

Playing for keeps:  
The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in  
the public sphere, 1983-2006

by

Margaretta Linda Patrick

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## **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

This thesis is an intellectual history of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and its public policy activity from 1983 to 2006. The EFC represents many of the major evangelical Protestant denominations and organizations in Canada. Although some commentators interpret its work in light of the American Religious Right, the EFC is non-partisan and strives to be more politically moderate. This stance reflects the historical political moderation of Canadian evangelicalism. EFC leaders give direction to the evangelical community by contributing to the development of an evangelical identity that assumes political engagement, ecumenism, persuasion, and a high view of the state. Their model of engagement is politically pragmatic and emphasizes the *imago Dei* principle and the common good.

The two concerns that contributed to evangelical political mobilization in the early 1980s were the increasing secularization of Canadian society and the privatization of religion. The EFC responded to these concerns in two ways. First, it defined secularism as intent on limiting religion in the public sphere. This interpretation enabled EFC leaders to mobilize their constituency, argue that public policy can never be religiously neutral, and insist that liberalism is not a neutral philosophy. However, it also meant that they did not critique the most secular of all spheres, the economy, or recognize the degree to which Christianity continues to enjoy cultural privileges as compared to other religions. The struggle against secularism took the EFC to Parliament Hill and into the courts.

Second, the EFC called for religious groups to be at the policy making “table.” This “table” is a liberal-democratic one that often requires participants to engage in discussions in a secular liberal manner. The impact of these requirements was evident in the EFC’s participation in the public debates surrounding the definition of marriage. Many of its arguments employed liberal reasoning and de-emphasized religious convictions. Over time the EFC moved toward the social consensus about the need to protect same-sex relationships. This movement, however, did not indicate secularization on the part of the EFC. Rather, its leaders desired to develop publicly accessible arguments and thereby they contributed to civil society.

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## List of Abbreviations

AMF	Alliance for Marriage and Family
BCCT	BC College of Teachers
CCC	Canadian Council of Churches
CCCB	Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
CLF	Christian Legal Fellowship
CMDS	Christian Medical and Dental Society
CPJ	Citizens for Public Justice
CRTC	Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission
EFC	Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
ICMF	Interfaith Coalition for Marriage and Family
IFCM	Interfaith Coalition for Marriage
IVCF	Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals
PC	Progressive Conservative Party



## Introduction

Despite predictions that religion would become increasingly irrelevant in modern societies (Berger 1990; Bruce 2002), religion continues to motivate Canadians to engage in public life and claim public space to practice their beliefs. People of faith volunteer for organizations that provide social services to the poor, donate money to charities, write letters to their Members of Parliament, participate in marches and rallies, and create organizations to influence public policy. In addition, religion continues to be a social and legal issue in Canada. For example, Canadian Sikhs successfully lobbied for changes to the RCMP uniform that allowed Sikh officers to wear their turban and they secured the right of Sikh students to wear the ceremonial dagger, or kirpan, in schools. Elsewhere the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice asked the Ontario government in 2004 to permit Islamic family law to operate under the province's *Arbitration Act*. Meanwhile, a number of evangelical organizations continue to argue for the right to require their employees to sign lifestyle statements that prohibit, among other things, engagement in same-sex relationships.

In this thesis I trace the political engagement of one evangelical organization, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), from 1983 to 2006. More specifically, I examine the development of the organization, identify some of the theological and political influences that informed its leaders, and study how those leaders responded to secularism. I outline the political and legal interventions undertaken by EFC leaders and then analyze those interventions by assessing the degree to which the organization operated as a modern public religion and naming some of the challenges that it faced as it participated in the public sphere. By “public sphere” I mean the public space in which citizens and organizations gather to discuss and help shape government and public policy. At times I use the term “public square” to refer to the same space. The EFC enters into political debates by mobilizing evangelicals to participate in public life, presenting briefs to Parliamentary committees, building relationships with individual Members of Parliament (MP) and at times being involved in closed-door planning meetings with these individual Members, intervening in legal cases, and engaging with the media. These types of participation are both public and political. I pay particular attention to how the EFC communicates with its base and actors in the political and legal spheres.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term “public sphere” has been theorized by many social, political, and critical theorists. The concept emerged during the Enlightenment and developed more fully by Jürgen Habermas in the 1960s. Theorists focus on the importance of non-coercive and inclusive deliberation for democracy, the creation of rational public opinion, and the potential for participatory deliberation to challenge hegemonic power and the status quo.

Created in 1964 to support Christian pastors who felt alienated in what they perceived to be an increasingly secular society and to overcome denominational barriers between mainline and evangelical churches, the EFC became more intentionally engaged in politics in 1983 when it hired Reverend Brian Stiller as its first executive director. A Pentecostal pastor and former director of the evangelical ministry Youth for Christ, Stiller had oratory and leadership skills that contributed to the growth of the organization. Stiller's arrival at the EFC serves as the starting point for this study since it was during Stiller's tenure that the EFC developed a model of political engagement and cultivated relationships with a number of MPs, including some Cabinet ministers and others in high levels of government. The conclusion of the same-sex marriage debate in 2006 marks the end of my study. The EFC had invested significant resources into the campaign against gay marriage and the end of that debate prompted EFC leaders to pursue new directions that are the subject of on-going debate.

The EFC is a worthy subject of investigation because it represents the majority of large evangelical denominations in Canada, a host of evangelical institutions, just over 1,000 individual congregations, and thousands of individuals. Appendix 1 is a list of the EFC's denominational, institutional, and organizational members. Many countries around the world have a national evangelical organization, of which the EFC is the second largest, after the National Association of Evangelicals in the US (Fieguth 2004). These national organizations are members of the World Evangelical Alliance,<sup>2</sup> an organization to which the EFC provides significant leadership.<sup>3</sup>

The mission statement of the EFC is to gather "evangelicals together for impact, influence and identity in ministry and public witness."<sup>4</sup> Although a significant aspect of the EFC's work is its support of churches and their ministries, such as evangelism, in this thesis I focus only on the organization's political and legal engagement in the Canadian public sphere. Within months of hiring

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<sup>2</sup> Originally created in 1846 in the UK, the organization became the World Evangelical Fellowship in 1951. In 1982 it changed its name to the World Evangelical Alliance. In 1983 *Faith Alive* reported that the Alliance had 28 members (EFC: Together we can. *Faith Alive* 1 [1]: 20). In 2010, its members included 128 national associations and 7 regional organizations. For more about the history and structure of the Alliance, see <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/members/> (accessed January 2, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> The International Director of the World Evangelical Alliance is Geoff Tunnicliffe, who began his term of office in 2005. Prior to and throughout this appointment Tunnicliffe was employed by the EFC. Tunnicliffe is a member of the WEA's International Executive Council and Bruce Clemenger, the EFC's current president, is the secretary of the Council. The EFC houses and supports the WEA's administration and financial offices.

<sup>4</sup> This mission statement is found on the EFC's website at <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=178> (accessed March 11, 2011). According to the website, the EFC fulfils its mission by drawing together ministry leaders in order to establish or deepen networks, communication, and partnerships; facilitating the development of evangelical leaders; representing evangelicals in the public square; and publishing a variety of materials that inform, resource, and encourage ministry organizations and leaders.

Stiller in 1983, the EFC's General Council, the governing body of the organization at the time, signalled to the membership its intention to be a major, long-term evangelical voice in Canadian public life. *Faith Alive* reported that at the Council's fall meeting Dr. Frank Peters stated, "It's one thing to play marbles in the back alley 'for funs,' but it's another thing to play 'for keeps'" (*Faith Alive* 1983a, 40). The statement aptly captured the desire of EFC leaders to become a voice in public debates and help shape social policy. Also captured in this statement was the confidence that the General Council had in Stiller's ability to lead evangelicals and address issues pertaining to public affairs and social policy. Stiller worked closely with the General Council, which had representation from the member denominations and organizations, and together they developed positions and strategies.

Stiller left the organization in 1997. The two presidents who succeeded him, Gary Walsh and Bruce Clemenger, continued to engage in the public sphere by developing positions that were based on biblical principles that they and other EFC leaders believed would best protect human life and promote human flourishing. The number of legal interventions increased, especially in cases involving religious freedom and same sex marriage. In addition to their political and legal interventions Walsh created an online clearinghouse for articles by and about evangelicals ([christianity.ca](http://christianity.ca)) and Clemenger founded a research centre to study Canadian evangelicalism.

## **Methodology**

I study the EFC as an exercise in intellectual history. As the editor of *Modern Intellectual History* noted in the journal's first issue in 2004, the aim of intellectual history is to illuminate "the interactions between texts and context and thereby [recover] contextually the meaning of texts, their significance, and the processes of their reception" (2004, 1). According to historian Peter Gordon, intellectual history tends "to regard ideas as historically conditioned features of the world which are best understood within some larger context" (n.d. 2). For intellectual historians, "context" is a broad category that includes social struggles, institutional changes, cultural dispositions, linguistics, and intellectual biography (2). As Gordon argues, intellectual historians are committed to understanding rather than evaluating ideas and are often interdisciplinary in their scope, drawing from works in philosophy, cultural history, political theory, and sociology, including the sociology of knowledge.

The most relevant aspect of intellectual history that I apply to the EFC is David Hollinger's assertion that one of the operating assumptions of the discipline is "that social action necessarily takes

place within a framework of meanings that serve to enable and to restrict what people do” (1982, 309). Put another way, people’s actions can be understood, at least in part, by the common ideas held by the publics of which they are a part (309). This thesis, then, studies the leadership of the EFC and how they made meaning of their faith in the context of Canadian secularization. EFC leaders took seriously the biblical command to be in the world but not of it. As a result, they refused to privatize religion. Instead, they insisted that faith has both private and public aspects and therefore must have a voice in the public sphere.

My position is that the EFC becomes more intelligible when we uncover the manner in which its leaders created meaning and discern the religious, social, philosophical, and political influences upon them. I hope to enter into the mindset, or worldview, of the EFC and examine how and why its leaders participate in Canadian public life as they do. This task requires that I study the context in which the EFC operated and how its leaders interpreted and responded to that context.

In order to delve into the mindset of the organization and its leaders, I examined EFC documents and publications, in particular, the legal and political documents it developed as it engaged with various social and religious issues. Since 1983 the organization has written many briefs to various parliamentary committees and participated in approximately 40 legal cases as an intervener, often in coalition with other evangelical, Christian, and religious groups. Most of these documents are available on the EFC’s website. In addition, I read every issue of the organization’s magazine, called *Faith Today* (originally published as *Faith Alive*), from 1983 through 2010. I paid particular attention to the regular columns written by the EFC presidents, the EFC updates in each issue, and any additional articles written by the presidents or other noteworthy evangelical leaders. I also read the three books written by Stiller during his time as EFC president and one published after his tenure at the EFC.

While there is a paucity of in-depth historical writing about the EFC, there are some shorter works that provide readers with a solid introduction to the nature of the EFC. These include a brief history of the organization written by freelance reporter Debra Fieguth in 2004 to celebrate the organization’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, an article written by Stackhouse comparing the EFC with its American counterpart, the National Association of Evangelicals (1995), and a chapter in Stackhouse’s *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* (1993). In addition, there are many scholarly and media articles written about evangelical political engagement. These articles often include quotes from EFC

presidents or other leading evangelical leaders about the EFC. In many of these articles the EFC is referred to as a politically moderate organization.

I augmented this written history by interviewing Brian Stiller and the EFC's current president, Bruce Clemenger. I also interviewed a number of people who knew the EFC well, including Stackhouse, John Redekop, a political scientist who volunteered with the EFC in a number of capacities from the late 1960s until the 1990s, John Reimer, a Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament in the 1980s and early 1990s who worked closely with Stiller during the abortion debate, and Gerald Vandezande, co-founder of Citizens for Public Justice and involved with the EFC almost since its inception. In order to gain a "thick" understanding of evangelical participation in the public square, I interviewed other evangelical leaders such as David Mainse of 100 Huntley Street and Dave Quist of the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada and sought the views of such politicians and academics as Bill Blaikie, Stockwell Day, Tom Flanagan, John MacKay, and Preston Manning.

In order to interpret the texts written by the EFC, I drew on the insights of a number of sociologists of religion, especially José Casanova, who contests the assumption of many secularization theories that religion inevitably declines and is privatized as societies modernize. I argue that the manner in which the EFC operated in the public sphere was similar to the national churches studied by Casanova in his book *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994). Just as Casanova found the political engagement of the Roman Catholic Church in various countries and evangelicalism in the US to be viable, and even desirable, public religions in modern secular liberal democracies, I find that the EFC contributes to Canadian public life. In addition, Casanova's work helps explain the resurgence of evangelical political involvement in Canada that began in the late 1960s. He suggests that religious groups and institutions tend to deprivatize when the state intervenes in the private sphere or seeks to colonize a religious life-world (227).<sup>5</sup> For many Canadian evangelicals, this process of deprivatization began when Pierre Trudeau, first as Minister of Justice and then as Prime Minister, began liberalizing social policy in the late 1960s and later introduced the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982. The latter brought legal rulings on matters of religious conscience

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<sup>5</sup> Building on the work of Jürgen Habermas, Simone Chambers defines lifeworld as "the background against which all social interaction takes place. It is a repository and contains the accumulated interpretations of past generations: how the people who went before us understood their world, themselves, and each other, their duties, commitments and allegiances, their art and literature ... As social actors, we draw upon these understandings when trying to make sense of the things that go on around us (or even inside of us)." Chambers, "A critical theory of civil society" in *Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society*, eds. Simone Chambers and Will Kymlicka (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 92.

and impacted the ability of religious adherents to practice their faith publicly. Many evangelicals interpreted these political and legal changes as state intrusions into their personal lives.

According to Casanova, religious groups are motivated to enter the public sphere for a variety of reasons: a) to defend the traditional lifeworld, for example, by protecting the traditional family; b) to challenge the autonomy of the secular spheres such as the state, markets, and science to operate without recognition of external moral norms; and/or c) to call for the retention of the concept of the common good and remind “modern societies that morality can only exist as an intersubjective normative structure” (1994, 228-29). According to Casanova, all three motivations may contribute to public dialogue about a society’s normative structures. As the following chapters reveal, all three motivations prompted EFC leaders to participate in the public sphere.

Another theorist who influenced my interpretation of the EFC and its political engagement is Talal Asad, a scholar who is more critical of a liberal appreciation of public religion than Casanova. More specifically, Asad argues that the ability of religious groups to influence the public sphere is limited by modern secular states as they create national identities or “personalities” (2003, 205) and then require loyalty to that identity. If necessary, Asad claims, states are willing to employ force to ensure obedience and loyalty. He is particularly concerned about the power of the state to form certain types of subjects who must adopt, or at least parrot, assumptions about the nature of knowledge, religion, desire, and social life if they wish to participate in public discourse. I appeal to Asad’s insight that public religions may be compelled to use the same means of political engagement as secular politicians and his concern about the modern secular state’s tremendous power (1993, 306) in my analysis of the EFC’s participation in the public sphere.

It is important to note that relying on written documents to the degree that I do in this thesis is limiting as documents cannot capture the internal debates and processes involved in arriving at a position. For example, if an EFC document reveals a particular theological or political orientation, the theological points involved could have been hotly contested during internal discussions. The outsider who later reads the documents does not have access to these discussions and therefore assumes the dominance of the theology that eventually found its way into the document. Being cognizant of this limitation, I made only those theological inferences that can be supported by a variety of documents. However, in my search to make the EFC’s positions and methods of engagement intelligible, at times I had to comment on the philosophical commitments that were evident in the document without a thorough understanding of the background behind the production of the document.

As the EFC intervened in public discourse, it encountered a number of challenges. It needed to present its positions in a language that could be understood by a religiously diverse population and it had to contend with the popular conception that it was a northern extension of the American Religious Right. These challenges form two themes developed in this thesis.

## Themes

The first theme is that the EFC both impacted social policy and was influenced by its engagement with politics, the legal system, and public discourse. On the one hand, for example, the EFC contributed to the ruling of the Supreme Court to protect the sanctity of life in the *Rodriguez* case that addressed the issue of doctor-assisted suicide in 1993. On the other hand, its participation in the public sphere required its leaders to employ secular liberal reasoning and language. While this type of participation did not indicate an increasing secularization within the EFC or make it any less committed to its evangelical faith, it revealed how the EFC adjusted to and accommodated “the world.” Its leaders developed a pragmatic conception of politics and used such liberal ideas as equality and rights in some of their arguments. The political and social contexts, then, influenced the organization and its leaders.

The second theme is that the EFC is not a northern version of the American Religious Right. While there is a great deal of communication between evangelicals on both sides of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel and evangelicals in both countries share similar views on such social issues as abortion, euthanasia, and same-sex marriage, there are significant political differences between Canadian and American evangelicals. This is in part due to the different political and social contexts that exist in the two countries. Any religious organization participating in the public sphere in either country must interact with that country’s particular history, political system, and cultural milieu. EFC leaders understood their own milieu and sought Canadian responses to the issues. They appreciated political “Red Toryism,” although with the departure of Stiller and Paul Marshall, a political theorist who influenced Stiller’s political thinking, there were virtually no more references to such Red Tories such as George Grant in the EFC’s literature and documents.

Despite the appropriation by EFC leaders of many aspects of Canadian political culture, a number of scholars and media reporters interpreted the EFC, and the political mobilization of Canadian evangelicals in general, as indicative of the American culture wars moving north. Commentators quickly focused on the role of evangelicals in the creation of the Reform Party in 1987 and equated

evangelicals with politically conservative, if not reactionary, views. As the Reform Party morphed into the Canadian Alliance in 2000 and then the Conservative Party of Canada in 2003, various members of the media raised concerns about the evangelical beliefs of the various Party leaders (Preston Manning, Stockwell Day, and Stephen Harper) and characterized their supporters as bigoted, narrow-minded, intolerant, and un-Canadian (Hoover 2000; McDonald 2006). Some of the fear stemmed from evangelical conceptions of their role in public life, which Jonathan Malloy, a political scientist who has examined the political engagement of evangelicals in the 2000s, describes in the following manner:

The cognitive centre of evangelical identity assumes not only that their interpretation of the Christian faith is superior to all other interpretations and faiths, but that it is their duty to share these beliefs in order to convert others. Furthermore, evangelical spiritual beliefs are closely linked to particular lifestyles and social behaviours. A dense evangelical subculture of churches, educational institutions, businesses, media and other organizations reinforce their identity and contrasts it with the outside world. (2004, 5)

As Malloy's words suggest, some of the public unease about evangelical political engagement stemmed from the fear that evangelicals would use the law and any political influence they could garner to impose their theology, moral code, and lifestyle on others. Indeed, given the desire of many evangelicals and a number of their organizations to retain the cultural dominance of Christianity, there is a Canadian Christian Right in Canada despite the fact that it looks differently than it does in the US.

## **Who are Evangelicals?**

Part of the difficulty of distinguishing Canadian evangelicals from their American counterparts is the lack of common definitions for the terms "evangelical" and "fundamentalism." The two terms are frequently confused in public discourse. The word "evangelical" comes from the Greek root word "*euangelion*," which means "Good News." First used to describe the teachings of John Wycliffe in 1360, the term came to be associated with the Protestant Reformation and subsequent Protestant revivalist movements of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and North America, including those of Henry Alline in Maritime Canada during the eighteenth century (Browne 2001, 45). Indeed, evangelicalism had significant influence in early Canadian history, evidenced in the dominance of Baptists and Methodists in the Maritimes, particularly in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Throughout much of



the nineteenth century an evangelical “creed” influenced many Anglophone Canadians in what is today Ontario (Gauvreau 1991), bringing together what are today known as evangelical and mainline churches. The advent of the Social Gospel movement shattered this Protestant consensus and Protestants in both Canada and the US divided into mainline and evangelical denominations. The fundamentalists were an evangelical sub-group that withdrew into sectarian communities in order to protect themselves from modern, or liberal, theology and evolutionary biology.

While fundamentalists in the US comprised a sizeable segment of American evangelicalism,<sup>6</sup> in Canada they were a proportionally much smaller group with very little status (Stackhouse 1993a, 12, 21). These demographic differences meant that Canadians did not experience the same “culture wars” that occurred in the US after fundamentalists there broke from their self-imposed isolation in the late 1970s in order to take back the nation for God. These fundamentalists, and the evangelicals who joined them, comprised the majority constituency of the “Religious Right.” Their subsequent alignment with the Republican Party made them a political force as they fought to keep the Lord’s Prayer and teaching of creationism in public schools, repeal the legal protections of gays and lesbians against discrimination, and lobby for socially conservative policies. The resulting political divide between this Religious Right and American liberals spawned the culture wars.

Although this brief history differentiates between evangelicalism and fundamentalism, the term “evangelical” remains difficult to define. Many contemporary scholars rely on the definition developed by British historian David W. Bebbington, who identified four elements of evangelical belief. According to Bebbington, evangelicals elevate the Bible as the ultimate religious authority, posit Jesus’ salvation work on the cross as central to their faith, focus on the importance of a change of heart within each believer (or New Birth), and promote “an energetic, individualistic approach to religious duties and social involvement” (Noll, Bebbington, and Rawlyk 1994, 6). While the degree to

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<sup>6</sup> George Marsden defines fundamentalism as a “militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism.” American fundamentalists desire a national revival and tend to be dispensational premillennialists referring to the practice of dividing history into eras, known as dispensations. The final dispensation is when Christ returns to earth to rule for 1,000 years (2006, 4-5, 232-33). According to some premillennialists, in the “last days” prior to Christ’s return, the world will experience great tribulation and the rise of an Antichrist. See Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999) 39-40, 93-94, and Wilcox 2000, 26-27).

which each of these elements is held varies among evangelicals, most scholars adopt these four elements as central to evangelical faith and life (Lear 1995, 18).<sup>7</sup>

In 1987 Reginald Bibby, a Canadian sociologist who tracks the growth and decline of religion in Canada, began referring to evangelicals as “conservative Protestants,” defining them as members of particular denominations, such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Baptists, Mennonites, Nazarenes, Pentecostals, and the Salvation Army. Bibby claimed that these groups share a focus on “born again” experiences, stress a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and emphasize the authority of scripture (1987; 1995, 125). However, Stackhouse disagreed with the term “conservative Protestant,” arguing that evangelicals tend to be “only *selectively* conservative.” For Stackhouse, evangelicals are innovative in their worship styles and missions and are no longer divided over such doctrinal controversies as how to practice baptism or the Lord’s Supper (1995a, 29, italics in original).

In any discussion about how to define terms, it is important to discover how the subjects involved define themselves. As Stackhouse observed, terminology is important because “words define us to ourselves and to others, and we can even begin to resemble those definitions, however mistaken they might be” (1995a, 29). He noted that in the late 1980s Stiller convinced some of the media to stop using the term “fundamentalist” when speaking about evangelicals. Stackhouse recalled how Stiller informed the media that calling an evangelical a fundamentalist was akin to calling a Black Canadian a “nigger” (28).<sup>8</sup> The point for Stiller was that he wanted the media to call evangelicals what they called themselves. In 1984 he defined conservative Protestantism as:

a religious faith which holds to the divinity of Jesus Christ; authority and trustworthiness of the Scriptures; the reality of sin and Satan; the need for each person to be “saved” and to be personally changed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit; the responsibility of the Church to preach the Gospel throughout the world; the coming again of Jesus Christ; and the eternal abode in either a literal heaven or a literal hell.  
(1984a, 19)

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<sup>7</sup> The 1993 Angus Reid/Rawlyk survey revealed that evangelicals placed a higher value on the Bible and Jesus’s work on the cross than on conversionism and activism (Rawlyk 1996, 118-19).

<sup>8</sup> While Stackhouse agreed that journalists must differentiate between evangelicals and fundamentalists, he found Stiller’s statement somewhat problematic. He noted that while some evangelicals refer to themselves as fundamentalists, African Canadians do not self-identify as “niggers” (Stackhouse 1995a, 28).

Stiller then claimed that Protestant churches, particularly Baptist ones, were moving in a more theologically conservative direction and predicted that many would come to desire “Bible-based ministry” in the coming decades.

In 2003, the EFC co-sponsored a survey to help determine how many evangelicals were in Canada. Respondents had to meet all six of the following indicators in order to be classified as an evangelical:

1. Belief that in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God provides the way for the forgiveness of sins
2. Belief that the Bible is the Word of God, and is reliable and trustworthy
3. Commitment of one’s life to Jesus Christ and self-identification as a ‘converted Christian’
4. Disagreement with the statement that ‘the concept of God is an old superstition that is no longer needed to explain things in these modern times’
5. Disagreement with the statement ‘Jesus Christ was not the divine son of God’
6. Weekly church attendance.<sup>9</sup>

The survey revealed that 19% of Canadians met all the indicators, of which 12% were Protestant and 7% were Catholic. Given that the category of Protestant evangelicals included both Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses and that some commentators objected to Catholics being labelled evangelical, the EFC decided that Canadians identified by the indicators would be considered “evangelically aligned” rather than evangelical (Hiemstra 2008, 1).<sup>10</sup>

On behalf of, and together with, these “evangelically aligned” Christians the EFC engages in public life by promoting pluralism, protecting religious freedom, and advancing what may be termed selective socially conservative mores based on its interpretations of the common good and the *imago*

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<sup>9</sup> These indicators may be found on the EFC’s website in a link intended to help the media understand the nature of evangelicals. For more, see <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=775> (accessed January 29, 2011).

*Dei* principle, which states that human beings deserve dignity and respect because they are made in the image of God. These are the subjects of the following chapters.

Before I outline the chapters, I need to locate myself in the discussion. I grew up in, and continue to hold membership in, the Christian Reformed Church, of which a sizeable contingency holds to the Kuyperian neo-Calvinist worldview that I argue in chapter 2 has informed a variety of EFC leaders. While some commentators identify the Reformed churches as evangelical, many within Reformed churches view themselves as bridging the evangelical and mainline denominations. Prior to this study I knew of the existence of the EFC but very little about its positions on specific social issues.

## **Outline of Study**

In the first chapter I examine the history of evangelical political engagement in Canada from the eighteenth century until the election of Stephen Harper's Conservatives in January, 2006. My aim in this chapter is to differentiate between Canadian and American evangelicals and to argue that most Canadian evangelicals were politically moderate throughout most of the twentieth century. In fact, the evidence suggests that throughout the twentieth century evangelical voting patterns reflected the same patterns evident in the general population. In this thesis the term "politically moderate" refers to those who seek the political centre, whether it be the centre-left or centre-right, do not use religion to polarize politics and public opinion, and are willing to engage in dialogue with those who hold different religious, political, and social views. Such dialogue does not preclude, however, that the participants may hold strong views on social or economic issues.

The second chapter looks at the history and development of the EFC from its inception in 1964 to 2006. During this time the EFC helped shape a particular Canadian identity that reflected the political moderation discussed in chapter 1. I spend considerable time tracing the religious and political influences on the three EFC presidents.

Chapter 3 investigates how the EFC defined and interacted with Canadian secularism. Resisting what it defined as the forces of secularism was a central aspect of the EFC's *raison d'être*, although the manner in which its leaders conceptualized secularism changed over time, becoming more nuanced and less dualistic. This investigation is followed by an overview of some of the political

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<sup>10</sup> Stackhouse argues that the Catholic evangelicals found by the survey were simply "reasonably faithful Roman Catholics." The problem with the questions, he suggests, is that they did not distinguish between the different views of tradition and the Bible held by Protestants and Catholics (2007, 1).

implications of a religious organization participating in the public sphere of a modern secular liberal state.

In chapter 4 I study the political model of engagement developed by the EFC as it participated in the “life” issues of abortion, euthanasia, and reproductive technologies. The model was politically pragmatic in that it took into account the difficult process of creating legislation. To support their model of engagement EFC leaders grounded their positions on arguments of the common good and the *imago Dei* principle.

Chapter 5 examines how the EFC protects religious freedom. The areas of religious freedom in which the EFC have been involved are religious broadcasting, religious education, sexual orientation and religious educational institutions, and the rights of religious minorities to practice their religion. Throughout their arguments EFC leaders emphasized that religion cannot be privatized because it impacts how one acts in all areas of life, including politics and education. In addition, they argued that there must be public space for religious adherents to live out their commitments, meaning that they should not be ordered to participate in public life as “a-religious” participants.

During the early 2000s, the EFC became immersed in the issue of redefining marriage to include gay and lesbian relationships. The desire of EFC leaders to protect the traditional family is the subject of chapter 6. These leaders argued that the traditional family is the best institution in which to raise children and interpreted the issue within the frame of religious freedom. At the end of the chapter I examine the type of religious-political subject created by the EFC as it participated in the public debates about the nature of marriage.

The EFC is a multi-faceted evangelical organization that seeks to influence public policy and public life. Its leaders not only recognize the distinct Canadian context in which they operate, but are aware that the context requires a particular type of participation. In this manner they are cognizant of the key elements of intellectual history: that ideas are important and that they are worked out in particular contexts. The first chapter sets the broad Canadian context by examining the role of evangelicals in public life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## Chapter 1

### Evangelicals and Canadian public life

When the Reform Party gained 19 percent of the popular vote and 52 seats in the 1993 federal election, Canadian political scientist Alan C. Cairns warned of an impending “culture war” due to the fundamentalist streak of evangelicalism he saw in the Party. After noting the evangelical faith of Reform’s leader Preston Manning and other Reform candidates, Cairns noted that “the visceral antipathy to Reform from the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, from ethnic groups, and from French language minority organizations outside Quebec underlines the extent to which cultural conflict over contending life styles now has explicitly entered partisan federal politics, a decade after entering courtrooms via the Charter” (1994, 230).<sup>11</sup> The term “culture war” is politically loaded. It conjures up images of conflicts in the US typically involving the issues of abortion, gay rights, feminism, pornography, the family, and law and order. In 1993, the culture war metaphor was in wide circulation as Bill Clinton, a Democrat, had won the 1992 US Presidential election running a campaign that embraced reproductive choice, gay rights, women’s rights, and public funding for the arts. Clinton’s policies met resistance from the American “Religious Right,”<sup>12</sup> a social movement that, beginning in the late 1970s, mobilized American religious conservatives, particularly conservative Protestants, to become politically active in order to stop abortions and promote the teaching of creationism in public schools. Some of the Religious Right’s best-known leaders include Dr. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family; Jerry Falwell, former leader of the Moral Majority; Ralph Reed, former leader of the Christian Coalition; and Pat Robertson, a televangelist and unsuccessful contender for the 1988 Republican Presidential nomination (Wilcox 2000, 5-7).

The term “culture war” is not only politically loaded; it also has a specific national context. In his book *Culture Wars* (1991), the American sociologist James D. Hunter defined the term as a clash between two moral visions, which he identified as orthodoxy and progressivism. Those who ascribe to orthodoxy derive their moral values from a transcendent authority while progressives locate moral

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<sup>11</sup> Cairns incorrectly conflated fundamentalism with evangelicalism.

<sup>12</sup> Although the Religious Right included Mormons and some conservative Jews, it is also known as the Christian Right, given the preponderance of Christians, especially fundamentalists and evangelicals, in the movement.

authority in the assumptions of the modern age, including rationalism and subjectivism (42-45). As suggested by the book's subtitle, *The Struggle to Control the Family, Art, Education, Law, and Politics in America*, Hunter's definition was derived solely from the American context, that is, a context in which evangelicals comprise approximately 25 to 33 percent of the American population and fundamentalists in turn are a sizeable constituency of that community.

In applying the term "culture war" to the Canadian context, Cairns was likely attempting to be rhetorically provocative. It would seem obvious that he was warning of an impending conflict between conservative religious figures associated with the Reform Party and the new Liberal government of Canada. Though somewhat less obvious, it is quite possible that Cairns was implying that the Reform Party was somehow acting un-Canadian by introducing an American-style politicized religious discourse to Canadian politics. All speculation aside, Cairns' forecast of an impending culture war was indicative of a common theme in many criticisms of evangelical participation in Canadian politics; namely, that Canadian and American evangelicals are motivated by the same social, cultural, and political forces. The result is the conflation of American and Canadian evangelicalism. To be fair to Cairns, his vision of a looming Canadian culture war included additional conflicts over language policy, multiculturalism, and immigration. Still, to apply the term of culture war to events occurring in Canada ignored the fact that Canadian history and political culture are sufficiently different from the US and require distinct Canadian evangelical responses to social and political issues (Hoover et al. 2002).

In this chapter I examine the history of evangelical participation in Canadian public life in order to establish the context for the emergence of the EFC. I trace evangelical political action from the early settlement of Canada prior to Confederation through to the election of Stephen Harper as Prime Minister in 2006. For each historical time period I look at the relationship between evangelicals and Canadian political culture. I then conclude the chapter by explaining how Canadian history helps explain 1) why Canadian evangelicals tend to be politically moderate; 2) the rapid secularization of Canadian society after World War II; and 3) the challenges that faced the EFC as it sought to lead evangelicals to participate in the public sphere.

The manner in which I use the term "evangelical" in this chapter requires some further commentary as its composition changed in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Beginning in

the 1760s, itinerant Methodist<sup>13</sup> and Baptist preachers from the US introduced evangelical revivalism to the Maritime colonies and a few decades later to Upper Canada. Over time these evangelicals cooperated with members of the Church of England (the Anglican Church) and Presbyterian churches on the basis of their shared desire to “Christianize” the colonies in the Maritimes and central Canada. By the time of Confederation in 1867, evangelicalism dominated Canadian Protestantism. Therefore, in the nineteenth century the term “evangelical” referred to Methodists and Baptists as well as significant sectors within the Church of England and the Presbyterians. This Protestant consensus fractured at the turn of the twentieth century when the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Church of England adopted a more liberal, progressive theology. These denominations became known as “mainline” Protestants and represented the majority of Canadian Protestants. The minority group, consisting of largely Holiness and Pentecostal sects retained the name “evangelical.” They rejected progressive theology and continued to emphasize the need for evangelism and individual conversion.<sup>14</sup> Given the different composition of evangelicals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is problematic to denote both groups by the single term “evangelical.” In order to make the necessary distinctions I refer to the earlier group as “nineteenth century evangelicals” and the later group as either “conservative evangelicals” or simply “evangelicals.” In all subsequent chapters the term “evangelical” refers solely to the latter group as found in the twentieth century. This chapter traces how both nineteenth and twentieth century evangelicals interacted with the Canadian state and Canadian political culture.<sup>15</sup>

Political scientist David Bell defined political culture as the ideas, beliefs, and values that inform political action and affect “the kinds of social problems we address and the solutions we attempt” (1992, 187). For Bell, political culture is expressed and preserved by symbols and slogans and is interrelated with social and cultural changes in that such changes result in shifts in political and public discourse. For example, the constitutional debates of the late 1980s and early 1990s introduced such concepts as “sovereignty association” and “distinct society” into Canadian political discourse and

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<sup>13</sup> Methodists are followers of British reformer John Wesley, who held a radical view of society evidenced in two of his beliefs: first, that social reform begins in the individual conscience; and second, that liberty is based on “individual free choice and conscience, thus allowing Methodists the freedom to withdraw from a government of which they did not approve” (Christie 1990, 26).

<sup>14</sup> Two significant evangelical groups were the Salvation Army and Christian and Missionary Alliance. The first Salvation Army British immigrants arrived in Canada in 1882. Five years later Canadian A.B. Simpson created the Christian and Missionary Alliance in New York City, which experienced significant growth in both the US and Canada in the 1920s. The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada came into existence in 1919.



common vocabulary (14-15).<sup>16</sup> Bell argued that prior to the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982, Canada had a distinct political culture. This was a proposal first developed by American political scientist Louis Hartz, who differentiated Canada and the US by what he termed their “political ideology” (or political philosophy). Hartz theorized that colonies retain political fragments of the mother country that are frozen at the time of colonial independence and do not develop according to the “natural” progression of political ideology found in Europe. For Hartz, the first stage involved a move from feudalism (or Toryism) to bourgeois liberalism (or Whiggery), which is a non-democratic and elitist tradition. Capitalism and the industrialization it engenders encourages democratic liberalism, the third stage of development. Socialism is the final stage. Each stage develops out of the previous one, meaning that the absence of, say, the feudal/Tory tradition stops the development of socialism because “socialism re-creates the feudal community” (1964, 46). Hartz believed that the future shrinks when the past is left behind, as “it is the continuing pressure of these older forces which renews the doctrinaire passion of European radicalism, renews its utopias” (42). When Hartz applied his theory to Canada, he contended that New France (later re-named Lower Canada and then Quebec) inherited a feudal/Tory ideology that viewed society organically and ensured social stability by distinguishing the rights and responsibilities of social classes. In contrast, the primary ideological component of the English-speaking colonies in British North America was the liberal individualism of “bourgeois fragments” (34). Hartz thought the presence of the feudal fragment in Quebec and some remnants of Toryism in what became Ontario and the Maritime Provinces impeded development of responsible government and liberal democracy in Canada (40).

Gad Horowitz, a student of Hartz, built upon Hartz’s notion that the arrival of British Loyalists from the US during the American War of Independence (1775-1783) moderated the liberal bourgeois fragment in Canada. Horowitz argued that the presence of the Loyalists and their “Tory touch” explains why socialism continues to be an element of Canadian political culture but is virtually absent in the US. Horowitz identified the brand of socialism introduced to the US as Marxist and originating in Germany. In contrast, Canadian socialism has British roots, is Protestant, labourist, non-Marxist,

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<sup>15</sup> Marsden traces a similar shift in the US from a Protestant consensus in the nineteenth century to the division between liberals and fundamentalists early in the twentieth century (2006, 232-35).

<sup>16</sup> Bell wrote his book during the constitutional crisis that emerged after the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, designed to persuade Quebec to agree to the Constitution. While Bell referred to the “rich tradition” of Canada’s political culture, he lamented the loss of this tradition as Canadians become less aware of their history. The inability of the different political ideologies (conservatism, liberalism, and socialism) to provide

and combines the corporate and organic ideas of Toryism with the rationalist and egalitarian elements of liberalism (1995, 23, 33). At the heart of Horowitz's argument was a desire to explain the distinctiveness of Canadian political culture, and, perhaps above all, to explain why Canada is different from the US. For Horowitz, Canada differs from the US because it has: a) a Tory touch; b) a tradition of right-wing liberalism rather than Jeffersonian liberal democracy; c) a centrist-left wing liberalism; d) a socialist movement; and e) greater ideological diversity that contributes to greater tolerance (24-29). While Horowitz believed the Tory touch was located in the Progressive Conservative (PC) Party,<sup>17</sup> he nevertheless identified the Party's primary political philosophy as liberalism (30-33). Canadian philosopher George Grant concurred, claiming that the PC Party combined business liberalism with a strong central government, evidenced in its creation of many crown corporations such as the CBC, the Bank of Canada, and the CNR (1989, 14).<sup>18</sup>

However, a number of historians and political scientists disagree with Horowitz's thesis that Toryism is a distinct element of Canadian political culture. In contrast to Horowitz's argument that Toryism tempered liberalism in Canada, political scientists Janet Ajzenstat and Peter J. Smith argued that Canadian political culture was not dependent on the opposition of Toryism and liberalism, but on the opposition between nineteenth century liberalism and civic republicanism, with the latter found on the political left and derived from the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Civic republicans critiqued nineteenth century liberalism for its individualism, its bias toward economic development, and its focus on rights and freedoms. In contrast, they emphasized community, democracy originating from that community, and citizen virtues. Ajzenstat de-emphasized Canadian distinctiveness by pointing to the liberal commitments of many early political leaders in British North America (Ajzenstat and Smith 1995; Ajzenstat 1995a; 1995b).

Other commentators focused on different elements of Canadian culture. Political theorist Paul Marshall argued that it was the traditions of accommodation and compromise that made Canadian

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solutions to the issues of national unity, regionalism, aboriginal rights, and ethnic tension alarmed him (Bell 1992, 15-18, 187).

<sup>17</sup> Originally named the Liberal-Conservative Party by Macdonald, the party underwent several name changes before 1942, when it became the Progressive Conservative Party.

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of theorists who question the accreditation of these institutions solely to the Conservatives, see Bell (1992, 163). The larger point is that regardless of which political party is in power, the Canadian state continues to spend more than the US government on the public sector. In 2003 the Canadian government spent 40 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product on the public sector, compared to approximately 30 per cent spent by the American government. On this point Canada is closer to the governments of Western Europe (Adams, Langstaff, and Jamieson 2003, 58).

political culture unique. According to Marshall, the founders of the Canadian Confederation established cultural diversity “as the foundation for public life.” They preferred compromise over majoritarian rule and sought to balance individual and communal rights and responsibilities (1992, 9).<sup>19</sup> Indeed, as Marshall pointed out, compromise between the French Catholics and English Protestants was critical to the formation of Canada in 1867. Bell identified regionalism as another aspect of Canadian culture (1992, 128), which was a result of the sheer size of the country and the cultural diversity that resulted from various immigrant groups settling in different parts of the country.<sup>20</sup> As ethicist Roger Hutchinson observed: “Where we come from in Canada shapes our consciousness, our self-images, and our understanding of what we mean by Canada” (1982, 249). It is also a reason why a number of political parties in Canada have represented regional interests, such as the Social Credit in Alberta and BC, the Bloc Québécois in Quebec, and the Reform Party in the West. The resulting fractured political culture often makes it difficult for Canadians to agree on key constitutional, economic, and political matters.

For our purposes, I focus on Canada’s experience with British Toryism to explain one of the fundamental differences between US and Canadian evangelicals. In doing so, I find myself in a conversation with Gad Horowitz and others, such as Donald Creighton, William L. Morton, George Grant, and Eugene Forsey, all of whom argue that Toryism is a significant element that distinguishes Canada’s political culture from American political culture.<sup>21</sup> Toryism also played an important role in the story of Canadian evangelicalism in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## 1.1 Pre-confederation British Toryism

British Toryism is a modern conservative political ideology that points to the Middle Ages as a golden age when people interpreted their existence within a divine order and a social hierarchy. Those

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<sup>19</sup> Marshall understands Confederation as a fundamentally conservative project, seeking to preserve traditional values rather than the emancipation of individuals (1992, 9).

<sup>20</sup> For example, many Mennonite immigrants settled in the Prairie Provinces. Most of the early Sikh and Chinese immigrants immigrated to southern British Columbia, the latter to work on the railroad. Many Scots relocated to Cape Breton Island and many of the Irish fleeing the potato famine (1845-1852) established themselves in Toronto and Montreal.

<sup>21</sup> Political scientists Ron Dart (1999; 2004) and William Christian (Christian and Campbell 1983; Campbell and Christian 1996) also view Toryism as a check against American-style liberalism. Political scientist Steve Patten acknowledges that while “the Canadian political culture has historically been liberal,” the traditions of social democracy and conservative Toryism are important counter ideologies and additional elements of Canada’s political culture (2001, 136). Patten suggests that many Conservative Party leaders blended Toryism

who contributed to Tory political philosophy include Anglican theologian Richard Hooker, Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and political theorist Edmund Burke. These Tories shared with other traditional conservatives a rejection of the individualism and social disruption brought about by industrialization, the French Revolution, Methodism, and philosophy, particularly utilitarianism and the liberal social contract theory. Instead, they valued the experiences of the past, traditional social order, and institutions such as the church, guild, and family that mediate between the individual and the state. In addition, they understood liberty as the right of a group to its autonomy (Nisbet 1986; G. Grant 1989).

Tories translated these beliefs into anti-liberal political principles. Steve Patten, a political scientist, identified four characteristics of Toryism held by both the older elitist “High Tory” British colonialists and the more modern and democratic “Red Tories” that emerged in Canada during the mid-twentieth century. First, Tories valued established social structures, including the church, state, and family. Second, they viewed society as an organic whole rather than the aggregate of individuals. Their notion of community included the Canadian political community; consequently, they were not averse to using the state to develop and/or protect Canadian interests. Third, they believed order was more important than liberty and at times allowed the state to enforce moral conformity for the purposes of the public good. As Patten concludes, “this has meant a Tory willingness to violate the liberal commitment to the limited state, and disregard the liberal distinction between public and private.” Finally, Tories placed politics over economics, resulting in the belief that the state may intervene in the economy to assist the less fortunate and to promote national interests (2001, 137).<sup>22</sup> Horowitz elaborated this conception of the Tories when he posited that Tories believed the state was to protect and enhance the common good, intervening in the economy when necessary to provide for the equality of condition (as opposed to the liberal search for the equality of opportunity) (1995, 23).

While some early British immigrants brought the Tory touch with them, Hartz recognized that the presence of Toryism in British North America was largely due to events in the US. During and after the American War of Independence, approximately 30,000 to 60,000 Americans loyal to the British government relocated to the Maritimes, Quebec, and what is today Ontario, many of them influenced

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with market liberalism, including Sir John A. Macdonald, Robert Borden, Arthur Meighen, R.B. Bennett, John Diefenbaker, Robert Stanfield, and, less consistently, Joe Clark (138).

<sup>22</sup> G. Grant argued that “at their best, Canadian conservatives never stood on an abstract appeal to free enterprise. They were willing to use the government to protect the common good. They were willing to restrain the individual’s freedom in the interests of the community” (1989, 65n22).

by the “Tory touch” (Horowitz 1995; Leuprecht 2003, 410; Bell 1992, 35). In addition to Tory collectivism, the Loyalists brought with them the ideas of British political philosopher John Locke.<sup>23</sup> Bell and Horowitz suggest that Locke’s fear of revolution and the lack of egalitarian dispositions in Toryism contributed to the counter-revolutionary nature of Canada (Bell 1992, 39; Horowitz 1995, 26), and therefore responsible government did not appear in British North America until the 1830s (Bell 1992, 49). The American Loyalists benefited from the largesse of the British government. In exchange for their support of the British government during the American War of Independence, they received compensation for their war losses, free land grants, pensions, and tools (54-55).

Prior to Confederation English-speaking Tories began to work with French-Canadian conservatives known as the *Bleus*. Both groups had a strong base in the dominant church of their respective colony and they shared the belief that government exists by divine ordinance. The Roman Catholic Church had become the unofficial established church in French Canada when it became the guardian of French culture after the British conquest of New France in 1760 (Bell 1992, 33) and especially after the 1837 and 1837 rebellions (Bramadat and Seljak 2008a, 34). In Upper Canada the Church of England became the established church in 1791 and over time became the home to so many English-speaking Tories that it became known as “Tories at prayer” (Dart 1999, 88-96). Nancy Christie described the Church as promoting a Tory worldview of “hierarchical corporate bodies and social ranks” (1990, 11) and working with the state to construct a stable society. For its part, the state viewed the Church as a means by which to stem the revolutionary impulses (Katerberg 2000, 285) and supported it by establishing clergy reserves, land set aside for the exclusive use of the Church. As Michael Gauvreau has noted, in this political environment where the Church legitimated the state and the state supported the Church, “political loyalty was endowed with a divine sanction and was thus merely the obverse of religious orthodoxy; any criticism or dissent from the church establishment carried with it the stigma of political radicalism” (1990, 49). The result was a dearth of public theological and political critique.

However, Toryism was by no means the preferred political ideology of all religious colonists. According to Christie, itinerant evangelical Methodist preachers and Baptists from the US brought with them a rival worldview that emphasized “the dynamic role of the free individual in transforming society based on a more inclusive and egalitarian concept of human relations” (Christie 1990, 11).

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<sup>23</sup> For a partial debunking of loyalist myths, see Bell, who argues that the Loyalists helped delay the development of a specifically Canadian identity and antagonized French Canada (1992, 38-40, 66-75).

These values were to have dramatic political effects as the Methodists and Baptists first challenged both the Church of England and political Toryism and then adopted the latter. (By the dawn of the twentieth century the Methodists had moved away from Tory conservatism.)

Christie's narrative reflects the common assumption that the early Canadian Methodists and Baptists contributed to liberal thought by opposing established churches and supporting political radicalism. This interpretation focuses on the cultural implications of evangelicalism. In contrast, S.D. Clark emphasized that evangelical political attitudes could be explained by its structural position in society rather than a supposedly inherent political radicalism within evangelicalism. He contended that eighteenth and early nineteenth century evangelicals operated as "sects," sociologically defined as religious groups that stress voluntary association, tend to be in high tension with their surrounding culture, and entail extensive commitment from their members (Stark and Finke 2000, 142-46). According to Clark, the Nova Scotian Baptists in the late eighteenth century and Methodists living in Upper Canada in the early nineteenth century organized themselves as sects. Comprised of the rural downtrodden and urban working classes, they sought religious, political, and economic autonomy from the control exerted by the metropolis, which in turn led many of them to support radical politics. However, Clark noted that many evangelical leaders were largely indifferent to politics and their followers exhibited "political illiteracy." From his perspective, the political contribution of the evangelical sects was not in their activities but in their separation of religion and politics and their decentralization of organization. Clark declared that the role evangelical sects played in helping to end the alliance between the church and the state contributed to liberal politics (1945).<sup>24</sup>

Christie's identification of evangelicalism as an element of cultural change is supported by Gauvreau, who argued that the strength of the evangelical awakening in British North America combined with the religious focus on history rather than philosophy or the natural sciences and the relative absence of the divisive aspects of the Enlightenment contributed to a Protestant consensus in the nineteenth century that emphasized the relationships between God, the individual, and human

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<sup>24</sup> As some sects grew more prosperous and migrated to the cities, they underwent a process of institutionalization, became denominations, and acquired some privileges which then needed protection. As a result, they became more dependent on the state. The change in their structural position led them to resist new theological ideas and shift to political conservatism. Clark argued that they entered politics to protect their new institutional interests and social position, participating in such campaigns as educational reform and the temperance movement. Given the evangelical history of political illiteracy, Clark maintained that their political engagement was largely driven by opportunism (1945).

society (1991, 16, 19, 70, 127). In fact, he labelled the nineteenth century as “the evangelical century.” While Gauvreau’s assessment is somewhat overstated, it is nevertheless the case that most English-speaking Protestants shared the goal of “Christianizing” the country and together they constituted a strong, though not always united, political force.

## **1.2 Nineteenth century evangelicalism: A Protestant consensus (1760-1880s)**

The Methodists and Baptists of the Maritime colonies and Upper Canada believed that individuals rather than the state transformed society. According to Christie, they replaced the Tory predilection for institutions with a focus on the individual, freedom, and liberty (1990, 34). However, Christie’s claim is an exaggeration since the desire for liberty typically did not extend to the Catholics (Noll 2006, 270).

In addition to preaching the language of freedom and liberty, Christie argued that the Methodists and Baptists redefined social unity. While the Tories and the Church of England believed that social unity was achieved through social distinctions and class responsibilities, the Methodists and Baptists conceptualized social unity as occurring in community, defined as the “voluntary association between individuals who shared a common intimacy with God” (Christie 1990, 34). So defined, community separated the converted from the unconverted (38). This voluntary nature of community incensed the Tory hierarchy, which interpreted it as evidence of the evangelical commitment to republicanism (Adamson 1994, 436). The Tories attempted to limit the political impact of the Methodists and Baptists by suppressing their religious expression (Christie 1990, 14-15). In 1810 they used the power of the state to do so, with the House of Assembly in Upper Canada expelling two Methodist preachers by invoking a clause from the 1791 *Constitution Act* that disallowed clergymen from participating in the House. Some early Methodist preachers experienced stoning and other physical assaults (Adamson 1994, 434). For example, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the Church of England and the governmental elite used the British army and urban mobs to limit the influence of preachers Henry Alline (Congregationalist/Baptist) and William Black (Methodist) (Rawlyk 1994, 138). Alline endured numerous physical assaults and threats on his life (Clark 1948, 188)

Despite the challenge Methodists and Baptists posed for Toryism and the Church of England, the evangelical conception of community, along with the vision of social change it entailed, a Protestant

consensus endured.<sup>25</sup> Most nineteenth century Protestants believed that converted individuals would voluntarily gather together in civil associations and work for social change. The Christian values and conduct of these individuals would permeate society and change it from the inside (Gauvreau 1990, 61), thereby helping to create a Christian nation. Methodists and Baptists shared these aspirations. In other words, although evangelical theology focused on the individual conversion experience before God, it also directed individuals to actively participate in society. For example, while the Baptists in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia contributed to a conservative political culture, they also worked to transform society and make “it more Christlike” by caring for the less fortunate (Rawlyk 1991, 114-16). Later in the nineteenth century evangelicals joined other Protestants in support of temperance (a debate that extended from the 1870s to the 1920s), the *Lord’s Day Act* (achieved in 1906), and missionary societies. With the exception of high-church supporters in the Church of England and some Lutherans, Protestants broadly supported these moral projects (Airhart 1990, 101). However, religious studies scholar N.K. Clifford argued that this missionary zeal had its dark side, as the Confederation vision of “God’s Dominion,” taken from Psalm 72, created ethnic prejudices among Protestants, leading them to assimilate non-Western immigrants by Christianizing them. For example, some Protestants voiced their fear of the “yellow peril” of Chinese immigration. Others worried that Slavic immigrants from southern and eastern Europe would “overrun” the country and one day govern those of Anglo-Saxon descent. Additional “undesirable groups” included the Jews, Mennonites, Mormons, and Doukhobours (1977, 24-32).<sup>26</sup> Missions to the aboriginal peoples included residential schools, which had long-lasting effects upon aboriginal communities due to the abuse aboriginal children suffered while attending these schools. Bramadat and Seljak summarized the context by claiming that at times the Christianizing project amounted to persecution of those who held non-conformist beliefs (2008a, 10-11).

Given that nineteenth century Canadian evangelicals did not separate the church and the state as thoroughly as their American counterparts, they were able to seek a middle road between Toryism and republicanism. Like the Church of England, they sought financial aid from the British

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<sup>25</sup> Rawlyk suggested that the consensus was the result of the “genuine evangelical churches” across the country becoming “more like the evangelical Anglicans and Presbyterians” during the mid to late 1800s. As a result, they replaced their “religion of the heart” with “the religion of the head” (1994, 208).

<sup>26</sup> The Roman Catholic Church also embraced the task of Christianizing Canada (Bramadat and Seljak 2008a, 9).



government and religious organizations supported by the British state.<sup>27</sup> By the mid 1830s, half a century after the US ratified a non-establishment clause in their constitution,<sup>28</sup> many of the large Canadian religious groups (with the exception of the Baptists) received some financial assistance from Britain. This was in contrast to American evangelical leaders, who raised money in their own communities or from successful merchants and professionals. Canadian evangelical leaders also spent more time than their American counterparts lobbying the government, focusing on such issues as education and the clergy reserves. Leaders of both the Church of England and the nineteenth century evangelicals believed that they required state assistance for their project of promoting Christian discipline in the colonies. For example, Egerton Ryerson, a Methodist leader in the movement to end the establishment of the Church of England, rejected the American Methodist understanding of society as comprised of autonomous individuals (Adamson 1994, 443-46). In his campaign for a public education system free from denominational control, Ryerson did not envision public schools as religiously neutral. Rather, he understood public education as developing a Christian conscience in students and teaching Christian values (Gauvreau 1990, 91).

Ultimately the Church of England and political Tories could not stem the tide of individualism, capitalism, and social democracy supported by evangelicalism (Gauvreau 1990, 50). Due to strong pressure from the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, in 1841 the government allowed other denominations to benefit from the clergy reserves, effectively disestablishing the Church of England. By 1854 the government eliminated the reserves altogether. However, in contrast to the American experience of disestablishment, Canadians did not create many new denominations or sects.<sup>29</sup> As Gauvreau pointed out, Canadians “converged towards the centre,” with almost all Protestants involved in either a Church of England, Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian church (1990, 65).<sup>30</sup> Gauvreau also noted that this convergence coincided with the politics of accommodation required to achieve Confederation. Building upon the work of others, Gauvreau suggested that the nineteenth

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<sup>27</sup> Clark attributed this phenomenon to the political consequences of the War of 1812. The anti-American sentiments unleashed by the War pushed Methodists in the Maritimes and Upper Canada to break with the American Methodists and create an alliance with the English Wesleyan Conference. Similarly, the Newlight Baptists came to depend on English leadership. For Clark, these alliances “signified the shift to a position of accommodation to conservative political forces” (1962, 179-80). See also Adamson (1994, 437-38).

<sup>28</sup> In the popular American mind disestablishment is synonymous with the separation of church and state. The latter concept originated from a private letter written by Thomas Jefferson in which he advocated for “a wall of separation” between the church and the state.

<sup>29</sup> For a theory about the continual creation of sects in the US, see Stark and Finke (2000).

<sup>30</sup> This pattern remained the same at the end of the twentieth century, leading sociologist David Martin to identify Canada as having a “shadow establishment” (2000).

century Canadian evangelical antipathy for polarization and its political moderation contributed to the political ethos of accommodation (90).<sup>31</sup>

The Protestant consensus as described by Christie and Gauvreau may be summarized as a project by which both churches and sects engaged in nation-building and establishing Canada as a Christian nation. As a result of their engagement with the project of establishing the Canadian nation-state, nineteenth century evangelicals did not develop a critique of the governing structures, including the state, economy, military, and legal system. Rather, they became part of the “informal Protestant cultural establishment,” a legitimating force for the state, progress, morality, and modern order that historian William H. Katerberg sees operating in early Canadian history (2000, 285). For Katerberg, Protestants in North America understood education as advancing the modern virtues of progress, individualism, capitalism, good citizenship, consensus Protestantism, and progress (286).

However, progress and capitalism spawned industrialization and significant social change brought about by the relocation of many Canadians from the countryside to the cities. Many of the new urbanites suffered poor working and living conditions. New avenues of transportation enabled the prosperous to move out to the suburbs, leaving the inner cities to the less affluent. These events renewed Protestant efforts to ban alcohol and establish a day of rest on Sunday to combat the brutalizing nature of constant work. At the same time, the Protestant consensus began to fracture as some groups called for more extensive social reform and adopted the “progressive theology” of higher criticism (Airhart 1990, 114-23). Out of this cauldron of change emerged the Social Gospel movement.

### **1.3 Social Gospel: A partial rupture of the Protestant consensus (1880s-1920s)**

While the early proponents of the Social Gospel continued to be concerned about alcohol and the effects of industrialization, they differed from the more theologically conservative element within Protestantism in their adoption of a scientific evangelicalism that combined evangelistic work with social reform and progressive theology. These Social Gospellers placed less emphasis on the dramatic conversion experience and paid more attention to service. They approached religious life as an aspect of everyday life, drew inspiration from the social sciences, and believed science offered unlimited future possibilities. They also professionalised many of the evangelical universities (Airhart 1990,

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<sup>31</sup> J.W. Grant argued that the political act of Confederation prompted Presbyterians, Methodists, and Anglicans to consolidate their various groups into denominational structures (1969, 332).

123-26). The Methodists embraced the message of the Social Gospel most thoroughly, followed by the Presbyterians and members of the Church of England. According to J.W. Grant, the individualism of the Baptists limited their involvement in the movement (1988, 102).<sup>32</sup>

The Social Gospel's adoption of scientific evangelicalism marked the end of the Protestant consensus and resulted in divisions within and between denominations. Protestants split into two broad groups, the more theologically liberal "mainline" Protestant denominations and the theologically conservative ones who retained the name of "evangelical." The division between the two groups was not always clear as the mainline denominations contained minority groups that did not adopt social progressivism. Many evangelicals and these minority groups continued to embrace social activism (Airhart 1990, 125).<sup>33</sup>

In addition, the mainline and evangelical churches continued to share a desire to evangelize new immigrants. Fearful of the Roman Catholicism that accompanied many of the new immigrants, Protestants of all doctrinal persuasions joined together to "Canadianize" the new immigrants by assimilating them into the Protestant faith. While both groups participated in foreign missions, the motivation for each group was different. Where the premillennialism of evangelicals led them to engage in evangelism in anticipation of the return of Christ, progressive groups engaged in evangelism in the name of service (Airhart 1990, 126-31). Where cooperation between the evangelicals and mainline churches was not an option, they developed parallel directions and institutions. For instance, in response to the professionalization of the progressive religious universities, evangelicals established Bible institutes and colleges to prepare their laity for evangelism and missionary work.

As Canadians experienced the horrors of World War I, they began to question the belief in progress espoused by the Social Gospel, with its hope in science and technology, liberalism, and progressive revelation. Still, socialist ideas remained in some circles, with the Methodist Committee on Social Service and Evangelism calling for a planned economy in 1918 (Wright 1990, 144-45). University students founded the Student Christian Movement (SCM) in 1921, the most theologically liberal organization to that time. In response, conservative evangelicals established a Canadian arm of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) in 1928 to evangelize university and high school students. IVCF

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<sup>32</sup> J.W. Grant located the Methodist zeal for the social gospel "in Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection" (1988, 103).

emphasized the traditional evangelical focus on a personal relationship with God and evangelism (165). Even so, points of contact remained between many mainline and evangelical leaders as they shared an aversion for communism (147-48).<sup>34</sup> By 1925, the Social Gospel came to be associated most closely with the United Church of Canada, created by the Methodists, Congregationalists, most Presbyterians, and a number of independent churches (154).

Despite the retrenchment of the Social Gospel movement, the creation of the United Church and the cultural dominance of the liberal mainstream Protestant churches meant that conservative evangelicals became cultural “outsiders.” In response, many turned their attention to creating institutions to further evangelism, missions, and personal holiness (Guenther 2008, 370). A minority, however, turned to fundamentalism, a movement that originated in the US and is one of three subcultures in American evangelicalism. The other two are the type of evangelicalism elucidated by Billy Graham and Pentecostalism (Nash 1990, 82).<sup>35</sup> While the fundamentalists exerted significant influence in the American evangelical subculture, the same did not occur in Canada (Stackhouse 1993, 12-13).

#### **1.4 Fundamentalism: A further rupture (1920s-1940s)**

Fundamentalism is a variant of evangelicalism concerned about the loss of Biblical foundations for civilization and is identified by its literal interpretation of the Bible, which is considered inerrant, its opposition to modernity, and its separatism (Hiller 1978, 194). According to Gauvreau, fundamentalism did not achieve the same dominance in Canada as it did in the US because in the nineteenth century Canadian Methodists and Presbyterians developed a biblical and activist theology that engaged with history rather than philosophy or natural theology. Gauvreau claims that this focus on history helped Canadian evangelicals avoid the more extreme variants of the fundamentalist/modernist rupture that occurred in the US and Britain in response to Darwinism, German higher

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<sup>33</sup> According to Hoover et al., Mennonite groups are generally less hostile to liberal social teaching than other evangelical denominations (2002, 355).

<sup>34</sup> Wright contends that many Protestant religious leaders in Canada became bitter critics of Lenin’s 1917 revolution and subsequent communist regime in Russia (1990, 147-48).

<sup>35</sup> (Neo)Pentecostal leaders include Pat Robertson (a charismatic Southern Baptist), Jimmy Swaggart (a pastor formerly in the Assemblies of God), and Oral Roberts (a neo-Pentecostal charismatic). Even in the heyday of these Pentecostal leaders, many American evangelicals did not perceive Pentecostals to be part of the evangelical mainstream (Nash 1990, 83).

criticism, and other modern challenges (1991).<sup>36</sup> Harry Hiller, a sociologist, suggests a number of additional explanations. First, the presence of British immigrants and Canadian religious leaders trained in Britain provided a counter-influence to American religious leaders and traditions. Second, Canada did not experience the same rapid industrialization as the US, with its resultant social dislocation and growth of cities. (Social dislocation tends to encourage religious innovation.) Third, the composition of Canadian evangelicalism differed from the US, particularly the lack of a sizeable Baptist fundamentalist contingent (1978, 194).

Canada's best-known fundamentalists are Toronto Baptist pastor T.T. Shields and Baptist pastor turned politician, William "Bible Bill" Aberhart. In the 1920s Shields led a splinter group out of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec and resigned his position on the Board of Governors of the Baptist McMaster University to protest its liberal theology (Stackhouse 1993a, 23-34). Dissenters who left the Convention established the Union of Regular Baptist Churches and the Fellowship of Independent Baptist Churches. While Shields worked within the Baptist Church, Aberhart moved into politics, creating Alberta's Social Credit Party, which won the 1935 provincial election and continued to lead the province until 1971. Aberhart was a fundamentalist who took many of his ideas from the British economist Clifford Hugh Douglas, particularly Douglas' belief that the international financial system exploited the majority of people. In the case of Alberta, the plight of farmers concerned Aberhart. He denounced the financial institutions in central Canada and sought to provide Albertans with more purchasing power by distributing "social credit," a stipend of \$25 per month to each citizen (Stackhouse 1993a, 42). Aberhart incorporated labour reform and medicare into his political platform (Wright 1990, 172, 184),<sup>37</sup> had a British socialist speak at his Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, and cared for his parishioners as they faced the economic crisis (Stackhouse 1993a, 42, 44). As J.W. Grant reminds us, responses to the Depression from "those of the right, which were most often products of a sectarian environment, blamed most of the ills of society on the improper regulation of money and credit and sought financial remedies within the capitalist system" (1988, 141). Grant charged evangelicals with being politically right wing because they lacked a critique of capitalism. Indeed, while Aberhart wanted monetary reform, he did not re-vision capitalism; he simply sought to

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<sup>36</sup> Hutchinson added to Gauvreau's analysis when he observed that the strong anti-German biases of Canadians due to their World War One experiences led them to reject all things German, including German Higher Criticism, thereby lessening the divisiveness of the modernist-fundamentalist split (1997, 25).

<sup>37</sup> Indeed, some scholars suggest that Aberhart shared a "common ideology" with Douglas and the CCF (Rawlyk 1991, 122-23).

make capitalism work better, in part by eliminating what he saw as economic parasites (Wright 1990, 184).

Both Aberhart and his successor Ernest Manning refused to privatize their faith and as premiers they continued to operate and host the *Back to God Hour*, a weekly radio broadcast first created by Aberhart in 1925. In addition to using the Bible to legitimate the Social Credit Party, Manning argued that God's sovereignty was the best tool with which to combat communism. He believed dictatorship, the persecution of the Jews, the establishment of the state of Israel, and the rise of the Soviet Union heralded the impending return of Jesus Christ. However, according to David Marshall, Manning rejected requests to "Christianize" public schools because he did not believe Christians should use the state to bring about Christian reforms. He preferred to work for individual conversion. Although Manning followed Aberhart's lead in establishing social programs, he believed the need for such programs indicated the decline of morality, the result of Christians abandoning their public responsibilities in favour of private religion (2001, 248-49).

Social Credit also became a political party in British Columbia, electing its first members to the provincial Legislature in 1952. Conservative Protestants, including fundamentalists, strongly supported the Social Credit. Initially Party leaders portrayed the Party "as a religious movement," complete with the song "O God our help in ages past" and a mischievous newspaper announcement that read: "Checking facilities for halos available" (Burkinshaw 1995, 196-97).

There are many theories about why the Social Credit appealed to Albertans and British Columbians. Political scientist Nelson Wiseman points to the number of American immigrants in the provinces, especially Alberta. He views the Social Credit as promoting "a radical 'populist' liberalism that stressed the individual rather than the community or the state" and appealed to rural Protestants, especially fundamentalists (1991, 416, 427). John Moir also linked political individualism with religious individualism, arguing that the appeal of the Social Credit lay in the "religion-based political conservatism of early Victorian Canadian Methodism, when support for Christian measures and Christian men, in that order, was advocated to replace partisan politics. Revivalistic spirit and techniques had a prominent place in Social Credit gatherings" (2002, 37). Moir suggested that the Social Credit was a radical reform movement that appealed to the republican leanings of conservative evangelicals, re-awakening their vision for a Christian nation. However, Bruce Guenther, a church historian who focuses on Canadian evangelicalism, disputed the notion that evangelicals supported Aberhart, noting that already prior to becoming premier Aberhart alienated many evangelicals with

his broad ecumenism.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Guenther argued, the Social Credit drew more members from the Church of England and the United Church than from evangelical churches (2000).

Clark provided a different perspective by tracing the changes in structural location inhabited first by Aberhart's Prophetic Bible Institute and then the party of Social Credit. For Clark, the Institute followed the development of a typical evangelical sect by seeking to isolate evangelicals from the worldly society, protesting large powerful churches, often with "creditor interests," and appealing to those who were economically marginalized. He maintained that such religious separatism easily led to political separatism and antipathy towards federal authority. However, when Aberhart formed the Social Credit party which then became the government, he and the party underwent a process of institutionalization and became more conservative rather than radical. For instance, in the 1944 provincial election, prominent business individuals and firms supported the party. Writing in 1945, Clark argued that whatever radicalism persisted in the party came from members who joined after its first election victory in 1935 and had little to do with the Prophetic Bible Institute (1945).

Through this process of institutionalization the Social Credit became part of the establishment. In this sense the Institute and the political party followed in the footsteps of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Baptists in Nova Scotia and Methodists in Upper Canada who moved towards legitimating the state. However, as both J.W. Grant and Clark noted, evangelicals did not develop specific positions on poverty, the state, and the relationship between faith and politics. Although conservative evangelicals remained active in their communities during the Depression, they did not engage in philosophical and political deliberations to explain why they participated as they did. Instead, they emphasized personal conversion as a solution to the economic problems, leading some to criticize Aberhart's lack of a specifically Christian approach to the Depression because he did not portray evangelism and conversion as answers to the economic crisis (Stackhouse 1993a, 43). The lack of political and economic deliberation suggests that evangelicals had reconciled themselves to some form of economic individualism. It also meant that they had few resources to help them respond to the decline of Christian cultural domination that followed World War II.

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<sup>38</sup> Stackhouse offers a similar analysis when he argues that Aberhart's early adoption of a teaching by a Calgary Pentecostal pastor who baptized only in the name of Jesus – and not the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – sparked controversy among evangelicals. Aberhart's self-identification as an apostle, his denunciation of other denominations, and his friendship with Catholics, Mormons, and those from the United Church further alienated him from other evangelicals (1993a, 39-44).

## **1.5 Post World War II changes: The decline of Christian cultural domination (1945-1980s)**

Although secularizing trends had been operating in society since the end of World War I, they became more apparent after World War II. Liberals and those involved in the market promoted the process of secularization as they chafed against religiously inspired restraints. The political and cultural elite became less religious and lobbied the various levels of government to curtail the privileges enjoyed by the Christian churches, including the removal of education from the domain of religious institutions (Bramadat and Seljak 2008a, 12-13; J.W. Grant 1988, 116). As a result, the state became more involved in people's lives and churches began to retreat to the private sphere.

J.W. Grant noted that initially evangelicals did not resist the state's pre-emption of their traditional role of caring for society or even indicate much awareness of its significance (1988, 177-180). Their church attendance remained strong throughout the 1950s, although Stackhouse noted "that there was less of a revival of genuine and lasting spirituality in the post-war boom than of a revival of general cultural conservatism and consumerism of which church involvement was a component" (1990, 206). In other words, the Christian churches did not lead culture; rather, they followed the general cultural trends toward conservatism and consumerism. At the same time, however, social institutions and the dominant culture continued to be influenced by Christian values (Bramadat and Seljak 2008a, 10).

Stackhouse cited the success of the evangelical pavilion at Expo '67, held in Montreal, as a pivotal moment for evangelical self-understanding. Expo '67 already had an ecumenical Christian pavilion planned and well in place. However, many evangelicals felt that it did not adequately reflect their Christian beliefs and insisted on constructing their own pavilion. Titled "Sermons from science," the pavilion became a major attraction, drawing 840,000 people into its main theatre during the six month fair and a total of 2.5 million by the time it closed its doors in 1975 (Stackhouse 1993a, 114-120). The success of the pavilion reassured evangelicals, perhaps falsely, that their beliefs had broad public support.

Yet such assurance was qualified by the social changes occurring at the time and embodied in new social policy drafted by the liberal elite. Although some of the Mennonite denominations were among the first of the evangelical denominations to become more intentionally engaged in politics in the



1950s (Bowen 2004, 189),<sup>39</sup> most of the others declined to do so until the late 1960s in response to legislation that liberalized divorce and made access to abortion and birth control easier. While the mainline Protestant churches supported the Bill, both evangelicals from a variety of denominations and Roman Catholics worried about the separation of morality from law (Egerton 2000, 97). These latter groups opposed abortion (especially the Catholics) and lobbied for more conservative social policy.

To bolster their position, evangelical denominations began to build the infrastructure needed to protect their orthodoxy and strengthen their ability to participate in the public square. They expanded their educational institutions,<sup>40</sup> created relief and development agencies, food banks, and crisis pregnancy centres, launched religious broadcasters, and set up some interdenominational and transdenominational organizations. While InterVarsity and the EFC transcended the mainline-evangelical divide, evangelical churches provided most of the leadership of the EFC from the 1970s on (Stackhouse 1993a, 184). In the 1960s and 1970s, InterVarsity leaders challenged evangelical students to expand their interpretation of Christian vocation beyond mission work to include all the jobs to which God called them. This shift indicated an expansion of evangelical interest from personal evangelism to the broader culture and society. Stackhouse suggested that in many cases the creation of these institutions was in response to the evangelical perception that society was increasingly secular and thus their creation was an example of how secularization and liberalism impacted evangelicalism (Stackhouse 1997, 56-59). In other words, it was the fear of secularism that drove evangelicals to become more intentionally involved in the public square. Guenther offers a slightly different interpretation, suggesting that the growth of evangelical churches in the 1960s gave evangelicals a sense of confidence and led them to act like cultural insiders. The creation of new institutions signified that evangelicals were ready to take on “a sense of responsibility for the character of Canadian society” (Guenther 2008, 373).

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<sup>39</sup> Not all Mennonites view themselves as evangelical. The Mennonite Brethren are more pietistically inclined and defined by some as evangelical and pacifist. The Mennonite Church Canada denomination is influenced by neo-Anabaptist thought and is more socially progressive on women’s issues (Loewen 2008; Guenther 2008, 393). Walter Klassen argues that Anabaptists are “Neither Catholic nor Protestant” but represent both traditions (2001).

<sup>40</sup> By the late 1980s, two evangelical seminaries (Vancouver’s Regent College and the Ontario Theological Seminary in Toronto) surpassed the United Church’s seminary (Emmanuel College) to become the largest seminaries in Canada (Stackhouse 1991, 259). Guenther suggests that because the Bible institutes and colleges focus on trans-denominational evangelicalism, they acculturate new immigrants more effectively than the earlier attempts of homogenization by nineteenth century evangelicals at the turn of the century (2008, 371).

Both Stackhouse and Guenther offer insights into the events of the time. As with the evangelicals examined by Clark, evangelicals of the 1960s and 1970s were moving away from their sectarian roots and becoming denominations, and here I use the term “denomination” in a sociological manner. According to Casanova, denominations are modern forms of organization with voluntary membership that adapt to the structural differentiation of the social spheres, emphasize religious individualism, and recognize the fact of religious pluralism. Denominations engage the world around them and create the institutions to do so (1994, 52-55, 71). In addition, they make fewer doctrinal and social demands on their members than sects. The point here is that just as evangelicals oriented themselves to society, society became more secular and began the process of de-Christianizing some elements of public policy. Evangelicals then had to decide whether they would work to keep Christian values dominant in the legal and political spheres or view themselves as one of the many voices in a pluralist society seeking to influence culture.<sup>41</sup> The tension between these two options continues to be reflected within the different elements of evangelicalism.

The expansion of evangelical organizations had four implications for the broader evangelical community. First, they quickly encountered bureaucratic, legal, and cultural roadblocks. For example, in the area of religious broadcasting, the state controlled the air-waves and refused to grant religious broadcasting licenses until 1987. These roadblocks in turn led evangelicals to become more involved in the public sphere and to develop arguments based on religious freedom. Second, the establishment of evangelical transdenominational institutions contributed to what Stackhouse identifies as the lack of an “elaborate theological sophistication” because evangelicals tended to seek only minimal theological agreement among their members (1993a, 198-99). This lack of theological sophistication contributed to the historical trajectory that pulled evangelicals to the religious, and even political, centre. Third, the absence of large evangelical foundations and wealthy business persons required these organizations to raise their own revenue. To do so, they had to appeal to the “broad middle” (201-02). Raising funds from a limited constituency encouraged evangelical organizations to avoid the extreme left and right and focus on the political centre as well as the middle of the evangelical constituency. Finally, there is little evidence that these transdenominational organizations helped the broader evangelical community develop a distinctly evangelical understanding of politics, the state, or

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<sup>41</sup> An example of one organization that sought to protect “Christian Canada” and rebuild a Christian moderate majority was Renaissance Canada, founded by Ken Campbell. Another is the Christian Heritage Party, a federal political party that espouses a pro-life platform and obtains its guiding principles from the Bible.

the market. Thus as evangelicals became increasingly involved in politics, they lacked a political theology.

All of this evangelical activity coincided with the rise of the American Religious Right. Although American fundamentalists abandoned the public sphere in the 1920s, the perceived moral decline of American culture and the teaching of evolution in public schools pushed them back to political engagement in the late 1970s and they quickly became the “backbone” of the Religious Right (Wilcox 2000, 30). Initially they, like many evangelicals, supported Jimmy Carter in the 1976 presidential election (Marsden 2006, 242) but Carter’s support for gay rights and his refusal to contest *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision affirming the right to abortion, led them to consider other choices. Carter’s intention to penalize insufficiently desegregated private schools further angered evangelicals, and was perhaps the immediate issue that drove evangelicals back into the public sphere (Gilgoff 2007, 79). Southern Baptist fundamentalist preacher and televangelist Jerry Falwell mobilized other fundamentalist pastors and founded the Moral Majority (1979-1989), a political lobby organization. These pastors were generally intolerant of Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, evangelicals, and even other Baptist churches (Wilcox 2000, 36). Falwell led the fundamentalists into the Republican Party, resulting in the moniker “the Religious Right.” Ronald Reagan won the 1980 presidential election with the support of “61 percent of ‘born again’ white Protestants” (Cizik 2005, 51).<sup>42</sup> In 1984 he gained an even greater majority of the white Protestant vote (52). During Reagan’s administration evangelical organizations become political insiders, with Reagan addressing the National Association of Evangelicals in 1983 and 1984.<sup>43</sup> Protecting “an orthodox Christian vision” and the “natural family” became central issues to all Christian Right organizations (Buss and Herman 2003, xviii), including the Moral Majority and Focus on the Family.<sup>44</sup> For many Religious Right organizations, protecting the family required a public rejection of feminism, particularly its support for abortion. In addition, Religious Right organizations lobbied for prayer in public schools and the teaching of creationism in science classes while opposing the gay and lesbian campaign for civil rights (Wilcox 2000, 37). The re-election of Reagan in 1984 led some supporters of the Moral

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<sup>42</sup> Cizik does not provide the sources of these numbers.

<sup>43</sup> Reagan appointed Dr. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, to the Commission on Pornography (Gilgoff 2007, 32). While leaders of the Religious Right used their status as insiders in the Republican Party to further their religious movements and cultural ideologies, professional politicians used the Religious Right to develop support for their conservative vision of the US (Marsden 2006, 247).

<sup>44</sup> Ten years after its inception in 1977, the budget of Focus on the Family was \$34 million. By 1995 it was more than \$100 million (Gilgoff 2007, 27). In 2005 Dobson resigned as the President of Focus on the Family.

Majority to become complacent and a series of widely publicized sex scandals of several high-profile televangelists in the late 1980s gradually made fundraising more difficult (37-38). In 1989 Falwell disbanded the Moral Majority.

In the political vacuum left by Falwell's departure Pat Robertson founded the Christian Coalition. Like the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition promoted "family values" and worked to eliminate abortion rights. Unlike the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition developed an ecumenical base of evangelicals as well as conservative Catholics, Jews, and African Americans. It mobilized the laity and professional activists rather than the preachers. During elections it distributed voter guides in churches, led voter mobilization campaigns, originally ran "stealth campaigns" in which those running for office hid their connection with the Religious Right, and adopted the "rights" language of liberalism. Rather than recalling a Christian America, the Christian Coalition talked of the rights of the unborn and the rights of the parents to educate their children in school systems that share their values (Wilcox 2000, 42-43). The Christian Coalition further differed from the Moral Majority in its broader mandate to include issues of taxes, government waste, crime, and health care, as well as abortion and homosexuality (Gilgoff 2007, 99). Yet it too ensconced itself in the Republican Party, and in 2000 evangelicals supported George W. Bush's "faith-based and community initiatives," his desire to protect heterosexual marriage, and his opposition to partial-birth abortions (Cizik 2005, 61-63).

In its effort to nominate sympathetic conservative politicians, the Moral Majority urged Religious Right organizations to form coalitions with such secular conservative groups as gun owners, English First groups, and anti-tax groups (Rozell 1997, 242). Elements within Christian Right organizations, like some within the Republican Party, combined their social conservatism with economic neo-liberalism. Based on classical liberalism, neo-liberalism emerged in Western economic theory in the 1980s and 1990s as an economic system based on Adam Smith's maxim that nations maximize their well-being by ensuring that individual citizens are able to freely participate in the market (Hoksbergen and Madrid 1997, 39). This maxim often entailed less government intervention in the market, free trade, and economic privatization. According to Steve Patten, neo-liberal "governance rejects any extension of social rights and limits citizenship rights to the negative liberties associated with classical market liberal notions of civil and political rights" (2001, 144). Those who worked with the poor and disadvantaged became increasingly worried about the future of social programs and the health of their clients in an increasingly neo-liberal American state.

Many Canadians who watched the politicization of abortion, the family, economics, and gay and lesbian rights that occurred in the US with the rise of the Religious Right became concerned that Canadian evangelicals were a northern version of the same political causes. This concern was heightened by the involvement of some high profile evangelicals in the formation of the Reform Party. But unlike the Republican Party in the US, which has received an overwhelming majority of evangelical votes since the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, the Reform Party received less than half of all evangelical votes throughout the 1990s. However, “Religious Right sympathizers” supported Reform at twice the national average (Hoover 1997).

### **1.6 Public unease about evangelical political engagement (1990s-2000s)**

Preston Manning and others created the Reform Party in 1987 as a response to pent-up feelings of alienation in the Western provinces and to address constitutional and fiscal issues (Flanagan 2007).<sup>45</sup> Ten years later Reform became the official opposition with 60 members in its caucus. Like his father Ernest Manning, the long-serving Social Credit leader of Alberta, Preston Manning publicly, but perhaps more cautiously, expressed his faith. Unlike his father, Preston’s faith was more broadly evangelical rather than fundamentalist. He claimed to support the separation of church and state but not the separation of faith and politics. In a carefully worded chapter in *The New Canada* (1992), Manning described how the Christian understanding of reconciliation as expounded in Christ’s sacrifice on the cross impacts all areas of life, including one’s political commitments. While he insisted Reform was a secular party that did not have a hidden religious agenda, he also resolutely claimed, “there *is* a relationship between private and public morality, between what one believes and how one responds to public policy issues, between personal spiritual resources (or the lack of them) and how one copes with political stress. And these relationships should be openly explored” (103, italics in original). He believed that voters have a right to ask of those vying for the right to represent them in Parliament about their deepest held convictions. To assuage voters’ concern about the religious ethos of Reform, Manning argued that Reform’s dedication to following the majority view on social and moral issues protected the public against the imposition of minority values upon the Canadian society (105-09).

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<sup>45</sup> According to Flanagan, prior to the 1990s, Party leaders did not want to debate social issues and tried to “neutralize” them or bracket them out of the discussion (2007).

As Reform's leader, Manning was not a Christian culture warrior. He refused to use religion as a political tool and did not view the Christian community as an interest group. He did not allow Reform Party memberships to be sold at church gatherings nor did he publish political material specifically aimed at the Christian, or more specifically the evangelical, community. Manning held that such a politicization of the church could destroy Party, or even national, unity and he pointed to the harm that could be done to Christianity if an MP who openly campaigned on a Christian agenda subsequently made an error in judgement or was caught lying. In addition, he argued that

if a self-professed Christian leader takes political advantage of the trust of the Christian community, making promises and commitments to them which in the end he is unable to honour, he plants seeds of disillusionment and mistrust, not just among the public at large but in churches and faith organizations, which will yield acrimony and division for years to come. (2002, 150)

Manning maintained this position in 1997 even when Party strategists reminded him that Reform did not capture a "fair share" of the Christian vote in 1993 (149).

Manning's interpretation of the role of religion in Reform was echoed by former Reform insider Tom Flanagan, who insisted that during his involvement with Reform in the early 1990s, "nothing, literally nothing was ever discussed in religious terms ... everything was discussed in political terms." Although many members directly loyal to Manning were evangelical and evangelicalism was often the "glue that held people together," Flanagan argued that the evangelical faith did not influence party policies, evidenced in the Party's "agnostic" position on the issue of abortion. The difference between Reform and the NDP, and at times Liberal Party, he contended, was that Reform was not hostile to religion (2007).

Yet Reform did not receive the support of the majority of evangelicals across Canada (Hoover 1997), perhaps because the Party was too closely associated with the western provinces. The evangelical tendency to hold politically centrist views on a number of issues was revealed in an Angus Reid/Rawlyk poll from 1993 that documented evangelicals held similar views about immigration, militarism, and politics as the general population. In an interview with the EFC's *Faith Today*, George Rawlyk expressed his surprise at the results, saying, "up to now evangelicals were painted as a somewhat redneck group but obviously this isn't the case" (Swift 1993, 23).

In addition to this mixture of religion and politics, some political pundits feared what they perceived to be Reform's commitment to neo-liberal economics, revealed in its desire for smaller

government. However, Reform was not the only Party to adopt neo-liberal policies. So did the Progressive Conservative Party (PC) under Prime Minister Mulroney (1984-1993). Mulroney's Finance Minister, Michael Wilson, focused on deficit reduction, privatization, deregulation, free trade, and limiting the universality of some social programs, including Old Age Security (Patten 2001, 139). Despite this move of the PCs to the economic right, Hugh Segal, a former Chief of Staff to Mulroney, distinguished Reform from the PC Party by labelling Reformers as "neoconservatives," identified as those who take "their inspiration from the excessive classical exaltation of the 'individual' in nineteenth-century liberalism" and who value "freedom as the core value — far more than responsibility to each other or to the common good" (1997, 3).<sup>46</sup> Segal's assumption that the Reform Party had a sizeable strain of Christian fundamentalism (Segal 2006, 171) and the allusion by others that Reform was "an 'evangelical party'" (Hoover 1997, 201) suggest that some political commentators connected evangelicals with the neo-liberal views they saw within the Party.

When Reformers could not attract significant electoral support outside of the western provinces, Manning initiated a campaign to "unite the right" in 2000. The campaign disbanded the Reform Party and formed a new party, the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance (Alliance Party). However, the Progressive Conservative Party under Joe Clark rebuffed Manning's overture. According to Patten, Clark's refusal stemmed from his roots in Red Toryism and his emphasis on social obligation and community (2001, 142-43).

Party members also rebuffed Manning when they chose Stockwell Day to lead the Alliance Party. Day's election caused even greater consternation among the political and social elites than Manning ever did. A former Pentecostal pastor and an MLA in Ralph Klein's neo-liberal Progressive Conservative government in Alberta, Day was more open about his socially conservative views than Manning. While an MLA, he unsuccessfully attempted to end public funding of abortions in Alberta. During the 2000 election, the media and the Liberal Party attacked Day's evangelical faith. They mocked his belief in creationism as portrayed in Genesis 1 and his decision not to campaign on Sundays. *Maclean's*, Canada's English-language weekly news magazine, published a picture of Day on its July 10, 2000 cover with the words "How scary" beside the picture. A Liberal Party strategist used a purple dinosaur doll named Barney to ridicule Day's belief in a "young earth," that is, earth as

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<sup>46</sup> Under Paul Martin, first as Finance Minister and then as Prime Minister, the Liberal Party also moved to the economic right. See Steve Patten, "Political ambition and corporate-friendly liberalism: three perspectives on Paul Martin," *Inroads: A Journal of Opinion* Summer-Fall (2004). Available online at [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_7074/is/ai\\_n28244969/pg\\_5/?tag=mantle/skin;content](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7074/is/ai_n28244969/pg_5/?tag=mantle/skin;content) (accessed May 6, 2011).

6,000 years old. Hedy Fry, then Liberal minister for Multiculturalism and for the Status of Women, not only claimed that Day's belief in Jesus as the God of the entire universe offended adherents of other religions but also suggested that Day would use political power to force Canadians to accept the belief. Hoover noted that during this time the media often used the term "fundamentalist" in stories covering the Alliance Party, thereby identifying Manning, Day, and other social conservatives as un-Canadian. Many evangelicals, including evangelical constitutional lawyer Iain Benson, interpreted this backlash as part of a broader anti-Christian bias that Benson called a "velvet oppression." In response to this perceived bias, the EFC and representatives of the Jewish, Catholic, and Muslim communities released a statement calling for the media to practice more toleration of religious beliefs (Heinrichs 2000; O'Leary 2001; Dawes 2000; Hoover 2000).

The media's unease with politically engaged evangelicalism continued to manifest itself after the 2000 election. When the mayor of Regina proclaimed June 2, 2001 to be a Heterosexual Family Pride Day, Michelle Landsberg, a journalist at the *Toronto Star*, described evangelicals "as a group that 'breeds ... toxic intolerance' and 'gives license to the kind of thugs who would beat a Matthew Shepard to death because he was gay.'" In response to a complaint by the EFC, the Ontario Press Council deemed the column to be unnecessarily hurtful (*Faith Today* 2002, 15). During the 2004 election that pitted Stephen Harper's Conservatives against Paul Martin's Liberals, Liberal pollsters in Ontario asked voters if they would be more or less likely to vote for the Conservative Party if they knew it had been taken over by conservative Christians (Clemenger 2004a). In addition, the Liberals accused the Conservatives of holding a right-wing, if not fundamentalist, "secret agenda" (Hoover 2006). As the Conservatives continued to organize after the election, the *Globe and Mail* ran two stories about a number of ridings in which conservative Christians, mostly evangelicals, won the Conservative riding nomination, thereby suggesting a link between a supposed Religious Right and the Conservatives (Galloway 2005; Simpson 2005).<sup>47</sup>

The strongest media reaction against evangelicals occurred during the same-sex marriage debate that occurred between 2003 and 2005. While conservative Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, and Sikhs opposed the change, evangelicals formed the strongest and most vocal opposition. In response,

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<sup>47</sup> In response to such media coverage, Janet Epp Buckingham, the EFC's former Director of Law and Public Policy, noted, "anyone who has ever been on a church committee knows how hard it is to conceive of an Evangelical conspiracy! We have trouble agreeing on the colour of floor tile for the foyer. And with 39 denominations under the EFC's umbrella, we know that while we have many core areas of agreement, we also



progressive elements within the media and academy again referred to evangelicals as fundamentalists, un-Canadian, and intolerant. For example, Maude Barlow wrote in her forum on the *Maclean's* website that

powerful far-right religious groups in the US, such as the Christian Coalition and Focus on the Family (whose leader James Dobson has backed politicians who called for the execution of abortion providers), have entered the political arena to impose their deeply conservative and narrowly moralistic views on the larger society. They want every breathing “liberal” removed from every level of office, from local school boards to the Supreme Court, and they are well on their way to success. (2006)

Barlow listed the EFC as one of the “new” evangelical groups “with a political mission.” The EFC’s Janet Epp Buckingham responded by pointing out that the EFC was hardly a new organization and was definitely not American. She alerted Barlow to the latest poll at the time which revealed that 35 percent of evangelicals supported the Conservatives, 30 percent the Liberals, and 20 percent the NDP. These polling numbers, Epp Buckingham noted, not only reflected the national numbers but revealed slightly more support for the NDP than the national average (2006).<sup>48</sup> A quick glance at the letters sent by EFC staff members to various newspaper and magazine editors in response to media portrayals of evangelicals as intolerant and fundamentalist during the same-sex marriage debate reveal the extent to which such characterizations occurred.<sup>49</sup> Clemenger worried that the enmity evangelicals felt from the mainstream media and “Ottawa” during the debate might push at least some of them away from political participation (Johnson 2005).

In his study of how the CBC, CTV, and Global television networks covered stories involving evangelicals over a 25 year period, communications specialist David Haskell found that when evangelicals espoused a position on an issue that differed from the perspective typically held by journalists, the resulting coverage was more negative than positive. According to Haskell, this occurred during the same-sex marriage debate. Referring to research that indicated journalists strongly support homosexual rights, he claimed that the manner in which many journalists covered

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have many distinctives.” Available online at <http://www.christianity.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=3006> (accessed January 30, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> However, the campaign against gay and lesbian marriage employed some tactics typically used in the US, such as direct mail campaigns and “American money flowed northward to support the fight” (Johnson 2005).

<sup>49</sup> For examples see <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1410> and <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1411> (accessed January 30, 2011).

evangelicals during the debate “evidenced the greatest signs of anti-evangelical bias” (Wilfrid Laurier Brantford 2007).

When Stephen Harper won a minority government in January 2006 with significant support from those who regularly attend church, not only English-speaking Protestants but also Catholics in Quebec (Grenville 2006), some columnists worried about his connections to the evangelical community. For example, Marci McDonald reflected some of the public’s concern about Harper in an article she published in *The Walrus* magazine entitled “Stephen Harper and the Theo-cons: The rising clout of Canada’s religious right.” The title reflected McDonald’s concern that Harper was the harbinger of a culture war. She portrayed Canadian evangelicals as power seekers, members of an American-style Religious Right, and culture warriors. McDonald argued that Harper actively courted individuals and organizations of the Religious Right, such as the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada established by Focus on the Family (Canada) and the National House of Prayer. McDonald wondered whether these voices were influencing Harper’s views on day care, Israel, and the Kyoto Protocol. The issue for McDonald was not whether Harper himself ascribed to the views of the Religious Right, but whether he owed them political favours and therefore was their captive, just as she perceived George Bush to be the captive of the American Religious Right (McDonald 2006). Of course, not all commentators agreed with McDonald. For example, Robert Sibley, a senior journalist at the *Ottawa Citizen*, charged McDonald with “secular bigotry bordering on fear-mongering -- all with a view to delegitimizing religion as a source of or inspiration for political life and ensuring the suppression of any moral or spiritual concerns that don’t fit the liberal-progressive consensus.” He was particularly incensed with the lack of direct evidence provided by McDonald and her implications about conspiracies (2008).

McDonald’s link between Harper and the Conservative Party with the American Religious Right was also disputed. According to Hoover, Harper “is not a natural culture-warrior” and under his leadership “the Conservative Party has consistently given social conservatives only a modest place at the table” (2006). At the Party’s annual general meeting in March 2005, members voted to retain the party’s support for traditional heterosexual marriage (although it allowed for the possibility of civil unions for homosexuals) but dropped its opposition to abortion “under Harper’s clear leadership” (Segal 2006, 197). As opposition leader, Harper supported the traditional definition of marriage<sup>50</sup> but

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<sup>50</sup> For Harper’s speech in the House of Commons against Bill C-38, the same sex marriage Bill, in 2005, see <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/archive/ldn/2005/feb/050217b> (accessed January 30, 2011).

as Prime Minister he demonstrated little commitment to address the issue. When Parliament defeated a motion to reopen the same-sex marriage debate on December 7, 2006, Harper indicated that he would not attempt to re-open it in the future (CTV 2006).

Ultimately, both the political culture of Canada and the diversity of evangelical political opinion make the emergence of an American-style Religious Right in Canada highly unlikely. While many Canadian evangelicals tend to support socially conservative positions, the Canadian political culture and their desire to participate in public debates pushes them toward the political centre. For instance, in 2003 an Ipsos Reid poll found that evangelicals, like all Canadians, ranked “Supporting Canadian children living in poverty” as the most important priority for the Christian church. “Preventing the exploitation of children in pornography and the sex trade in Canada and the world” and “Hoping to reduce homelessness in Canada” were the next two concerns for all Canadians, including evangelicals (Van Ginkel 2003, 8). Despite their social conservatism on the moral issues of abortion and same-sex marriage, in 2003 evangelicals shared many of the same social concerns as other Canadians.

## **1.7 Themes from Canadian history and the EFC**

As this overview of evangelicals in Canadian political history indicates, evangelicals have a long tradition of engagement in Canadian society, contributing to the identification and establishment of such Canadian values as accommodation and toleration. Indeed, Paul Marshall, writing on behalf of the EFC, suggested that evangelicalism is “near the heart of Canadian identity.” Hoping “to dispel the notion that evangelicalism in Canada is a stereotyped import of the worst of cultures from the American South” (1992, 1), Marshall traced how the Canadian balance of order and community with individual freedom reflects the evangelical balance of individual conversion and social activism. For example, he described how the religious revivals in the Maritimes during the eighteenth century balanced spiritual rebirth with social activity; how Methodists in Ontario balanced “personal and social transformation” by defending religious freedom and respecting authority; and how evangelicals in Western Canada helped establish the Social Credit Party and the socialist-oriented Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). For Marshall, this evangelical inheritance cannot be ignored because it is a significant aspect of Canadian identity.

Three themes emerge from the history presented in this chapter that are relevant to an examination of how the EFC participates in Canadian public life. First, Marshall and others within the EFC insist that Canadian evangelicalism is distinct from its American counterpart. This chapter suggests that

such differences are largely due to differences in demographics, history, and the political culture of the two countries. The presence of political Toryism in Canada prompted many evangelicals to accept and work with an interventionist state. As Hoover et al. note, the Canadian political tradition emphasizes “moderation and deferential appreciation for the state and its program” (2002, 353). They add that while twentieth century evangelicals on both sides of the border share the same antipathy toward abortion, euthanasia, and same-sex marriage, Canadian evangelicals do not share the American disdain of (big) government. Rather, “Canadian evangelicals’ attitudes about redistribution are similar to Canadian non-evangelicals’ attitudes, and both are, on average, less opposed to big government than are U.S. non-evangelicals or Catholics. US evangelicals are even more sharply opposed” (363). In other words, Canada evangelicals in general do not adopt neo-liberalism. The difference may be attributed to the strength of fundamentalism in the US and the general anti-statist tone of American political culture (366-67).

Several commentators follow Rawlyk in ascribing to Canadian evangelicals an “irenic” nature, defined by Sam Reimer “as attitudes towards other individuals or groups that are not sectarian, partisan, prejudiced, or patriarchal” (2003, 132). This irenic nature may contribute to evangelical political moderation in Canada. Environics pollster Michael Adams provides an example of Canadian irenicism when he notes that Canadians in the Prairie Provinces indicate the highest support for traditional gender identity, family structures, and social duty. However,

whereas in the United States high levels of these traditional trends tend to go hand in hand with exclusionary and discriminatory values such as *Sexism* and *Xenophobia*, in Canada’s Prairie region we find no such intolerant underbelly to the belief in traditional categories of identity. Tradition without intolerance seems a rare combination in the world these days. (Adams, Langstaff, and Jamieson 2003, 85, italics in original)

Given the strength of evangelicalism in the Prairie Provinces,<sup>51</sup> there is no reason to think that evangelicals are not included in this description.

Hoover provides four explanations for why Canadian evangelicals are more moderate than their American counterparts. First, Canadian Mennonite<sup>52</sup> and Reformed churches, with their social justice

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<sup>51</sup> The Prairie Provinces are home to 27 per cent of all Canadian evangelicals who in turn comprise 20 percent of the Prairie population (Hoover et al. 2002, 360n7).

<sup>52</sup> The strong influence of Mennonites differentiates Canadian from American evangelicalism (Stackhouse 1994, 383). The Brethren are also a sizeable contingent of British evangelicalism (Bebbington 1997, 40).

traditions, are over-represented in Canadian evangelicalism. Second, Canadian fundamentalists make up a smaller proportion of evangelicalism. Third, the Canadian political system reinforces irenicism because “its rather elitist methods of dealing with interest groups and social movement organizations, allows for civil forums of communication, such as parliamentary committees and special commissions, but can and often does greet populist ‘outsider’ tactics with polite indifference.”<sup>53</sup> To be accepted in the public square, then, one must be heard as a moderate voice. Fourth, the Canadian state regulates the content of evangelical radio and television programs, although the lack of aggressive radio personalities may be attributed to a generally more moderate Canadian political culture (1997, 208-10). However, Hoover does not mention another important factor. Given the small size of their movement, Canadian evangelicals often work in coalitions, either across evangelical denominations or with other religious groups. For example, the EFC joined efforts with the Catholics on the abortion debate and with Hindus and Muslims in an effort to gain public funds for religious schools in Ontario. This collaboration diminishes both inter-denominational and inter-religious conflict.<sup>54</sup>

The second important theme that emerges from this chapter is that the presence of Toryism may help explain the nature and speed of Canada’s secularization process. Combating secularism, or a variant thereof, is a *raison d’être* of the EFC. In the nineteenth century, more Canadians than Americans attended church. Until the 1950s Christian beliefs informed public policy, leading J.W. Grant to suggest that Canada emerged late out of the Victorian era (1988, 180). However, from the 1960s on, fewer Canadians attended church and self-identified as Christian. As Bowen notes, “secularization in the form of disengagement from organized religion came relatively late to Canada, but it has swept through with a vengeance” (2004, 14). The American situation is the reverse: at the end of the twentieth century more Americans attended church and self-identified as Christian.<sup>55</sup> Mark Noll suggests that Toryism, with its group-oriented and traditional views, and the proto-establishment privileges enjoyed by the Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian churches, are responsible for the rapid secularization of Canadian society. He believes that “the forces of modernity ... have worked *through*

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<sup>53</sup> For more information on how the Canadian political system limits evangelical political activism, see Jonathan Malloy (2004).

<sup>54</sup> There are signs of moderation in the American religious right as well. For example, the National Association of Evangelicals is becoming more involved in environmental issues (Kirkpatrick 2007).

<sup>55</sup> However, as Noll cautions his readers, church attendance does not indicate religiosity and higher church attendance in the US does not necessarily indicate a more Christian country (1992, 549). In addition, given the continued dominance of Christian culture operative within American civil religion, levels of attendance may be exaggerated as Americans adjust their answers to poll questions in order to conform to expected religious behaviour (Reimer 1995).

the communal, top-down structures [in Canada], while they have worked *alongside* the more fragmented, populist structures of American churches” (1992, 549, italics in original). Noll summarizes the difference as the US having a form of secularization within the churches whereas Canada has a type that takes people out of the churches (550).<sup>56</sup>

The third theme is that the political and theological diversity among evangelicals compels the EFC, which represents approximately one-third of Canada’s three million evangelicals (including most of the largest denominations), to generally develop centrist positions in response to issues. At the same time, the lack of twentieth century evangelical philosophical thought on poverty, capitalism, the nature of the state, and the relationship between church and state makes policy development more difficult for the EFC. As suggested earlier, the lack of such deliberations may indicate that evangelicals have reconciled themselves to some forms of economic individualism. The lack of philosophical reflection and the diversity of political views among contemporary evangelicals prompted EFC leaders to embark on an education campaign to help evangelicals interpret Canadian culture. Taken one step further, this interpretation and the subsequent policy recommendations contribute to a national Canadian evangelical identity, the subject of the next chapter.

## 1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined Canada’s history and political culture, which had a tendency to move individuals and organizations engaged in the public square to the political centre. I argued that evangelicals have been no exception, although the position they occupy is centre-right rather than centre-left. British Toryism, immigration patterns, and the British parliamentary system helped moderate the individualism preached by the itinerant evangelical preachers who came from the US in the nineteenth century. Indeed, nineteenth century evangelicalism contributed to the religious accommodation required for Confederation and helped establish a consensus among Protestants that lasted in some form until the 1920s. When the consensus collapsed, conservative evangelicals did not completely abandon the public square. Nor did they adopt *en masse* the fundamentalism of Shields and Aberhart or the neo-liberalism of the American Religious Right. Instead, Canadian evangelicals evidenced a variety of political commitments across the political spectrum and did not identify

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<sup>56</sup> In 2006 Noll expanded his analysis to include the new intellectual movements that swept particularly the Roman Catholic and United Churches in the 1960s, including the Second Vatican Council, as causes for Canada’s rapid secularization.

themselves with one political party. As the next chapter reveals, the EFC reflected the same commitment to the political centre.

## Chapter 2

### The history of the EFC: Contributing to a Canadian evangelical identity

As the EFC's Executive Director, Brian Stiller did more than direct the operations of the organization. He helped Canadian evangelicals refine their understanding of the role of religion in the public square and interpret the secularizing trends they saw in the culture. The emphasis on these secularizing trends played a key role in persuading evangelicals to become politically engaged if they wanted public policy to reflect, at least to some degree, traditional Christian norms and values.

This move towards political engagement did not go unchallenged. For example, John Stackhouse, in his study of the EFC and its American counterpart the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), argued that both organizations assumed the necessity of engaging in politics despite the fact that not all evangelicals thought political involvement was a priority (1995b, 176, 178).<sup>57</sup> In addition, he charged that at times the two organizations took positions on issues for which there was no complete consensus among evangelicals. As a result,

rather than truly representing all those who could have agreed with their broadly inclusive statements of faith and purpose, they ended up representing a particular kind of evangelical Christianity, and in a kind of ironic and partially self-fulfilling prophecy were granted title to the term [evangelicalism] without gaining the much larger constituencies they had hoped for. (176)

Specifically, Stackhouse pointed out that most of the members of the Canadian Baptist Federation and the Lutheran Church-Canada were not EFC members (172). Given the diversity of views within the evangelical community about the nature of evangelicalism and its role in society, Stackhouse questioned whether any organization could legitimately claim to represent the broad evangelical community on a variety of issues (173-77).

John Redekop, a former president of the EFC's General Council (its previous governing body), disagreed, claiming that Stackhouse's view of representation was too limited. While granting that the

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<sup>57</sup> In his article Stackhouse noted a number of differences between the EFC and the NAE. First, Canadian Mennonites were more involved in the EFC than American Anabaptists were in the NAE (1995b, 162). Second,



EFC could never claim to represent the rank and file of individual congregations, he insisted that the organization nevertheless represented the common interests of denominational leaders, the decision-makers who joined forces to further their common interests. According to Redekop, then, denominations maintained their individual identities and purposes while working together on certain issues. He claimed that just as in politics, “when you elect leaders you trust them to make decisions and that’s how EFC works” (2008).

A key issue in the debate between Stackhouse and Redekop was the degree to which the EFC contributed to the creation of an evangelical identity. On the one hand, Stackhouse’s article from 1995 suggested that the EFC’s conception of evangelicalism elevated a particular constituency within the broader evangelical community. On the other hand, Redekop argued that the EFC represented the common views of the evangelical leaders. In this chapter I trace the development of the EFC from its inception in 1964 to 2006 in an effort to determine the degree to which the EFC helped create a particular evangelical identity. The question necessitates that I look at the theological, political, and philosophical influences on the organization’s presidents. Given the lack of common evangelical conceptions of such issues as poverty, economics, and the nature of the state as discussed in Chapter 1, the adoption by EFC leaders of a particular understanding of, for example, the state, would suggest that the EFC indeed interpreted evangelicalism in a specific manner. I limit my study to the EFC presidents, for as Doug Koop, the editor of *Christian Week*, observed:<sup>58</sup> “The EFC is greatly shaped by the personality of its leader” (1998). While this statement applies more to Stiller than his two successors, the authority to make decisions and create policy has increasingly come to reside in the EFC’s staff, meaning that the presidents’ assumptions and beliefs are important indicators of the organization’s policies. I conclude the chapter by returning to the debate between Stackhouse and Redekop.

This chapter is the second of two chapters that provide the historical background to the rest of this thesis. It acts as a bridge between a general Canadian evangelical history as outlined in chapter 1 and the examination of how EFC leaders interacted with secularism as studied in chapter 3. These interactions with secularism comprised the context from which EFC leaders developed a model of

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the EFC did not portray itself in opposition to the Canadian Council of Churches as the NAE did against the National Council of Churches (170-71).

<sup>58</sup> *Christian Week* is an evangelical periodical published twice a month. Besides the denominational publications, it is the only Canadian alternative to the EFC’s *Faith Today* as a source for evangelical perspectives and news.

political engagement, protected religious freedom, and promoted human dignity and traditional marriage, the subjects of chapters 4 through 6. In short, this chapter describes the philosophical and theological assumptions of the EFC leaders as they interacted with Canadian public institutions and the complex issues that at times divided not only evangelicals but all Canadians.

## 2.1 Creating the EFC

Pentecostal pastor Harry Faught founded the EFC in 1964, with significant support from Oswald J. Smith, founder of The People's Church, a missionary-oriented church in Toronto. Both Faught and Oswald had connections with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in the US.<sup>59</sup> Faught encountered the American organization while studying at Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas and he wanted to develop a similar organization in Canada (Stackhouse 1995b, 161). In fact, one of the founders of the NAE travelled with Faught in 1967 on a national tour in an effort to increase the EFC's membership (Kydd 1997, 298).<sup>60</sup> Faught envisioned the primary purpose of the EFC as bringing evangelicals from the mainline and evangelical churches together for mutual support and worship, hence the inclusion of the term "fellowship" in the name of the organization.<sup>61</sup> To encourage evangelicals from the mainline churches to join, Faught insisted that membership, in contrast to the NAE, be individual rather than congregational (this policy was later amended to allow individuals, denominations, and organizations to join).<sup>62</sup> Consequently, three of the first six EFC presidents of the EFC's General Council were leaders in the Presbyterian Church of Canada (Kydd 1997, 298), a mainline Protestant rather than an evangelical denomination. In the early years of the EFC a variety of groups provided limited administrative support, including the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada,

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<sup>59</sup> Fundamentalists created the NAE in 1942 to promote evangelism and counteract the public influence of the Federal Council of Churches (FCC). Within a decade its leaders referred to themselves as "evangelical" in order to distinguish themselves from the separatist fundamentalists. For an in-depth history of the NAE, see Cizik 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Carl Henry helped found the NAE, Fuller Theological Seminary, and the magazine *Christianity Today*. During his Canadian trip he discussed the "God is dead" philosophy (Fieguth 2004, 31).

<sup>61</sup> Redekop attempted to have the term "fellowship" replaced with "alliance" but received little support (2008).

<sup>62</sup> At the EFC's 1969 convention, 749 people attended, with 202 identifying themselves as Presbyterian, 63 as Anglican, and 47 as United Church (Minutes of the General Council, April 15, 1969 as quoted by Stackhouse in 1993a, 284n5). Since the mid-1970s, however, the top leadership has come from the evangelical denominations (172). In an interview John Redekop recalled the active participation of a number of people in the early years who represented a variety of evangelical denominations, most notably Robert Thompson from the Evangelical Free Church who also served as leader of the federal Social Credit Party from 1960-1967; Gerald Vandezande, a member of the Christian Reformed Church; historian Charles Tipp of the Fellowship Baptists; and Reverend Merv Saunders of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (2008).

Citizens for Public Justice, an organization with roots in the Reformed tradition, and the Mennonite Central Committee Canada (Redekop 2008).

The EFC's original constitution noted its opposition to theological liberalism, spiritual nihilism, and apostasy (likely referring to the then popular "God is dead" movement) while its statement of purpose outlined its commitment to furthering the gospel. It adopted the statement of faith of the World Evangelical Fellowship, which is a generic listing of the primary theological tenets of the evangelical faith but does not specifically refer to the Bible as inerrant (see Appendix B). To support the evangelical community and engage the culture, EFC leaders created commission to study such issues as theology, inter-church relations, Christian education, social action, public relations, and foreign missions (Stackhouse 1995b, 161-63).

Over time three Protestant denominations came to influence the EFC in significant ways, of which two joined the organization in its early formative years. The Pentecostal Church of Canada<sup>63</sup> and the Mennonite Brethren joined the EFC almost immediately upon its inception, with the latter being the first Mennonite group to do so (Guenther 1997, 233). In 1979 the Christian Reformed Church joined (Stackhouse 1993a, 187n31) after much internal debate in which the denomination's leaders had to be convinced that the EFC was not promoting a fundamentalist agenda<sup>64</sup> and was committed to cultural engagement and intellectual rigor (Tangelder 1968). According to Stackhouse, these three traditions continue to inform the "cultural outlooks" operative within the EFC: 1) the revivalist/ evangelistic culture that focuses on evangelism and wants a non-interfering state; 2) the Reformed tradition that understands Christianity as transformative and desires involvement with the state and other institutions; and 3) the Anabaptist position that Stackhouse characterised as desiring a non-interfering state but also wanting to be "a witness to the state on behalf of peace and justice issues" (2008). The Pentecostal influence was evident in the leadership of Faught, two other Pentecostal leaders who later served as presidents of the EFC,<sup>65</sup> and Stiller, an ordained pastor in the Pentecostal Assembly of Canada. Mennonite Brethren influence can be seen in the contributions of John Redekop, an active

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<sup>63</sup> Some Pentecostals hesitated about joining the EFC given their at times turbulent relationship with evangelicals. For example, some evangelicals refused to attend meetings where Faught spoke. For their part, Pentecostal leaders feared that Faught would dilute the Pentecostal doctrine of baptism by the Holy Spirit (Kydd 1997, 298-99).

<sup>64</sup> In 1951 the Christian Reformed Church of North America severed its ties with the NAE due to the fundamentalism the denomination perceived to be operative in the Association (See "The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (II), available online at <http://reformedreflections.ca/articles/re-evangel-fello-of-can-2.pdf> (accessed March 15, 2021)).

<sup>65</sup> The two are Reverend Charles Yates (1977-1983) and Dr. Kenneth Birch (in the mid to late 1990s).

member of the denomination who served as the EFC's vice-president in the late 1980s and its president from 1991-1993. Beginning in the late 1960s, Redekop encouraged other EFC leaders to move beyond inter-church fellowship and become more involved in the public sphere. For its part, the Reformed community contributed its heritage of philosophical and political thought via the Institute for Christian Studies, a Reformed graduate school in Toronto. Over the years a number of professors at the Institute volunteered on various EFC commissions. In addition, Gerald Vandezande, an active member of various Reformed organizations and co-founder of Citizens for Public Justice,<sup>66</sup> was a long-time member of the EFC's General Council. Throughout his years of involvement with the EFC, Vandezande found his fellow General Council members open to "proposals that might be useful in the development of a Christian witness that thinks beyond the immediate demands of the constituencies that you speak for, but also meets the needs of people, our neighbours, across the country" (2010).

As the EFC sought to expand its membership and discern its purpose, Canadian society underwent fundamental changes. Industrial development brought increased urbanization. Pierre Trudeau, first as the Liberal Minister of Justice and later as Prime Minister, introduced new social policies that made abortion, contraceptives, and divorce more available, de-criminalized homosexual relations between consenting adults, and instituted the policies of bi-lingualism and multiculturalism. When Quebeckers voted against sovereignty-association in 1980, Trudeau promised constitutional change and embarked on a quest to repatriate the Constitution and write a *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (hereafter referred to as the Charter).

Despite these social changes the EFC remained small, underfunded, and largely unnoticed. It had no full-time paid staff and relied heavily on volunteers who were already busy in their conference offices. It held an annual meeting that brought evangelical leaders together for workshops, speeches, and worship, published a magazine named *Thrust*, and addressed specific social issues such as lotteries. In addition, the EFC sponsored biennial seminars for evangelical leaders and administered Share, Canada!, a relief and development organization originally managed by the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. Eventually Share became the Canadian branch of World Relief, an organization initially established by the American National Association of Evangelicals in 1944 to

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<sup>66</sup> In 1999, Stiller said that Vandezande taught him "more about political engagement than anyone" (Vandezande 1999, viii). A decade later he told a freelance writer that "in time, there was little that I did without consulting [Vandezande]" (Volman 2009). Vandezande also had a friendship with John Redekop and Mario Di Gangi, a former president of the EFC's General Council (Vandezande 2010).

support European victims of World War II (Stackhouse 1995b, 167). In 1977 the EFC defined its purposes in largely pastoral terms: 1) unifying evangelicals; 2) promoting renewal in the whole Canadian Church; and 3) affirming the authority of Christ over all aspects of society.

In 1981 the General Council revised the organization's constitution and charted a new course. While maintaining the mandates of developing evangelical church leadership and fostering unity, the new constitution expanded the EFC's role in public life. More specifically, the organization was to defend the rights and freedoms of the Church, Christian institutions, and individual Christians as well as "bring moral direction" into governmental decisions (Stackhouse 1995b, 167).<sup>67</sup> To meet the objective of becoming more involved in politics, the General Council hired Stiller in 1983 to become its executive director (the titled changed to "president" shortly before Stiller left the organization in 1997). Under Stiller, the EFC operated with a reinvigorated General Council and a much more politically active evangelical base. More importantly, Stiller had significant access to political power during the Progressive Conservative governments from 1984-1993, which meant that the EFC had moved from a pastoral fellowship with little political clout to a politically engaged organization that wielded some degree of influence in the backrooms of Parliament Hill. Given the importance of Stiller's influence on the EFC, it is worth looking at his career more closely.

## **2.2 Brian Stiller: 1983-1997**

Stiller came to the EFC with a desire to understand more about public policy. An ordained Pentecostal pastor with a graduate degree from Wycliffe College, the Anglican college at the University of Toronto, Stiller worked for Youth for Christ for 16 years prior to his tenure at the EFC.<sup>68</sup> As he worked with young people he became aware of the degree to which public policy impacted people's lives, but realized that he lacked a theological framework that could connect the

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<sup>67</sup> In 1987 *Faith Today* listed the following as components of the EFC's mandate: "1) Remind the nation of the supremacy and reign of Jesus Christ; 2) Encourage government to rule with truth and justice; 3) Publicly express biblical convictions; 4) Prepare Christians to be 'salt' and 'light' – effective ambassadors to their own communities; 5) Bring church leaders together in prayer, fellowship and national strategy" (*Faith Today* 1987b, 33).

<sup>68</sup> Youth for Christ is an international evangelistic outreach to youth under the age of 25. Founded in the 1940s, it hired Billy Graham as its first full time staff person. Over time Youth for Christ spawned other organizations, including the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and World Vision International. Stiller originally joined Youth for Christ in Montreal and then moved to Toronto to work with the branch office there. In 1975 he became the organization's national president (*Faith Today* 1996, 54).

social and spiritual needs of people with public policy (Stiller 2008). He brought this concern for a holistic view of life to the EFC.

As early as 1978 Stiller volunteered on the EFC's Social Action Commission. He later served as the organization's vice-president (Stackhouse 1995b, 167) and became its executive director in 1983 at the age of 41. At the time the EFC had a budget of approximately \$26,000, funds which Stiller had to raise, and a tiny, cramped office (*Faith Today* 1996, 54). Almost immediately Stiller reorganized *Thrust*, renaming it *Faith Alive* and then *Faith Today* two years later. While *Faith Today* was published by the EFC, and the EFC's president was its Editor-in-Chief, Stiller and his successors insisted that the news and issues magazine was not the "organ" or mouthpiece of the EFC but a "forum for conversation" and "a vehicle for community understanding and exchange" (Walsh 1999a, 7). However, as Mark Chapman observed, there is considerable overlap between the EFC as the public voice of many evangelicals and its publication which elaborates the views of evangelicals (1994, 32n2).<sup>69</sup> On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the magazine, Stiller suggested that *Faith Today* had helped non-evangelicals understand that evangelicals were not "some funny, fundy group in the corner" but had a "substantive, legitimate and coherent message to offer the world" (Cambridge 1993, 33). Under Stiller's leadership, then, *Faith Today* not only sought to bring evangelicals together, but also to portray evangelicals and their concerns to the general public.<sup>70</sup>

Stiller's skills, temperament, and background contributed to the EFC's significant growth over the next decade. Those who knew Stiller personally often commented on his entrepreneurial spirit and zeal for networking (Stackhouse 2008; Redekop 2008; Jantz 1994). Within five years of taking office, Stiller was able to increase the EFC's budget to \$1.2 million and by 1990 the budget reached \$2 million (Stackhouse 1995b, 168). In 1996 *Faith Today* reported that the organization had a budget of \$3 million, a staff of 30, and represented almost 2 million people, including 14,000 individual members, 28 denominations, thousands of churches, and 100 parachurch agencies (54).

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<sup>69</sup> I do not study the contents of *Faith Today* in this thesis. I limit my use of the magazine to the columns written by the EFC president/Editor-in-Chief, articles written by various authors about the EFC, or columnists who quote an EFC president in a story.

<sup>70</sup> At the end of 2008, the average print run of *Faith Today* was 20,000 copies per issue, with an estimated readership of 45,000 to 100,000. The average reader has an individual income of \$67,000, a post-secondary degree, and is 50 years old. Readers come from the following churches in descending order: Baptist, Pentecostal, Christian and Missionary Alliance, non-denominational, Christian Reformed, Mennonite Brethren, and Anglican. For more, see <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=467> (accessed January 30, 2011).

Although the EFC expanded and became more politically involved under Stiller's leadership, Stiller's background as a Pentecostal pastor remained a point of tension in the broader evangelical community. On the one hand, Stiller's oratory gifts developed as a pastor, combined with his Saskatchewan roots, allowed him to converse comfortably with both denominational leaders and the evangelical base, which at the time was largely located in Western Canada. As Stackhouse noted, Stiller understood the concerns of the working class. He spoke their language and channelled their concerns into support for political engagement generally and for the EFC specifically. In Stiller the EFC found someone "who could and wanted to articulate frankly the fear that evangelicals had that their country was running away from them and that they were going to suffer for it as their country became much less congenial to them" (Stackhouse 2008). On the other hand, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec and the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches delayed their membership with the EFC because they feared that the EFC would become a wing of American fundamentalism. These Conventions joined the EFC only after Stiller left the organization (Stiller 2008).

Stiller brought with him a vision for a new age of evangelical political involvement. He believed the social changes occurring in Canada and in the mainline churches presented opportunities for evangelicals to engage in public debates and exert some political influence. Early advertisements for the EFC in *Faith Today* declared, "It's time we stood up for what we believe," and that the "EFC is vital to the religious life of Canada ... It's time that we break the silence that has allowed our great country to lose its religious mooring and drift into a state of moral chaos" (*Faith Today* 1986a, 71; 1987a, 55). There was a sense of urgency as well as possibility in these ads. The sense of urgency was rooted in the perception of the loss of a Christian ethos in Canada while the sense of possibility rested on the premise that there was still time for Canada to regain its religious foundation. The deciding factor was whether evangelicals were ready to act. Indeed, Stiller used this urgency-possibility strategy to persuade evangelicals and their leaders to engage in all aspects of Canadian public life, including politics. The message was clear: the future of Canadian—not just evangelical—identity depended on robust evangelical participation in public life.

One of Stiller's major concerns was the lack of home-grown Canadian evangelical leadership. Therefore *Faith Alive/Today* did not feature the leaders of the American Religious Right. Instead, throughout his time at the EFC Stiller expressed his concerns about the dominant American TV personalities of the time. For example, in the third issue of *Faith Alive*, which addressed the lack of evangelical leaders in Canada, Stiller praised Billy Graham but was silent about Jerry Falwell, the

primary voice of the American Moral Majority (Stiller 1983a, 7-9). Three years later when Stiller discussed “high-tech evangelism,” he lamented how “religious programs too often seem to assault [the unchurched] with manipulative, American-patriotic and narrow fundamentalist presentations. And unfortunately, too often viewers perceive TV evangelists as being money gatherers and empire builders” (1986a, 24-25). Stiller went on to celebrate the work of Graham and other evangelists such as Luis Palau, David Mainse, and Terry Winter (the latter two were Canadian), thereby separating them from such televangelists as Falwell, Jim and Tammy Baker, and Jimmy Swaggart. Stiller’s silence on these latter television personalities spoke volumes. In addition, Stiller wrote that he found the anti-Clinton sentiments uttered by Falwell disturbing (1994a, 70). When Stiller was asked about his concerns over imported evangelical leadership during the 1980s, he recalled that Falwell and the Moral Majority “may have sounded right in their world but sounded awfully tinny up here” (2008).

In addition to urging the development of Canadian evangelical leaders, the early *Faith Alive* issues reflected Stiller’s Canadian patriotism, which he made explicit in his book *Don’t Let Canada Die by Neglect* (1994), a compilation of his columns for *Faith Alive/Today* and other EFC literature as well as several of his public speeches. In the book Stiller admitted “to being very much in love with Canada” and proud of his Saskatchewan roots. However, he qualified his patriotism by speaking about the need “to love God first” and “putting God’s moral law first.” Yet for Stiller the command to love God first did not require the retention of the “old order” of Christian dominance but to love one’s neighbours (1994b, 22-24). This suggested a rejection of Christendom, in which the Christian faith was dominant and granted political and economic privileges. As Stiller worked at the EFC, he became convinced of the need for those who follow “‘the Jesus way’ to become more focused in caring for our nation” (x). More specifically, he called evangelicals to rebuild the foundation of Canada by developing their own spiritual disciplines, contesting individualism, and becoming engaged in the public debates about religious broadcasting, politics, the arts, education, and business (3-21).

If Stiller desired evangelicals to become more engaged in the public sphere, he discovered that he first had to re-shape the evangelical conception of “the world” and the necessity of participating in it in some manner.<sup>71</sup> Part of his education program was an eight hour seminar he created in 1987

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<sup>71</sup> In typical evangelical parlance, “worldly” is a negative term used to identify “bad” behaviour, including smoking and drinking alcohol (Stiller 2003a, 95-96). These behaviours are seen as bad because they do not “lead to a witness of Christ’s claims on life” (1994b, 110). Some evangelicals go so far as to define a concern about politics and society as worldly (33). In contrast, Stiller advised evangelicals that although sin entered the world with the Fall, the earth, its products, the physical body, and living in the world remain important. Indeed,



entitled “Understanding our times,” that encouraged audience members to engage culture. Stiller recognized that his proposed vision required evangelicals to shift their thinking away from viewing the world as secondary to viewing it as essential and evangelicals as essential to it. Perhaps to distinguish himself from fundamentalists, Stiller rejected evangelical separation from culture and refused to view “the world” as evil or foreign. In 2008, he told *Faith Today* that he wanted evangelicals to “understand that sectarianism is neither biblical nor helpful” (*Faith Today* 2008a, 23).

Stiller also had to educate evangelicals about the processes of politics and law-making as well as the philosophies that he believed were harming Canada, especially secularism. An EFC ad in a 1987 issue of *Faith Today* defined secularism as “a view that God is irrelevant to life,” a view that EFC leaders believed was “quickly replacing Christian faith as the foundation stone of our nation” (*Faith Today* 1987b, 33). To combat secularism, Stiller called evangelicals to participate in the public sphere. He advocated a particular type of engagement, one founded upon what he described as thoughtful and carefully constructed strategies (Stiller 1988a, 33). He reminded evangelicals that many of the freedoms and benefits they and other Canadians enjoy have their origins in the “Judeo-Christian” faith of the early settlers and politicians (1985, 61).<sup>72</sup> This nod to history did not indicate that Stiller wanted a return to a Christian establishment. Instead, he urged evangelicals to learn the language of the contemporary culture. He taught them that speaking religious truth did not require them to use religious-sounding words. If evangelicals wanted to be taken seriously, he advised, they had to attend public debates and present ideas rather than moralize (1995a, 78). He reminded them of the importance of loving those of other religious traditions (1991a, 78) while at the same time remembering that their “duty [is] to persuade all people that what we believe is true” (1987c, 34). In addition, Stiller warned against the dangers of materialistic individualism (1991b, 202). It appears that the overall purpose of this education was to provide evangelicals with a Christian interpretation of society in preparation for increased engagement in the public sphere. This interpretation accepted the modern differentiation of society and the separation of the church from such institutions as the state and the economy. At the same time, Stiller believed that religious voices had the right and the

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“it is in the world that we encounter the life of Christ. The drama of God’s recreating life is played out on the stage of life, in this world” (2003a, 96).

<sup>72</sup> While EFC literature frequently uses the term “Judeo-Christianity,” some sociologists of religion are uncomfortable with it. For instance, Lori Beaman writes that the term masks the anti-Semitism that remains pervasive. Beaman, “The myth of pluralism, diversity, and vigor: The constitutional privilege of Protestantism in the United States and Canada,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42:3 (2003), 322n15.

responsibility to be involved in the development of social and economic policy in an effort to protect the Christian understanding of the human person as the image of God.

Stiller cultivated a public voice for evangelicals, largely through his contacts with media personalities and his public image. He became a prominent spokesperson for evangelicals on public policy matters and heightened his public image by hosting “The Stiller Report,” later re-named “Cross Currents,” a weekly half-hour television show on Vision TV that brought together various guests to discuss the issues of the day. The program had strong connections with the EFC as frequent panel members included Redekop and Vandezande, as well as George Rawlyk, a Baptist historian who studied Canadian evangelicalism.<sup>73</sup> The show portrayed evangelicals as reasoned contributors to public debates.

While Stiller’s success was due in large part to his own abilities as a fundraiser, organizer, and public figure, his tenure as the EFC’s president coincided with at least three external factors that significantly impacted the work of the EFC and played to Stiller’s strengths. First, the 1982 repatriation of the Constitution with its *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was just a year old and Canadians had not yet fully comprehended its implications. Evangelicals became aware of the implications in 1985, when the Supreme Court ruled that the Christian justification of the *Lord’s Day Act* violated the freedom and conscience of Canadians. Much of the EFC’s analysis of the ruling viewed it as one of the first indications of a new emphasis on the freedom of Canadians to be free *from* religion and its influence (Epp Buckingham 2002, 29; 2007, 19). As EFC leaders came to interpret the Charter as a tool for secular and/or non-Christian advocacy groups to challenge the public role of Christianity in Canadian politics and society, they began to intervene in legal cases that involved issues of religious freedom. Generally these cases involved the religious freedom of Christians, although a few involved the rights of religious adherents of other faiths to publicly express and practice their beliefs.

Second, Canadians elected Brian Mulroney’s Progressive Conservatives in the 1984 federal election, giving the Party its first majority government since John Diefenbaker’s government from 1958 to 1962. Mulroney’s first caucus had a number of evangelical MPs, including Mennonites from

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<sup>73</sup> After Rawlyk’s death, Stiller wrote a column in *Faith Today* about Raywlyk’s contributions to the study of evangelicalism in Canada (1996a, 70).

the Western provinces<sup>74</sup> who helped Stiller gain political access. These MPs included John Reimer from Ontario, Benno Friesen from British Columbia, and Jake Epp from Manitoba. Ramon Hnatyshyn, a Ukrainian Orthodox from Saskatchewan, also became an important contact for Stiller.<sup>75</sup> Both Hnatyshyn and Epp served in Mulroney's Cabinet – Hnatyshyn as House Leader and Justice Minister and Epp as Minister of National Health and Welfare and then as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Epp worked closely with the EFC during his tenure as Minister of Health (1984-1989), particularly on the issue of abortion in the wake of the 1988 decision by the Supreme Court to strike down the abortion law. To this day Epp and Stiller remain friends.<sup>76</sup> In addition to political contacts, Stiller established relationships with such media personalities as Barbara Frum, then co-host of CBC-TV's *The Journal*, and Peter Gzowski, a former host of CBC-Radio's *Morningside*, as well as with ethicist Margaret Sommerville at McGill University and Don Page, then serving in the Department of External Affairs (Stiller 2008).

Third, Canadian evangelicalism experienced growth in the 1970s and 1980s, an era that saw the membership numbers and attendance rates of mainline churches decline. As a result of the growth, the number of students attending Canadian evangelical colleges, seminaries, and post-secondary theological schools increased. George Egerton and former Liberal MP David Smith subsequently claimed that the growth provided the evangelical community with some political clout. For example, during the 1980-1981 federal debate about whether to recognize God in the preamble to the Constitution, Smith informed Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberal caucus that the number of students in post-secondary theological schools affiliated with the Pentecostal Assembly of Canada alone was more than the combined number of students in schools operated by the Anglican, United, and Presbyterian denominations. According to Smith, the numbers helped convince Trudeau to include the phrase "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God

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<sup>74</sup> According to Redekop, among the Canadian General Conference and Mennonite Brethren (MB) denominations, the Dutch-Russian Mennonites set the tone rather than the more politically aloof Swiss-German Mennonites that are dominant in the US (Redekop 1995, 35). Mennonite candidates have contested a number of seats in most elections since Confederation, representing a variety of political parties. In some ridings two or more parties ran Mennonite candidates (40-46). When an undisclosed national political party approached Redekop to become its local candidate in the 1984 election, the MB leadership informed him that if he ran for office he would have to give up all of his denominational and local church leadership positions. Redekop chose not to run for the nomination (1999, 27).

<sup>75</sup> Hnatyshyn served as Canada's Governor General from 1990 to 1995. Stiller believes the Western Canadian heritage he shared with these MPs partially explains his political access (2008).

<sup>76</sup> Stiller later dedicated two of his books to Epp (1997a and 2003) and in 2005 Epp became the Chancellor of Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto where Stiller served as president from 1995 until 2009.

and the rule of law” in the preamble of the Constitution (*Faith Alive* 1983b, 45; Egerton 2000, 104-6). As Redekop recalled years later, the political significance of the number of students in evangelical Bible institutes and colleges helped EFC leaders become aware that they could have as strong a public voice as the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Council of Churches (2008). However, it must be kept in mind that despite the fact that there may have been more students in evangelical schools than those operated by the mainline churches, the numbers were nevertheless relatively few.

A number of national issues occupied Stiller’s attention during his 14 years of leadership at the EFC, with abortion being perhaps the most prominent. Other issues included the funding of independent religious schools in Ontario, a campaign against euthanasia, and protesting an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. These issues heightened the unease with which evangelicals viewed Canadian society and are covered in depth in later chapters.

Given Stiller’s love for Canada, the unity question greatly concerned him, especially after the failure of the Meech Lake Accord in 1990, which sought to amend the *Constitution Act 1982* in an effort to address the concerns of Quebec that prevented the province’s leaders from signing the *Act*. Stiller found the aspirations of Quebecers as outlined in the Accord to be reasonable (1992a, 70). A year after the collapse of Meech Lake, Mulroney initiated a second round of negotiations with the provincial premiers that produced the Charlottetown Accord. During this process, the EFC established a task force on Canada’s future, chaired by Paul Marshall, who reminded Canadians that evangelicals, like other Canadians, accept the Canadian values of “Peace, Order, and Good Government.” He wrote about how Christianity was a central element of Canadian identity given the religious nature of Canadian society and politics in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (1992). Don Page, then dean at Trinity Western University and another member of the task force, argued that evangelicals could offer a national perspective given their presence in every region in Canada and a national reconciliation process based upon the Christian principles of “Confession, Forgiveness, Restitution, and Lasting Reconciliation” (1992, 29). Stiller later noted that the high regard Canadians have for an activist federal government contributed to the evangelical penchant for denominational structures, writing, “this ‘Canadian way’ of being attached to and allowing national governmental forms to lead is a powerful cultural instinct that is not lost on the felt need of congregations and church leaders who want to be a part of something larger, something national”

(1993a, 78). In this manner Stiller emphasized the reciprocal relationship between evangelicalism and national political structures. The underlying argument was that evangelicals are a part of Canada and value Canadian public institutions just as strongly as other Canadians.

As policy development and political engagement were extremely important to Stiller, a significant personal milestone occurred in 1996 when the EFC opened an office in Ottawa called the Department of National Affairs. Its creation enhanced the ability of evangelicals to engage more directly in the political process. The EFC appointed Bruce Clemenger, at that time the EFC's researcher and developer of policy, to lead the office. The connection to Ottawa through the Department of National Affairs was important to Stiller as it was consistent with his view that evangelicals must be engaged in political processes, including the lobbying of policy makers and leaders of the state.<sup>77</sup>

At the age of 55 Stiller left the EFC in 1997 to become president of Ontario Bible College/Ontario Theological Seminary.<sup>78</sup> He is to date the longest-serving EFC president and under his leadership the number of EFC affiliates increased, as did its budget. Stiller established contacts with people far removed from the evangelical community, thereby modelling for evangelicals the value of the liberal principle of the individual freedom of conscience. This principle in turn required that evangelicals recognize that they were one voice among many and to work for the religious freedoms of all Canadians, not just themselves.

Studying this history of the EFC under Stiller's leadership does not by itself further the discussion between Stackhouse and Redekop about the degree to which the EFC helped create a Canadian evangelical identity. What is required is a study of the philosophical and theological influences upon the EFC's leaders. Stiller's religious roots are in Pentecostalism, a tradition that historically did not engage in Canadian political life (Althouse 2009). Given Stiller's involvement with a broad spectrum of evangelical traditions that he encountered within the EFC, one may surmise that he became familiar with a variety of models conceptualizing the relationship between faith and politics. One

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<sup>77</sup> Stackhouse thinks that most evangelicals continue to see the role of the EFC as monitoring the state, particularly the federal government. However, he cautions against an overly deterministic interpretation of the scope of the EFC's work, noting that it also works to deepen congregational life and assists churches in mission work and evangelism (2008).

<sup>78</sup> Stiller began to serve as the voluntary interim OBC/OTS president in June of 1995 when it faced bankruptcy. The OBC/OTS hired him permanently in 1996 and he served as president of both OBC/OTS and the EFC until May 31, 1997. In 1998 the OBC was renamed Tyndale College and when it received university status in 2003 it became Tyndale University College. It remained connected with the seminary and in 2006 the college and seminary bought the adjoining property of 56.3 acres from the Sisters of St. Joseph for \$40 million (*Faith Today* 1996, 54; [www.tyndale.ca](http://www.tyndale.ca)).

model prominent among American fundamentalists and some evangelicals was developed by Francis Schaeffer, a neo-Calvinist theologian and former fundamentalist whose work Stiller encountered while in university (Stiller 1994b, 3-4). Schaeffer rebelled against the humanist worldview that views human beings as autonomous, independent, and perfectible (1976, 60, 121). He found this “secular humanism” to be dangerous because he believed that it leads to chaos and statism. Humans were created to worship something, he preached, and when they reject God they put the state, society, or some other idol at the centre of life and worship it.

In *A Christian Manifesto* (1982) Schaeffer introduced evangelicals to the concept of cultural warfare. He viewed the battle against secular humanism as momentous and total, involving the arts, philosophy, religion, architecture, and social policy. In essence, he taught evangelicals that worldviews matter, and that abortion, family breakdown, and pornography were the results of the humanist worldview. Schaeffer’s notion of cultural warfare was similar to the American culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, prior to the founding of the Moral Majority in 1979, Schaeffer urged Jerry Falwell to use his influence to combat secular humanism (Gilgoff 2007, 82).

Although Stiller learned a great deal from Schaeffer, he did not ascribe to Schaeffer’s desire to return to a golden past when Christianity was the established religion. In fact, Stiller doubted whether such a golden age ever existed (1997a, 42-43). For Stiller, the purpose of evangelical political engagement was not to re-impose Christendom but to have “the biblical values of truth, integrity, and justice pervade the legislative agenda” and “to live out the Gospel in a redemptive way, with an eye to Jesus’ return and with a heart of obedience” (179). Furthermore, while Stiller, like Schaeffer, viewed with concern the desire of modern humanism “to eliminate Christian influence in our society” (Stiller 1994b, 24), he did not adopt Schaeffer’s call for a culture war. Instead, Stiller intentionally distinguished the EFC from the American Religious Right (1996b, 70). Rather than adopt Schaeffer’s model, Stiller’s writings reflected elements of the writings of Redekop and Marshall. Below I highlight the work of these two theorists and examine how they influenced Stiller. I begin with Redekop, as his involvement with the EFC preceded that of Marshall.

### 2.2.1 John Redekop

It is significant that Redekop is a member of the Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, which joined the EFC in 1964.<sup>79</sup> According to Bruce Guenther, the Mennonite Brethren are more involved in transdenominational evangelicalism than many of the other Mennonite branches, are more acculturated, and are less Anabaptist, with only one-half of them supporting the traditional Anabaptist peace position (1997, 230, 233). Guenther claims that historically there was some mutual critique between evangelicals and Mennonites. Where evangelicals challenged the manner in which Mennonites intertwined ethnic distinctions with their doctrines of faith, Mennonites distrusted how the theological emphases of evangelicals unwittingly promulgated such cultural values as consumerism, individualism, and nationalism (239). Despite these historical differences, Redekop's membership in the Mennonite Brethren predisposed him to welcome such a transdenominational evangelical organization as the EFC and to advocate for evangelical involvement in politics.

In fact, Redekop was a significant force in moving the EFC from an organization that defined its purpose as providing mutual support and fellowship to its members to one that was engaged in the political life of the nation. Some of Redekop's motivation lay in his experiences with American evangelicalism which he encountered in the early 1960s while doing his doctoral thesis at the University of Washington in Seattle. His thesis examined Billy James Hargis, a pastor and spokesperson for the American far right in the 1950s and 1960s. Redekop described Hargis and his followers as Christian fundamentalists who were virulently anti-communist, opposed to both social reform and the United Nations, and desirous of a return to traditional America. Redekop distrusted their tendency to conflate liberalism with communism (1968, n.p.<sup>80</sup>) and their rigid political ideology. He found the growth of the far right movement to be disturbing because it thwarted social progress by describing most state intervention in social issues as communist subversion. Moreover, Redekop disliked how the far right transplanted "final, total answers, from the private, religious sphere to the public, political sphere" (1968, 202).

Upon his return to Canada in 1968 and after accepting a job at Waterloo Lutheran University (now Wilfred Laurier University) in Ontario, Redekop became involved with the EFC and served as the

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<sup>79</sup> In 2001 the Conference had a membership of 34,288 and an attendance of 45,528 people. The combined number of members of all the Mennonite denominations that are also members of the EFC is 48,887 (Guenther 2008, 412-13).

<sup>80</sup> Taken from the preface of Redekop's *American Far Right*.

first chair of its Social Action Commission.<sup>81</sup> His distrust of the American far right's penchant for simplistic religious answers to political issues and its view of America as God's chosen country, coupled with his reservations about the militarism, patriotism, and partisan identification he saw in the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), all led him to join other EFC leaders in insisting that the organization be non-partisan.<sup>82</sup> As he recalled in an interview, the decision not "to become the chaplain of the government of the day" was "a direction-setting decision" (2008). As a result, claimed Rekeop, the EFC did not feature prominent politicians at its conventions and both Redekop and Stiller desired a clear distinction between the EFC on the one hand and the NAE, Jerry Falwell, and the Moral Majority on the other hand. In this manner Redekop not only helped lead the EFC to become more involved in politics, but he also contributed to the development of a particular type of engagement that eschewed political partisanship and strove for the political centre. In 1983 Redekop and a few other General Council members challenged Stiller to apply for the position of Executive Director (2008).

Redekop's two other contributions to the EFC were his dedication to ecumenism and social justice.<sup>83</sup> These commitments in turn contributed to the manner in which the EFC defined evangelicalism. Redekop called for evangelical denominational and parachurch leaders to work together, identify issues for which they had something distinctive to say, and then collectively address those issues. He especially desired the leaders to address "the social consequences of the gospel" (2008). When some leaders reminded him of how the Social Gospel movement split Protestantism in the early twentieth century, Redekop responded by referring to Jesus' parable about the Good Samaritan as found in the biblical book of Luke. In the parable a Samaritan, a social outcast, chose to aid a wounded man after two Jewish religious leaders passed by without stopping.<sup>84</sup> At the time, Redekop saw evangelical denominations such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and the Evangelical Free Church contributing to relief and development organizations overseas but doing little to address social justice issues in Canada. Soon Redekop and other EFC leaders began urging the federal government to support Canadian

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<sup>81</sup> In 2008 Redekop recalled that when he became involved with the EFC he was the only person in the organization with a PhD (2008).

<sup>82</sup> However, the NAE did not become overtly identified with the Republican Party until 1979 (Cizik 2005, 50-55).

<sup>83</sup> This is not to say that other evangelical leaders involved in the EFC did not have the same commitments to ecumenism and social justice. Redekop's contributions are highlighted here because of his long involvement in the EFC, his previous experiences in the US, and his education in political science.



aboriginals, provide more relief funding for famine-stricken Ethiopia, and promote refugee sponsorship and family reunification programs. Redekop urged other EFC leaders to lobby for the protection of all people, not just its members, and to make specific policy recommendations. He advised EFC leaders to avoid the language of “thus says the Lord” and instead focus on how the EFC’s positions served the common good (2008). In short, Redekop helped guide the EFC to view evangelicalism as ecumenical, concerned about social justice, and politically centrist.<sup>85</sup>

Specific policy issues for which Redekop provided some leadership included capital punishment and the role of religious education in public schools. He wrote an article in *Faith Today* arguing against capital punishment and together with others helped steer the General Council away from advocating for the retention of the practice. With regard to religious education in Ontario public schools, Redekop advised other leaders not to argue for mandatory religious exercises in public schools. Given his previous experience as a high school teacher, he insisted that the requirement to read the Bible did not make a school, its staff, or its students Christian. Instead, Redekop called EFC leaders to respect the religious freedom of all Canadians and the religious pluralism of Canadian society (2008). This did not mean that EFC leaders ignored the issue of religious education. To the contrary, they became very involved in the debate but grounded their arguments in religious freedom and in the importance of recognizing the role of religion in society rather than demanding mandatory Bible readings and the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer. As early as 1972 Redekop wrote that in his view the mandatory requirements for religious practices in public schools were not moral (1972, 27).

Redekop’s commitments to ecumenism, protecting the religious freedom of all Canadians, and speaking in a publicly-accessible manner were shared by other EFC leaders. They took the values of liberal democracy seriously, including the individual freedom of conscience. Redekop and Stiller assumed the differentiation of church and state, but neither of them believed that differentiation required the separation of faith and politics. This refusal to privatize religion was also present in the work of Marshall.

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<sup>84</sup> The parable is found in Luke 10: 25-37. Jesus used it to answer the question “Who is my neighbour?”

<sup>85</sup> Although Stiller sometimes linked evangelicals with the Progressive Conservative Party in his early days at the EFC, he quickly distanced evangelicals from any particular political party (Stackhouse 2008).

### 2.2.2 Paul Marshall

Born in Britain, Marshall came to Canada as a graduate student and upon earning his Doctorate he taught at the Institute of Christian Studies. During the late 1980s and early 1990s he chaired (or co-chaired) either the EFC's Social Action Commission or its Religious Liberties Commission.<sup>86</sup> In 1997 Stiller referred to Marshall as "one of the most important influences" in his study of how the Christian faith may influence public policy (Stiller 1997a, 219). In an interview Stiller referred to Marshall as his intellectual tutor and claimed that Marshall helped him realize the falseness of the evangelical penchant of separating religion from public life (2008). Of particular importance to this chapter is Marshall's influence on Stiller's conception of the state.

Marshall brought with him to the EFC a commitment to two political philosophies. First, he had a deep respect for Toryism and Canadian philosopher George Grant. Grant critiqued the type of English-speaking liberalism developed by John Locke and the American liberal philosopher John Rawls.<sup>87</sup> Often described as a Red Tory,<sup>88</sup> Grant opposed abortion, supported an interventionist state, and promoted Canadian economic nationalism. Like Grant, Marshall appreciated the Tory conservatism brought to Canada by the early British immigrants. He believed that the presence of the Anglican and Catholic traditions in Canada differentiated Canada from the US (1991, 8). Indeed, the Tory assumption of a strong central state is congruent with the Kuyperian interpretation of the state, the other political philosophy Marshall brought to the EFC.

Kuyperian thought emerged out of a Calvinist worldview and can be traced back to the former Dutch Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper and Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd. These two scholars advocated for a positive view of the state and it is this view that distinguished their American followers from the organizations of the Religious Right, many of whom advanced a negative view of

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<sup>86</sup> In 1998 Marshall left the Institute for Christian Studies to work for Freedom House as a senior fellow at the Centre for Religious Freedom. In 2006 he moved to the Hudson Institute, where he holds the same title. He remained chair of the EFC's Religious Liberty Commission until at least 2000 (EFC 2000a).

<sup>87</sup> Grant claimed that Rawls' theory of justice is "the union of equality and liberty" (1985, 39) which requires significant cooperation between large private corporations and the state. He questioned whether Rawls' view of the person as a calculator of her own interest is able to provide a concept of the common good capable of constraining mammoth corporations or whether it will lead to anything other than consumptive individuals. He also criticized Rawls for abstracting his theory from the realities of war and imperialism and separating self-interest from any knowledge of the state of nature, of "the way things are as a whole" (41-42).

<sup>88</sup> Horowitz defined a Red Tory as "a philosopher who combines elements of socialism and toryism so thoroughly in a single integrated *Weltanschauung* that it is impossible to say that he or she is a proponent of either one as *against* the other. Such a red tory is George Grant, who has associations with both the Conservative party and the NDP" (1995, 32).

the state. Redekop described an important element of Calvinism when he wrote that Calvin emphasized “the Christian role of the state and asserted that its function is to help Christians live the Christian life” (2007, 51). This element of Calvinism is evident in various Reformed churches in North America founded by Dutch immigrants grounded in the Kuyperian worldview.

Marshall introduced evangelicals to Kuyperian neo-Calvinism<sup>89</sup> in his book *Thine is the Kingdom: A Biblical Perspective on the Nature of Government and Politics Today* (1984), written to help evangelicals develop a biblically rooted view of politics and government. Christians engaged in politics needed to do more than advance Christian morality or hold good humanitarian intentions, Marshall insisted. He wanted them to understand that politics is intrinsically important on its own merit and that like all other aspects of life it is under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Marshall attributed to the state the positive task of promoting justice, often defined in the classical sense as “giving each their due” (52). Individuals are given their due when everyone has “what we need in order to discharge our life’s responsibilities ... each of us has a right to fulfil the callings that God has given us” (55). At its heart justice is concerned with right relationships, especially between God, people, and things (55). For Marshall, this Kuyperian neo-Calvinist conception of justice requires that those within the state are able to recognize justice and injustice and “rectify what is unjust by restoring things to their right relation” (1989, 18). In fact, in an article written for *Faith Today* Marshall identified the promotion of justice as the state’s “ministry.” He stressed that justice must be meted out impartially, meaning that governments, especially those that involve Christians, cannot provide specific privileges for Christians. Rather, they are to promote justice for all (1987, 38). Marshall argued that the principles of justice are found in Scripture and therefore God provides direction for Christian engagement in politics. Ultimately, then, Christians do not engage in politics on the basis of “common sense” or “neutral reason.”<sup>90</sup> He also thought that governments are most able to carry out their responsibilities in constitutional democracies.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> I take the term “Kuyperian neo-Calvinism” from Jonathan Chaplin, *Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011).

<sup>90</sup> The latter is an implicit rejection of many modern liberal theorists, including John Rawls.

<sup>91</sup> Many elements of Marshall’s conception of the state are echoed by fellow Kuyperian neo-Calvinist philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff, who attributes to the state the judicial task of promoting justice and the legislative task of making just laws. Wolterstorff follows Calvin when he suggests that good government serves the common good, defined as “the *shalom*, the flourishing, of the people,” although he acknowledged that governments wreak injustice when they enforce their view of the common good (2005, 150). Like Marshall, Wolterstorff locates government, at least partially, in the “order of creation” (150), meaning that government is more than God’s remedy for sin (149); it is also a mediator “of divine authority” (154). Wolterstorff contrasts

While Marshall held a positive view of the state and its ability to promote justice, he also portrayed government as limited because its authority comes from God, not from itself or the people. Marshall further limited the power of the state by reminding his readers of the biblical call for all citizens to participate in the search for justice. Justice is the task of all people, he insisted, because “the political order is designed by God to be a body of citizens, with diverse offices and responsibilities, called to implement justice within their territory” (1984, 61). For Marshall, then, the state is not to overstep its boundaries and interfere in, or manage, the offices of other authorities. God-given authority is diffused throughout society, with individuals, churches, parents, schools, and the courts all occupying their own sphere with their own authority structures. Kuyperians attribute to the state the function of ensuring that such institutions do not violate each other’s spheres or areas of authority. If and when they do, the state is to restore right relations “by rewarding the just and punishing the unjust” (56).<sup>92</sup> The principle that each interconnected but distinct sphere has its own area of authority that must be protected is called “sphere sovereignty.”<sup>93</sup>

The Kuyperian worldview differs from classical liberalism in that it does not view individuals as autonomous nor understand the state as the institution that most threatens individual liberty and against which individuals must be protected. Instead, the state promotes human flourishing by ensuring that individuals have what they require to live out their lives. Marshall argued that the state has intrinsic value in that it is an institution created by God. It also has instrumental value because it provides social order for human flourishing. However, Marshall did not view the state as plenipotentiary, as the most important public institution or the final authority. Instead, the state is limited by a variety of authorities in the different sovereign spheres of society. At the same time, the

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his theology with that of Anabaptist theologian John Howard Yoder. According to Wolterstorff, a key difference is that Yoder viewed the “powers,” the political, social, philosophical, religious, and ethical structures, as fallen and enslaving humanity. The result, claims Wolterstorff, is that “we are not to obey the state because it issues legitimate commands that place us under obligation; we are simply to subject ourselves to it, in the way that Russians subjected themselves to Stalin” (154).

<sup>92</sup> In disagreement with John Howard Yoder, Marshall maintains that it is incorrect to oppose Jesus’ ethic of love, admonition against revenge, and non-violence as outlined in the Sermon on the Mount with the state, the only institution authorized to use force. Marshall understands Jesus as addressing individuals whereas Paul in Romans 13 (where he urged his readers to submit to the ruling authorities) argued that God punishes the evildoer and rewards the good *through the state*. For Marshall, interpreters who ignore the “distinction between, on the one hand, Christians acting on their own authority and, on the other hand, Christians acting with the God-given authority of political office,” wrongly conclude, as Yoder does, that Christians are not to be directly involved in politics (1984, 46, 155n4).

<sup>93</sup> The notion of sphere sovereignty has some similarities with the conservative valuation of group autonomy described by Nisbet (1986, 38). Similarly, the Kuyperian view of the state can be aligned with the conservative view as detailed by Nisbet (22, 35).

notion of differentiated authority as found in the doctrine of sphere sovereignty was not necessarily anti-liberal given that both systems of thought promote the notion of institutional differentiation whereby the church is separated from such public institutions as the state and the economy but religious adherents have the right (and in Kuyperian terms, the responsibility) to speak on matters of public policy.

In 1992 Stiller referred to *Thine is the Kingdom* as “the most complete and helpful overview of a Christian view of politics” (Stiller 1992b, 82). Kuyperian commitments are visible in Stiller’s political understandings in three ways. First, during his tenure the EFC adopted the Kuyperian commitment to structural pluralism as a way in which Christians can be transformative agents in society. As Marshall noted, most Christians believe that they are engaging in the work of transformation but differ in their view of how transformation is to be achieved. Where traditionally evangelicals believed it was accomplished through individual action, Anabaptists posited that the church as an alternative community would effect change. Mainline churches focused on actions taken by the church itself whereas those of the Reformed persuasion sought transformation by creating alternative Christian organizations (1991). While schools at all levels of education were the most obvious type of alternative Reformed organizations, other Canadian examples included a Christian labour union, credit unions, and care facilities for the elderly and those who live with disabilities. In Reformed parlance these organizations were examples of structural pluralism, a model of society that assumes religion impacts all of life and thus insists that societies must allow for a wide variety of faith-based organizations to service various faith or non-faith communities. The EFC advocated for structural pluralism in the areas of broadcasting and education, the subjects of chapter 5. A discussion paper issued by the Social Action Commission supported structural pluralism as modeled in “the Dutch Calvinist idea of ‘pillarization’” as an example of how to address religious pluralism. When divergent fundamental beliefs make it extremely difficult or impossible for people to work together within one organization, the Commission suggested that “instead of trying to control everybody by means of government, it is better to try to exist in communities and organizations alongside one another, and to open up society to coexistence. This is a biblical theme” (EFC 1997a, 5). The Commission viewed coexistence as a biblical approach because it reflects the belief that God’s grace

extends to everyone, not just Christians. It concluded that Christians are called to promote the rights of all people, whether they are Christian, secular, or belong to another faith tradition.<sup>94</sup>

The second aspect of Stiller's writings that reflected Kuyperian neo-Calvinist commitments was his identification of Christian activity in the political sphere as a ministry because all areas of life are affected by sin and require redemption. When Stiller wrote an article for *Faith Today* about the creation of the Christian Heritage Party, a conservative Christian political party, he identified a number of guidelines to help Christians think through the issue. His first principle was "'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein' [Ps. 24:1]. Nothing is beyond God's ownership" (1988b, 77). This is a reiteration of Kuyper's belief that every inch and domain of human life is under the Lordship of Christ (Noll 1996, 46).<sup>95</sup> Stiller linked political action to ministry even more overtly when he described the EFC's interventions at the Supreme Court as a form of evangelism. He made this remark after the Court ruled against the request of Sue Rodriguez to legalize doctor-assisted suicide (1994b, 133-36). In an interview Stiller recalled that the "Understanding our times" workshops conducted across the country in the late 1980s were "a way to help evangelicals to understand primarily a Reformed vision that all of life is the Lord's" (2008). Essentially, he wanted evangelicals to come out of their sectarian cloisters, become involved in socio-political issues, and see all areas of life as important because they are important to God.

A third area of Kuyperian influence on both Stiller and the EFC can be seen in the positive view of the state developed in many EFC documents and literature. For instance, in the EFC's 1983 "Charter on human life" EFC leaders stated: "We urge the Government as administrator of public justice: to protect human life at all stages of development" (*Faith Alive* 1983a, 40). This statement attributed to the state the task of securing justice and assumed that governments were able to recognize justice and injustice and have the requisite tools and skills to rectify unjust situations. In 1987 Stiller claimed that evangelicals "must be about reclaiming and redeeming that which our Lord has created to help order this part of the universe until he returns in glory and power" (1987a, 59), a task that included seeking truth and righteousness for all, not just for evangelicals. For Stiller, the prevailing principalities, such as the state, "are not intrinsically evil or demonic. They have been ordered by God for the benefit of society" (59). In 2008 Stiller described the state as a human conundrum filled with a variety of

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<sup>94</sup> For more on the Kuyperian view of pluralism, see Mouw and Griffioen (1993).

<sup>95</sup> This is not to suggest that only Kuyperians believe all of life falls under the Lordship of Christ. In this context, however, its adoption, taken in conjunction with the other aspects of Kuyperian thought adopted by Stiller, suggests a thorough Kuyperian influence on Stiller and the EFC.

people, some of whom love power while others desire to serve. While some are incompetent, others are brilliant. Reflecting upon what he had learnt about the state during his time at the EFC, he said that he had come to see government as a gift of God, “because if you don’t have government you have anarchy. I see that as a constituent of Christ’s concern. Today I say to young people the calling for [political involvement] is a great calling” (2008). He went on to suggest that many evangelicals unfortunately adopt the antipathy towards public life found in a popular revivalist phrase which Stiller paraphrased as: “When God calls you to be a preacher, don’t stoop to be a king” (2008).<sup>96</sup> In contrast, Stiller grew up in a home in which his father, a Pentecostal preacher, personally knew Tommy Douglas. Consequently, “there was an honouring in our community of the role of the public square” (2008). Thus prior to his introduction to Kuiperian thought, Stiller already held a positive view of the state. One might say that for Stiller the Kuiperian view of the state reinforced the view of the state modelled by his father.

Each of these three elements of Kuiperian thought may be found in an undated two page EFC information sheet entitled “Being a faithful Christian, being a good citizen.” Written in response to the question “Should Christians participate in politics?” the paper stated, “our task is to work to transform [society]” (EFC n.d.a, 1). While the paper acknowledged the importance of calling people to repentance, it emphasized the need to reform social structures that cause injustice and limit the ability of people to pursue their calling(s). The paper then pointed out that many believers portrayed in the Bible held political office in order to fulfill “their desire to be obedient to God in the pursuit of justice and care for the vulnerable” (1) It went on to declare that “the governing authorities are God’s agent to do good” (1) and that politics often involves choosing between two or more legitimate goals (2). The belief that all of life, including politics, is under the lordship of Christ was also stated (1).

In his research on the EFC during the early 1990s Mark Chapman implicitly confirmed the influence of the Kuiperian tradition on both Stiller and the EFC. After interviewing Stiller, Chapman concluded that the EFC

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<sup>96</sup> Stiller attributed the phrase to revivalist preacher Dwight Moodie, a nineteenth century revivalist preacher. I could find no reference of this quote to Moodie. However, various present-day evangelical preachers use modified versions of the phrase. For example, Charles H. Spurgeon is quoted as saying, “If God calls you to be a minister, don’t stoop to be a king” (<http://sermonseeker.com/sermons/Special%20Occasions/The%20Mission%20of%20a%20Minister%20%28Ordination%20Sermon%29> [accessed January 30, 2011]) and American preacher Jordan Grooms said, “If God calls you to be a missionary, don’t stoop to be a king” (<http://home.snu.edu/~HCULBERT/slogans.htm> [accessed January 30, 2011]).

believes that it is better to help develop right policy than to wave placards criticizing the government. It seeks to work with government as an enabler. The EFC's approach is based on a high view of government that believes that good policy enables good living and that bad policy does the opposite. Therefore its objective is to try to find a way to write good policy. (1994, 82)

Although Chapman did not link this thinking with the Kuyparian tradition, he recognized that Stiller viewed the state as a potentially positive social force.<sup>97</sup>

The Kuyparian worldview takes seriously the task of serving all members of society by attributing to the state the task of protecting institutions and organizations that represent citizens' particular commitments and beliefs. This is the "public justice" element of Kuyparianism that Jonathan Chaplin defines as a "*pluralistic* social theory which seeks to give priority to a recognition of many different kinds of legitimate social relationship, community, and association, and the rights and responsibilities attaching to them" (2004, 3, italics in original). Such a view of public justice is antithetical to the desire to privatize religion. Although Redekop disagrees with some elements of the Kuyparian worldview, he does not dispute these aspects of public justice.

### **2.2.3 Redekop's response to the Kuyparian view of the state**

Redekop questioned the Calvinist view of the state that anchored Kuyparianism and wondered whether Christian political engagement could achieve such positive results given that governments are "kept busy restraining evil, 'putting out fires,' dealing with a vast assortment of crises, and trying to control social antagonism and cleavages" (1985, 37). He juxtaposed the Calvinist position that views political involvement as a ministry with Anabaptist theologian John Howard Yoder's claim that the church is pre-eminent over the state, (37), and suggested that the work of contemporary neo-Calvinists calling on governments to act justly blurs "the distinction between a lost world and the body of Christ" (2007, 54). In addition, Redekop questioned the degree to which Calvin remained rooted in medieval Catholicism, which unified life and society under the cross (51).

Redekop's view of the state is grounded in Anabaptist history and theology. Historically Anabaptists abstained from political activity because they believed that the political order had a lower standard of ethics than the church in that it was not guided by love. Anabaptists further distrusted the

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<sup>97</sup> The EFC is not the only evangelical group to adopt elements of Calvinism. As Casanova notes, others are also drawing from this heritage, including members of the American Religious Right (1997, 158).



state because it has the ability to use force to achieve its goals and desires. In his book *Politics under God* (2007), Redekop adjusted this historical position and developed a view of political engagement he called “Reformed Anabaptism.”<sup>98</sup> He encouraged Christians to engage in politics in order to increase civic righteousness. More specifically, he urged them to consider “selective involvement” in politics by supporting political policies that reflect such church values as health care, safety, education, and care for elderly persons (91). Redekop claimed that God requires Christians to “affirm the legitimacy of the state” (99) and advocate for religious freedom for all (101). In addition, he advised Christians not to link the gospel with any one political ideology or party as Christians are conservative, liberal, or socialist “depending on which part of the gospel is being emphasized” (155). Christians are to work with other religious and non-religious people, he argued, because Christians cannot claim “a monopoly on compassion” or political insight (153). When engaged in pressure politics, they “must be careful to use proper methods,” which includes “reasonable compromises on nonessentials” and the willingness to “accept the improvement of society by degree” (154). According to Redekop, Christians are able to actively participate in various levels of government although he acknowledged that senior positions in government could be out of reach as it might be difficult to retain one’s religious ethics at that level. Such participation would be virtually impossible if one was a pacifist (201).<sup>99</sup> Redekop’s respect for liberal democracy and individual conscience, his desire for religious adherents to work together, and his recognition that change often happens incrementally are apparent in his work and that of the EFC.

Although Redekop argued that Christian action can make a state more just, he warned Christians against using the state to promote their own interests. Given the Anabaptist position that the church and society operate with different ethical systems, Christians cannot expect governments to evidence the love ethic of the church. Instead, Christians can be the conscience of society by promoting justice, freedom, and human dignity, examining the basic orientations of government, evaluating specific public policies, and focusing on the assumptions that undergird policies. At the same time, Christians must keep in mind the potential for states to do both good and evil (1972).

This is not to say that Redekop held a negative view of the state. Rather, he labelled his conception of the church-state relationship as “Anabaptist realism,” a perspective that he described as advancing an optimistic view of the state but not seeing it as part of the created order. Although governments

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<sup>98</sup> Both Stiller and Clemenger wrote an endorsement for *Politics under God*.

can reflect God's love, Redekop declared, they are nevertheless "God's Plan B," introduced after the Fall of Adam and Eve into sin as recorded in Genesis 3. In Redekop's view, God gave Adam and Eve the freedom of choice and they chose to reject God's lordship. However, God continued to love humanity and therefore provided them with political structures such as governments to help establish and maintain stable and peaceful societies. While the church's ethic and purpose are far more important than those of the state, the state need not be an enemy of the church (2007, 19-21).<sup>100</sup> For his part, Marshall rejected the notion that because the state came into existence after the Fall, it was part of God's Plan B. Instead, he contended that there were many activities and institutions recorded in the Bible that occurred after the Fall, including the construction of bricks and singing of music. He insisted that their later introduction did not indicate that they existed because of sin (1984, 42).

Despite Redekop's influence on Stiller, the latter appeared to lean more towards the Kuyperian view of the state rather than Redekop's Anabaptist realism. One example occurred in 1989 when Stiller wrote a foreword to a book that resulted from a conference held to discuss the task and limitations of the state. In the foreword Stiller noted that although Christian interest in the state is at times "too self-centred, it also shows there is a need for involvement by those who believe that politics is a part of God's creation." In the next sentence he claimed "that, while governments do at times act tyrannically, they have been created to act as 'servants of God'" (1989a, viii). With these words Stiller depicted the role of the state positively and did not portray it as God's response to sin or God's "Plan B."

The previous paragraphs suggest that there is some evidence for Stackhouse's claim that the EFC interpreted evangelicalism in a particular manner and thereby helped create an evangelical identity. This identity viewed the state in positive terms as an institution created by God to promote and protect justice. At the same time it is important not to overstate the differences between Marshall and Redekop. Both urged EFC leaders not to seek the political establishment of Christianity and to promote the religious freedom of all religious groups. Both assumed the importance of Christian political engagement, produced arguments that were accessible to the general public rather than narrowly focused on a particular religious community, and called evangelicals to be engaged in issues of social justice. They were leery of the American Religious Right and worked for distinctly Canadian evangelical responses to Canadian issues. Both of them understood the differences between

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<sup>99</sup> Some Anabaptists understand the church as an alternative community in which their faith is a way of life. The work of Stanley Hauerwas, an Episcopal theologian and ethicist, reflects this approach.

Canadian and American political cultures and between Canadian and American evangelicalism as described in the previous chapter. Over time Marshall and Redekop became friends and continued to provide leadership to the EFC. Ultimately they influenced the EFC to construe Canadian evangelicalism as politically engaged in order to promote public justice. For some of the denominations affiliated with the EFC, these assumptions were a significant break with previous conceptions of political engagement. Thus there is some support for Stackhouse's charge that the manner in which the EFC defined evangelicalism did not reflect the full diversity of political views held by evangelicals.

Under Stiller's leadership the EFC focused on the institution of the state rather than, say, civil society or culture. The organization produced briefs to the government on a host of issues and sought to influence MPs and Cabinet Ministers. Towards the end of Stiller's tenure the organization's focus expanded to include the courts as various groups employed the Charter to challenge the constitutionality of some of the Christian assumptions underlying a number of social policies. Although the public voice of the EFC diminished after Stiller's departure as his successor did not have the same public persona, the EFC's participation in parliamentary discussions and legal interventions continued.

### **2.3 Gary Walsh: 1997-2002**

When Stiller left the EFC it employed 30 people (*Faith Today* 1997, 10), represented 28 denominational affiliates, and maintained close relationships with over 100 parachurch agencies (*Faith Today* 1996, 54). As Stiller's successor the General Council selected Gary Walsh, at that time the Bishop of the Free Methodist Church in Canada. A contemporary of Stiller, Walsh assumed the Presidency of the EFC in 1997 at the age of 52. At the time the EFC's mission statement instructed the organization "to be a public advocate of the gospel of Jesus Christ, unite Christians of diverse backgrounds, express biblical views on public issues, and assist Christians in evangelism" (McIntire 1998, 34). Whether intentional or not, Walsh paid special attention to the unity element in the EFC mission statement. He focused on expanding evangelical partnerships to include the renewal movements in mainline churches and sought to have the EFC enrich congregational life. Stackhouse characterized Walsh's role as being a "pastor to pastors" (2008).

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<sup>100</sup> Redekop acknowledged that he supports "dualism, a two-kingdom perspective" (2007, 200).

During his time at the helm, Walsh continued Stiller's and Redekop's commitment to ecumenism by emphasizing what the evangelical community held in common rather than what divided it. To that end he saw his role as a facilitator rather than a leader and he helped create ministry "roundtables" that brought various denominational organizations together to pursue a common purpose.<sup>101</sup> In addition, he sought to moderate the public perception of evangelicals. He wanted evangelicals to be less confrontational for he considered it unfortunate "if the evangelical movement became known for half a dozen angry issues" (*Faith Today* 1997, 10). In Walsh's view, this could be done if the EFC de-emphasized issues and crises and instead focused on "the value that the organization adds to Christendom" (Careless 1999, 37). How Walsh understood the term "Christendom" in this context is unclear. The writer of the article placed Walsh's quote within a larger discussion of how the EFC might expand its representation to include more elements in the evangelical community. It is probably the case that Walsh used the term to refer to the broader Christian community.

In 1998 Walsh led the EFC's General Council through a re-visioning process that continued to identify the EFC's public and political role as "job one" but also called for greater unity and a renewed commitment to "thinking Christianly" (Walsh 1998a, 10).<sup>102</sup> The process led to changes in the EFC's governing structure. Walsh wanted to move the EFC away from a single-cell organization that revolved around the president, as it did under Stiller, to a multiple-cell organization (Careless 1999, 35).<sup>103</sup> Governing responsibilities moved from the General Council to a Board<sup>104</sup> and as the EFC hired more staff to address public policy, including hiring its own lawyers,<sup>105</sup> the need for the

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<sup>101</sup> Under Walsh these "roundtables" addressed higher education, evangelism, Christian media, and global mission (Fieguh 2004, 32-33).

<sup>102</sup> When introducing the re-visioning process to *Faith Today* readers, Walsh echoed Stiller's desire to develop "made in Canada" approaches to Canadian issues when he reminded them that "looking to other countries for precedence and guidance may be less helpful" given Canadian multiculturalism and pluralism (Walsh 1999b, 17).

<sup>103</sup> As a result, Walsh's role in *Faith Today* diminished in comparison to Stiller's role. Where Stiller had a one page editorial entitled "Understanding our times" towards the end of each issue, most of Walsh's editorials were on page 7 and entitled "From the publisher." Towards the end of his tenure the editorial was re-titled "The gathering place," a title Clemenger has maintained.

<sup>104</sup> E-mail from Bruce Clemenger to the author December 23, 2008.

<sup>105</sup> The first lawyer hired was Janet Epp Buckingham, who has a LL. B. from the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa, where she wrote a thesis on religious freedom. Prior to working for the EFC, she worked for Christian Legal Fellowship while serving as chair of first the Social Action Commission and then the Religious Freedom Project. During her tenure at the EFC (2000-2006), she was its Director of Law and Public Policy in the Ottawa office. In 2006 she left the EFC to become the director of the Laurentian Leadership Centre in Ottawa, where students of Trinity Western University gain experience and knowledge by working for MPs. The EFC then hired Don Hutchinson, a former pastor of The Salvation Army Church (Canada) who founded and ran

Social Action Commission diminished and eventually it ceased to operate. Walsh reaffirmed his desire to reach out to evangelicals in the mainline churches and regional evangelical groups. Interestingly, he noted that the “EFC has never developed an organizational life that takes it to the grassroots” (Careless 1999, 36), echoing the concerns raised by Stackhouse about representation. However, although Walsh may have desired to bring the EFC to the grassroots, the decision-making process was staff-driven, especially by the president. While this process enabled decisions to be made more quickly, the organization lost an avenue with which to incorporate a variety of voices from its member denominations. In effect, the centralization of the decision-making process reduced the amount of collaboration among the various elements of its constituency.

Seeking to serve the church more effectively, Walsh enlarged the EFC’s Centre for Ministry Empowerment and more intentionally linked churches with the EFC’s Commissions and Task Forces (Careless 1999). He helped establish [www.christianity.ca](http://www.christianity.ca) as an online clearing house of information and news sources about evangelicals and provided leadership to Vision 2000, an evangelistic outreach project initiated by the EFC under Stiller. In an effort to support the EFC’s public and political work, Walsh and other EFC leaders changed the name of the Ottawa office from the Department of National Affairs to the Centre for Faith and Public Life and expanded its role to include an educational component to help evangelicals think through issues. As Walsh became increasingly concerned about the lack of religious freedom he saw reflected in court decisions, he extended the EFC’s public and political role by creating the Religious Freedom Project to monitor legal decisions and public debates concerning religion and religious practice(s). Prior to becoming the EFC’s legal counsel, Janet Epp Buckingham supervised the project. The Religious Freedom Project spawned the Religious Liberty Commission, originally chaired by Paul Marshall. John Redekop also provided leadership to the Commission.

The first year and a half of Walsh’s presidency were difficult as he adjusted to his role of leading a national organization and being a public spokesperson for evangelicals. In his first year a budget shortfall forced him to lay off staff temporarily, and his restructuring program caused “some trepidation within the organization” (Koop 1998). Moreover, Walsh at times seemed uncertain, if not uncomfortable, with the media, who had grown accustomed to Stiller’s public role as a spokesperson for Canadian evangelicals. Walsh’s lack of media savvy was demonstrated when, within several

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the legal department of that denomination in Canada. In addition to Hutchinson, Faye Sonier is the EFC’s associate legal counsel.

months of becoming president, Bill Phipps, then moderator of the United Church, publicly stated that he did not believe in the divinity of Christ. When *Maclean's* magazine called Walsh looking for a response, Walsh chose to speak about Jesus rather than “slamming” Phipps. As a result *Maclean's* did not include Walsh in the story. Members of several renewal groups in the United Church expressed their disappointment, stating they would have appreciated more active support from the EFC. Walsh later explained his response as “less reactionary” than others, stating “I don’t have much of a need to put down people or organizations with whom I disagree. There is so much good in the United Church; I didn’t want to use the moment to slam their leader” (Careless 1999, 36). In theological terms, Walsh’s emphasis upon Christ rather than Phipps was consistent with the centrality of Jesus in evangelical theology. However, as EFC’s president, Walsh’s task was not to engage in nuanced theological discussions, which would be of little interest to mainstream reporters or general readers, but to articulate clearly the EFC’s position on central theological issues that defined evangelical faith.

One year later, the *Hamilton Spectator* called Walsh just as he was entering a meeting, looking for his response to the killing of an abortion provider in Buffalo. When Walsh could not meet the *Spectator's* 90-minute response deadline, the paper’s religion editor noted the EFC’s silence on the issue. Walsh felt the *Spectator's* actions were unfair. “We’ve spoken and spoken and spoken. We’re decidedly pro-life at every level. Who would expect we would need to make a statement about life? We’ve been talking about life for 20 years.” Once again Walsh’s response reflected a lack of media savvy. This time, however, Walsh decided a change was in order. As a result of these events, Walsh implemented changes so he and the organization would be prepared for such contingencies in the future (Careless 1999, 36).<sup>106</sup>

During Walsh’s tenure the EFC produced an extraordinary number of briefs, discussion papers, and policy positions in response to the issues of the day. Such productivity could occur, at least in part, because the Ottawa office hired had hired its own lawyers. Many of the issues addressed during this time were the same as those addressed by the EFC under the leadership of Stiller, with the addition of the issue of biotechnologies. Based on the EFC’s online resource list, under Walsh’s five-year term the organization made at least 23 presentations to various parliamentary bodies and published eight position papers or other materials intended to educate evangelicals and engender discussion among

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<sup>106</sup> Doug Koop, editor of *Christian Week*, voiced his concern about these incidents when he wrote, “the voice of evangelicals in Canada must speak loud enough to be heard and soon enough to be heeded” (1998).

them. The paper topics included: Christianity and pluralism; gambling; poverty; religious education in public schools; marriage; stem cell research; and child pornography.

In those same five years the EFC intervened in at least 14 legal cases, most of them at the Supreme Court and often in coalition with other groups. The majority of these cases involved the issue of homosexuality in some way, whether it was the religious freedom of religious adherents and their institutions to express their disagreement with the practice of homosexuality, challenging the expansion of social benefits to same-sex couples, or opposing same-sex marriage. The EFC also intervened on behalf of Ryan Dobson, a child who sued his mother for harm inflicted while in *utero*; argued against Robert Latimer, accused of the “mercy killing” of his young daughter afflicted by cerebral palsy; contended that the protection of children trump the freedom of expression in a case involving a man from British Columbia who had written unpublished stories about minors engaging in sexual acts; and argued against granting a patent for a genetically modified mouse, known as the Harvard Mouse case. Thus although Walsh focused more attention on the institution of the church than Stiller, the EFC under his leadership continued to employ significant resources to address and interact with the state, especially the courts

These political and legal interventions reveal that under Walsh the EFC focused attention on traditional evangelical concerns. While the EFC under Stiller participated in the national unity debates and how national broadcasting rules and Ontario’s public schools mistreated and/or misrepresented religion in general, many of the issues which it addressed under Walsh’s leadership focused on issues involving sexual morality. Granted, the organization continued to address religious education in Ontario’s public schools and cautioned the government that anti-terrorism laws could adversely impact Christian humanitarian agencies while its Social Action Commission published a background paper entitled “Good news to the poor” which related the Bible to issues of poverty and the Canadian government (EFC 1999a).<sup>107</sup> Yet the bulk of its work from 1997 to 2002 addressed such issues as prostitution, the expansion of conjugal rights to same-sex partners, new reproductive technologies, and the freedom of Christians to state their beliefs about homosexual relationships. The EFC framed its concerns about sexual morality in terms of the *imago Dei*, arguing that image bearers of God need legal and political protections in order to live with the dignity and respect they deserve.

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<sup>107</sup> The paper became the most widely circulated document ever produced by the EFC (Walsh 2001b, 7).

Although Walsh did not write about the theological and political influences in his life,<sup>108</sup> EFC documents continued to reflect a Kuyperian influence. For example, in “Good news to the poor” the Social Action Commission described society in the Kuyperian language of sphere sovereignty. The Commission defined the state’s role as securing “public justice” and the language used to describe such justice reflects the notion of sphere sovereignty:

A central function of government, however, is to set out a public legal order that can serve to justly integrate all social institutions together into one society according to public justice, that is, in a way that respects, enables and enhances their specific callings. Sometimes the state sets conditions which shape the future integration of society and sometimes the state follows up existing integration in order to correct distortions and oppression. Both are valid elements of government’s public legal integration of society.

The state’s task, however, includes more than simply making laws and regulations. Governments that legally integrate society may have to step in to prevent the oppression of one institution by another, intervene to justly reconstitute a distorted societal relationship, act to fulfil a particular function or service that is absent or failing, or arbitrate in order to restore a person or institution to its proper place when another institution unjustly absorbs its callings. (EFC 1999a, 9-10)

While Stackhouse wrote his critique of the EFC and NAE in 1995 when Stiller was the EFC’s president, he might have made the same observations in 2003 given the EFC’s continuing focus on ecumenism and the influence of the Kuyperian view of the state evident in some EFC publications. Some of this Kuyperian influence came from Bruce Clemenger, the director of the Ottawa office who helped develop many of the papers and submissions developed during Walsh’s tenure. Clemenger obtained his Master’s degree at the Institute for Christian Studies where Paul Marshall was one of his supervisors.

Walsh left the EFC in 2002 in order to lead Interdev, an international organization that developed global strategic partnerships.<sup>109</sup> The EFC leadership engaged in a ten-month search that culminated in

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<sup>108</sup> In an interview with *Christian Week* Walsh noted the importance of Dean Merrill’s *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Church* (Zondervan, 1997) on his thinking (Koop 1998).

<sup>109</sup> Shortly thereafter, Interdev announced that it was shutting down its operations as it no longer had a role to play in developing partnerships. Walsh then became president of Just Opportunity International Canada, a microcredit financier based in Toronto. Towards the end of 2008 he resigned from Opportunity to take a position at Northeastern Seminary and Roberts Wesleyan College in the state of New York.



the unanimous decision to hire Bruce Clemenger as its president. A generation younger than Stiller and Walsh, Clemenger differs from his predecessors in that he is much more of an academic.

## **2.4 Bruce Clemenger: 2003-present**

Clemenger's journey to political activism reflected some of the same influences evident in Stiller's life. As a high school student Clemenger encountered Francis Schaeffer's book and film series *How Should We Then Live?* In an interview with *Faith Today*, Clemenger claimed that Schaeffer inspired him to integrate his personal faith with other areas of life (Fieguth 2004, 33). After high school Clemenger obtained an undergraduate degree in economics and history, followed by a Master of Philosophical Foundations degree in political theory from the Institute of Christian Studies. At the time of writing he continues to work on a PhD in political theory.

Although familiar with the work of the EFC from a young age,<sup>110</sup> Clemenger became directly involved with the EFC in 1989 when he joined its Social Action Commission. In 1992 Stiller hired him to be the organization's research coordinator and he worked closely with Stiller to open the EFC office in Ottawa in 1996. As director of the office, he was the EFC spokesperson for issues concerning law and public policy (Fieguth 2004, 33-34). When *Faith Today* interviewed Clemenger in 2003 when he became the EFC's president, it asked him to identify the future challenges for Canadian evangelicals. Clemenger highlighted issues concerning religious freedom because he was uncomfortable with the changing definition of tolerance, particularly its move "from a recognition of difference to a celebration and affirmation of diverse faiths and lifestyles" (*Faith Today* 2003, 15).<sup>111</sup> Clemenger worried that this definition would become problematic for evangelism. Other challenges he noted include the role of the Church in an increasingly secular country, how to speak in public debates in Canadian society, and how to engage young people in church ministry.

As the EFC's president Clemenger continued to challenge the secularism which evangelicals viewed with increasing concern. Yet the manner in which Clemenger interacted with secularism was different from that expressed by Stiller and Walsh, in large part because the context of Canadian public life changed in the early 2000s. After some Muslim fundamentalists flew two planes into the

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<sup>110</sup> Clemenger's father sat on the EFC's General Council in the 1970s. Robert Thompson, a federal politician and leader of the federal Social Credit Party, was a family friend (Fieguth 2004, 31, 33). Thompson was president of the EFC's General Council in the 1970s.

twin towers in New York on September 11, 2001, Canadians became more aware of the public consequences of religion. A year later the Supreme Court ruled in *Chamberlain v Surrey School Board No. 36* that the term “secular” does not mean a-religious. This ruling meant that a secular school system does not prohibit the involvement of religious parents and groups who participate in education as particular religious voices. The Court recognized that people’s views are often motivated by religious beliefs.<sup>112</sup> The *Chamberlain* decision permitted Clemenger to spend less energy on educating evangelicals about the dangers of secularism and instead focus on the benefits of participating in civil society. As a result, a number of Clemenger’s columns in *Faith Today* call for a public discussion about the content of “Canadian values.” Thus Clemenger interacted with a different Canadian ethos that was marked in part by a new openness to religion in the public sphere.

In addition, Clemenger worked with a different evangelical community than did Stiller. More specifically, evangelicals had become more invested in politics and more politically savvy. Where Stiller had to convince evangelicals about the importance of participating in politics, Clemenger could assume that most evangelicals now agree on the importance of political engagement (Clemenger 2003, 172). Where Stiller had to teach evangelicals about the dangers and limitations of bifurcation, of identifying some tasks as sacred and others as secular, Clemenger claimed that evangelicals “believe that life should not be bifurcated or compartmentalized” (2009a, 4). He saw evangelicals as integrating their faith with the rest of their life, suggesting that they view such activities as serving the poor and others in need as acts of worship as well as of service (4). Furthermore, Clemenger worked within an evangelical context shaped by the lessons learned from the abortion debate – that an all-or-nothing approach to politics is often counter-productive. Institutionally, he benefitted from the structural changes established by Walsh as the EFC now has the organizational structures and ability to respond quickly to issues.

Another change in the context in which Clemenger worked was a new alignment between the Conservative Party and evangelicals, demonstrated in the 2006 and 2008 elections. When Harper’s first Cabinet was sworn in, Clemenger noted that the evangelical faith of some of the Cabinet members did not become a public issue, a fact he welcomed, especially when he compared the silence

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<sup>111</sup> Six months later Clemenger addressed the issue again in *Faith Today*. Where toleration once meant “Respecting the religious beliefs of another, particularly when you consider those beliefs to be heresy,” he believed that it now means affirming all differences (Clemenger 2004b, 14).

<sup>112</sup> See *Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36*, 2002 SCC 86, [2002] 4 S.C.R. 710, ¶19. Available online at <http://scc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/2002/2002scc86/2002scc86.html> (accessed February 21, 2011).

with the negative reception Preston Manning and Stockwell Day encountered when they assumed the leadership of the Reform and Alliance parties respectively (2006a, 14).

In the midst of all of these contextual changes, the EFC's budget and types of activity expanded. In 2002 its revenue was \$2,932,381. Revenue rose to \$4,273,895 in 2007, with the largest increase coming from program registrations and contributions.<sup>113</sup> The EFC declared 2005 a Year of Prayer for Canada and instituted a campaign called "Celebration 2005," aimed at motivating Christians to engage in their communities. In 2007 Clemenger established the EFC's Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism which seeks to improve public and scholarly representations of Canadian evangelicals, prompt new research, provide information to evangelical ministry leaders, and act as a storehouse for research. Its first advisory council was chaired by Stackhouse (Regent College). Other members included: Marguerite Van Die (Queen's University); Bruce Guenther (Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary/Trinity Western University); Mark Noll (University of Notre Dame); and Samuel Reimer (Atlantic Baptist University<sup>114</sup>). Nine other members represented denominations, a particular church, ministry organizations, the EFC, and a public polling company. Another new initiative was the Missional Church Project, established to facilitate dialogue between denominations, churches, mission agencies, and educational institutions in order to gain greater insight about the great commission as found in Matthew 18, 18-20 (*Faith Today* 2008b, 15). In addition, Clemenger followed Walsh in his desire to collaborate with more denominations and ministries and in his focus upon the service nature of the EFC for other ministries (*Faith Today* 2003, 15).

Clemenger continued the trend of becoming more involved in legal cases, demonstrating how the state remained a central institution for the EFC in its political engagement. By the end of 2006 the EFC under Clemenger intervened in at least 6 cases, many of them in coalition with other groups. (By the end of 2010 the number of cases reached 12.) These coalitions paralleled similar developments in the Protestant mainline churches that created inter-church coalitions in the 1970s to address specific social justice issues. Seven of the EFC's interventions under Clemenger may be classified as cases concerning religious freedom, of which two involved religious freedom for non-evangelical groups

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<sup>113</sup> Affiliation fees increased from \$252,715 in 2002 to \$368,608 in 2007. These fees were dwarfed by contributions, which totalled \$2,460,123 in 2007, roughly \$340,000 more than the contributions received in 2002. In 2007 the EFC spent \$909,496 on its publications, \$848,251 on "public witness," which includes conferences, research, and costs involved in legal interventions, and \$1,582,131 on "equipping and encouraging ministry leaders" via roundtables and partnerships. The budget of 2008 remained roughly the same for these budgetary items. To view EFC audited annual financial statements, see <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/page.aspx?pid=1231> (accessed January 27, 2011).

(Jews and Jehovah's Witnesses) and two addressed religious freedom with regard to how religious people opposed to homosexual activity and marriage may publicly express their views.

Despite these legal interventions in religious freedom, the issue that consumed Clemenger's time until the end of 2006 was the same-sex marriage debate. The EFC spent a great deal of resources making parliamentary presentations, intervening in legal cases as a member of the Interfaith Coalition on Marriage and Family,<sup>115</sup> conducting media interviews, and participating in civil society debates. During the debate Clemenger argued that one's views of same-sex marriage were increasingly "the litmus test often used in Canada of late to determine whether someone is tolerant and reasonable, compatible with secular society and suitable for public office" (2006b, 14). Given evangelical opposition to the expansion of marriage, some within the academy and the media portrayed them as un-Canadian, fundamentalist, and trying to impose their socially conservative views on the Canadian populace (14). To counter such claims Clemenger advanced three arguments. First, he insisted that all legislation reflects a moral position. The question was not whether morality should be imposed, but which moral position would legislation enforce. He pointed out that in the marriage debate both the political right and left desired to have their moral views enshrined in public policy and ultimately the government made a moral choice (2005a, 14). This defence helped the evangelical base put the public's concerns about their political activity in perspective. Clemenger further used the argument to expand the definition of morality beyond the traditional issues of abortion, euthanasia, and marriage to include how individuals and countries spend their money. Thus for Clemenger national budgets are moral documents (2004c, 38-39). Second, Clemenger emphasized how evangelicals participate in all professions and walks of life (2005b, 14) and he focused on their contributions to the charitable and voluntary sectors of society (2006b, 14). Third, he urged evangelicals to live out their integrated faith, to meet the needs of the vulnerable, come alongside the poor, and help the broken (14). These words hinted that perhaps Clemenger wanted to spend more EFC resources on the issues of poverty and homelessness. Indeed, the EFC-initiated roundtable on poverty and homelessness is increasingly involved in proposing policy recommendations and doing advocacy work.

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<sup>114</sup> Now Crandall University.

<sup>115</sup> Members of the Interfaith Coalition change depending upon the particular case. The most consistent members are the EFC and the Islamic Society of North America. The Catholic Civil Rights League and the Ontario Council of Sikhs participated in more than one case with the Coalition. Other associations that appear in only one case include the Archdiocese of Vancouver, the BC Council of Sikhs, the BC Muslim Association, the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Focus on the Family.

Another important element of Clemenger's agenda was to call for public discussions to provide "content," or meaning, to the Charter principles<sup>116</sup> of justice, tolerance, religion, life, and equality, Clemenger wanted Canadians to provide the content, not the courts (2006c, 14). Implicit in Clemenger's arguments was the assumption that religious voices were free to express and practice their beliefs in civil society and that religious adherents were fully entitled to participate in civil society *as* religious adherents. Clemenger emphasized this public nature of faith. As he noted, "a well reasoned dialogue can provide the civil forum for a plurality of perspectives to be heard and perhaps result in a substantive conversation about which guiding principles are necessary for a truly just society" (14). When Clemenger called evangelicals to participate in these discussions, he urged them to do so with the goal of seeking "the good of society" (2005b, 14). He informed evangelicals that they promote the good when they advocate for policies "that uphold human dignity, care for the vulnerable, promote justice in relationships and protect our freedoms" (2006b, 14).

When Clemenger identified the significant influences upon his thinking, most of them were in the Kuiperian tradition. In addition to Schaeffer<sup>117</sup> and Marshall, he listed Bernard Zylstra, a former political theorist with the Institute for Christian Studies, and Al Wolters, a philosopher and theologian who previously taught at the Institute and Redeemer College, another post-secondary Kuiperian educational institution. Clemenger credited Gerald Vandezande for teaching him about public policy and Stiller for his leadership in helping the evangelical community engage in public life.<sup>118</sup>

Like Marshall, Clemenger employed a classical definition of justice. For example, in a 2007 column in *Faith Today* he wrote, "justice is fulfilled when each has their due; that is, what is necessary for them to fulfil their calling before God. This includes food and shelter as well as community and friends. It also includes authority that is commensurate with our responsibilities" (Clemenger 2007a, 14). The last line is typical sphere sovereignty language in that social spheres

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<sup>116</sup> Clemenger found the Charter's use of the term "principle" rather than "value" significant. For Clemenger, "principle" refers to "that which abides and is grounded" whereas Nietzsche's term of "value" refers to "that which one asserts in the *absence* of principles" (2006c, 14, italics in original).

<sup>117</sup> Clemenger credited Schaeffer with teaching him "that life need not be bifurcated and that faith should not be compartmentalized. Indeed, quite the opposite. ... Our faith has implications for all areas of life – the alternative is idolatry and living a life [of] unexamined habits" (2006d, 14). Yet he, like Stiller, distanced himself from Schaeffer's desire to return to Christendom or a golden, more Christian past.

<sup>118</sup> E-mail from Bruce Clemenger to author December 23, 2008.

have their own sovereignty and authority structures. The state is not to interfere with these authority structures unless there is a problem within one of them or between one or more of them.<sup>119</sup>

Despite his educational training at Kuyprian institutions, however, Clemenger was careful to note that concern for public justice is by no means exclusive to the Reformed or Kuyprian tradition. In an interview he took pains to note that those representing the United Church, any of the Reformed Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, or a Mennonite Church all believe that they are promoting public justice when they engage in the public sphere in that they all believe they are identifying biblical principles deemed to be the best for the whole society, not just themselves. Clemenger argued that moving beyond such articulation to advising on policy specifics was outside the scope of the church (2008a).

Two consistent themes among these three EFC presidents were their commitment to political engagement and their positive view of the state. All of them called evangelicals out of their sectarian communities into the public sphere. Their view of the state was in large part influenced by the Kuyprian tradition. Other elements adopted from this tradition were its conceptions of sphere sovereignty and structural pluralism. To conclude this chapter I return to the debate between Stackhouse and Redekop. Both have a deep knowledge of the EFC but they differ on how to define the notion of representation. The question is whether the call to public engagement and the manner in which that public engagement occurred created or reflected evangelical identity.

## **2.5 A return to the Stackhouse/Redekop debate**

Despite all of the work generated by the EFC, George Rawlyk observed in 1996 that Canadian evangelicalism appeared leaderless. He pointed to a 1993 Angus Reid poll which revealed that 72 per cent of Canadian evangelicals could not identify an evangelical leader. A further 7 per cent said there were no such leaders. Another 5 per cent listed American evangelist Billy Graham with an additional 3 per cent naming Canadian televangelist David Mainse and 2 per cent Brian Stiller.<sup>120</sup> Rawlyk

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<sup>119</sup> In another article Clemenger wrote that “at its core, the State is oriented toward the pursuit of justice in the public sphere. It adjudicates between members of society, individual and institutions, and it protects rights and holds us to our responsibilities in our common life together. Stated another way, government undertakes a specialized activity of individuals and institutions that make and enforce public decisions which are binding on the whole community in the pursuit of justice and the good of all” (Clemenger 2006e).

<sup>120</sup> An article in *Faith Today* reported that Stiller was not surprised at the response, claiming that most Canadian evangelicals followed American and/or British leaders, particularly Billy Graham and John Stott (Browne 2001, 45).

attributed the lack of leadership to the populist and local nature of evangelicalism. Canadian evangelicals resist being melded into a coherent movement, he thought, because they consider it “a frontal challenge to their Canadian Christian identity that owed so much to the way in which localism blended into a growing sense of individualism” (1996, 140). Rawlyk also discovered that only 19 per cent of conservative Protestants said they had direct contact with the EFC, such as personal contact, watching it on television, or reading about it, compared with 4 per cent of the Roman Catholics and 11 per cent of mainline Protestants (135). In fact, conservative Protestants had more direct contact with IVCF, Aglow Canada (formerly Women Aglow), and especially the Bible institutes and colleges, than with the EFC (136). Pollster Andrew Grenville found that the EFC had direct contact (personal or written) with approximately 500,000 evangelicals, compared with 900,000 evangelicals who had such contact with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. The total evangelical population at the time was 3.4 million (1997, 421, 428).

Clearly the majority of Canadian evangelicals at the time of Rawlyk’s study did not have significant contact with the EFC. In 1995 Stackhouse suggested that some denominations did not join the EFC because it pursued agendas and advanced positions that were not shared by all evangelicals, thereby defining evangelicalism in a particular manner that alienated some denominations. As he noted in his comparison of the EFC and the National Association of Evangelicals, the two organizations not only spoke for their constituencies in the public sphere “but they also sought to educate and shape their constituencies, to speak *to* them” (1995b, 177, italics in original). Essentially, he argued that the EFC helped create a transdenominational and politically engaged evangelical identity with which some evangelicals disagreed (178). Stackhouse pointed to the EFC’s support for the compromise abortion Bill of 1990 as an example of the EFC not reflecting an evangelical consensus and going beyond the basic evangelical tenets of its statement of faith (176).

For Stackhouse, the EFC’s reliance on denominational leaders to determine evangelical views and the abstention of a number of denominations raised the question of representation, of how the EFC gathered input from evangelicals in the process of discerning and developing distinctly evangelical positions. Stackhouse further suggested that the search for a united evangelicalism was fruitless because “‘evangelicalism’ per se provided too slender a basis for such involvement in public life” (1995b, 178).<sup>121</sup> He claimed that even in the golden age of evangelical political action in the

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<sup>121</sup> Former evangelical and now Catholic political theorist J. Budziszewsky echoed some of the concerns raised by Stackhouse on this point. In an observation about American evangelicals Budziszewsky wrote, “the typical

nineteenth century, evangelicals established issue-specific organizations rather than umbrella groups. There is, he said, no single and simple “evangelical opinion” and thus the EFC and National Association of Evangelicals should either: 1) represent a wider diversity of evangelical opinions; 2) explicitly state the convictions which determine its particular version of evangelicalism; or 3) limit its work to areas in which there is unanimity and leave the more controversial issues to be debated by the denominations or new issue-specific organizations (178-79). In 2004 Stackhouse summarized the role of the EFC as edifying the church, informing church congregants about public policy, and equipping them “to do better in the political sphere” (Fieguth 2004, 34). The implicit suggestion was that the EFC should limit its work to equipping congregants to participate in the public sphere rather than undertaking such engagement itself on behalf of evangelicals.

Redekop disagreed, claiming that the EFC operates in the same manner as other umbrella agencies. From the United Nations to political parties to very small associations, Redekop claimed, umbrella organizations have members who participate conditionally while maintaining their own agendas and identities. He insisted that the objective was not to have every person in a local congregation understand a particular issue, as each person is interested in a variety of issues and may adhere to different positions than others in the congregation. Instead, the process was akin to that of political representation where individuals vote for another person to represent him or her in governmental debates and decisions. He conceded that the inherent risk in such a structure is differentiated input, revealed during the abortion debate during the early 1990s, when the EFC supported a compromise Bill because it stated that life beings at conception while many rank and file evangelicals opposed it because its definition of the mother’s health allowed many abortions. Yet despite the danger of differentiated inputs, Redekop argued that the EFC’s focus on denominational and parachurch leaders rather than the base was an authentic and legitimate structure (2008).<sup>122</sup>

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evangelical is ambivalent. On the one hand, he is convinced that Christ is Lord over every part of life, the public square included. This draws him outward. On the other hand, he tends to think of faith in exclusively individualistic terms, as a ‘personal’ relationship with Jesus Christ. From this perspective, even the church begins to blur; society at large becomes invisible. Although the Great Commission to bring Christ to all people pulls him outward again, it does not pull him far enough. He is apt to imagine that if only everyone were converted, the public square would take care of itself. Sufficiently provoked, he warmly takes part in public affairs, but his participation is impulsive rather than careful and orderly.” Budziszewsky, *Evangelicals in the Public Square: Four Formative Voices in Political Thought and Action* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) 17.

<sup>122</sup> EFC presidents communicate with the base in a variety of ways. Initially Stiller sent out polls about various issues that were then synthesized and reported in *Faith Alive/Today*. Stiller also sent out bulletin inserts entitled “Religion watch.” With the move of society towards the web, the EFC created the online site Christianity.ca and



The examination of the leadership presented in this chapter supports Stackhouse's argument that the EFC contributed to the creation of a specific evangelical identity, particularly its focus on political engagement and ecumenism, the very elements identified by Stackhouse as problematic. However, it is difficult to establish the degree to which the EFC was responsible for the adoption of this identity by evangelicals. At least two other possible explanatory factors exist. First, the manner in which evangelicals participated in the abortion debate may have led many of them to re-examine their understanding of politics and their engagement in it. Such a re-evaluation may have led evangelicals to support the EFC as they came to understand the manner in which the EFC participated in the abortion debate. Second, the public space for religion shifted as the courts grappled with the definitions of religion and secularism and as religious groups claimed public space by participating in public discussions, running for office, intervening in legal cases, and working with other religious groups to develop common causes and positions. These efforts in turn influenced public perception and perhaps even legal decisions. Thus there was a dialectical relationship between evangelical identity and society that suggests an evangelical identity that is in continual flux.

## 2.6 Conclusion

This overview of the work of the EFC's three presidents yields four observations. First, the influence of Redekop and Marshall upon the EFC was significant. Both encouraged the organization's leaders to engage in the public square and helped move the organization from one that spoke primarily to evangelicals to one that had a political voice and identity. In addition, Hoover's contention that the Mennonite and Reformed communities helped moderate Canadian evangelicalism was substantiated in this chapter (1997, 208). Stiller blended the Mennonite and Reformed traditions to form a political theology that he then employed to define Canadian evangelicalism.

Second, the Kuyperian view of the state as described by Marshall was operative within many aspects of the EFC. As a result, there was congruence between the EFC and two Reformed institutions: the Institute for Christian Studies and Citizens for Public Justice, both of which contributed a well-developed political theology to the EFC and profoundly influenced Stiller and Clemenger. The adoption of a positive view of the state informed by the Kuyperian worldview may not be as surprising as it appears at first glance as there was a natural affinity between the principle of

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its "magazine" *Church and Faith Trends* is now published exclusively on the EFC's website and thus accessible to all. The issue, as stated by Stackhouse, is how to get the "pew sitters" to go onto the site (2008).

sphere sovereignty and the evangelical fear of governments overstepping their bounds and interfering in non-state institutions such as the family, church, and voluntary associations.<sup>123</sup>

Third, the EFC became a leadership-driven rather than a grass roots organization. On this point both Stackhouse and Redekop agree. The leadership was primarily from the presidents, but also from the staff, especially since the structural reorganization instituted by Walsh. For example, Don Hutchinson, the EFC's vice president, its general legal counsel, and director of the Centre for Faith and Public Life, monitors various social issues and together with the president and associate legal counsel decides on which legal cases to intervene.<sup>124</sup>

Fourth, the issue of religious freedom has been and remains an important aspect of the EFC's political and legal interventions. Increasingly EFC leaders emphasize the public consequences of religion and the right of religious practitioners to publicly express and practice their faith. This issue is the topic of chapter 4. However, to properly examine how the EFC interacts with the issues of religious freedom, I first outline how its leaders interpreted and responded to secularism, the subject of chapter 3.

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<sup>123</sup> But as Clemenger reminded the author, although evangelicals in general want limited government, what that means differs from evangelical to evangelical (Clemenger 2008a).

<sup>124</sup> E-mail from Don Hutchinson to author, April 30, 2009. Hutchinson noted that the EFC is “in the process of structuring a legal advisory panel to further assist in assessment of intervention opportunities and development of legal argument.”

## Chapter 3

### Defining the secular public sphere

EFC leaders now support a secular state in that they acknowledge the differentiation of such public institutions as the state, church, and economy. They do not hearken back to a “golden past” when most Canadians self-identified as Christian. Indeed, Stiller urged evangelicals to distinguish between cultural dominance and Christ’s rule and avoid “fighting for the old majoritarianism” (1992c, 70).<sup>125</sup> At the same time, EFC leaders challenge evangelicals to be vigilant against *secularism*, typically defined as an anti-religious ideology dedicated to limiting, if not removing, religious reasoning and practice from public life. A secular state, EFC leaders argue, does not require the privatization of religion in order to protect the civil peace and encourage tolerance. However, the manner in which they defined and interacted with secularism put them in opposition with those who claim that Christianity continues to be privileged in Canada (Biles and Ibrahim 2005a, 2005b).

Since concern about secularism motivated much of the political work of the EFC, it is important to understand how its leaders defined the term and how their definition accorded with scholarly conceptions. In order to evaluate the EFC’s conception of secularism, I compare it with a sociological definition that I only briefly describe here as it is discussed in greater detail in section 3.2 below. According to Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “secularism refers to a public settlement of the relationship between politics and religion” (2008, 12). In Western Europe, this settlement took a specific form, born from such experiences as Christendom, the Protestant Reformation, and the religious wars that followed. José Casanova traced the etymology of the term “secularism” back to the medieval Christian conception of reality as consisting of two realms, the religious and the secular. Properly speaking, Casanova claimed, pre-modern thinking consisted of three worlds: the “other” world (or heaven) and the two realms of “this” world (i.e., the religious as found in the church and the secular as found outside the church). “Secular” priests worked in the world whereas “religious” priests withdrew from the world to live in isolated religious communities. The church mediated between the secular world and heaven, meaning that it structured reality. Consequently, there was little or no

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<sup>125</sup> Leslie Tarr, then senior editor of *Faith Today*, reminded his readers that Christians must distinguish between the dismantling of Christendom, which is a good thing, and the destruction of Christianity, which is impossible. To lose privileges may be uncomfortable, he acknowledged, but the gospel does not require such privileges and

differentiation between morality, sin, and the legal system. Membership in the church was compulsory, although there is no firm evidence that members personally lived “Christian” lives (1994, 12-16).

With the advent of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, the church lost its central and mediating role in society. These events initiated the process of secularization as they differentiated the various social spheres from the church and religion. Enlightenment philosophers elevated the secular world and insisted that religion find its place within the secular world. Over time, various secular states expropriated much of the land and wealth from the church and took over some of the church’s public functions, such as education and welfare services. In short, secularization contributed to the de-sacralization of reality and society (Casanova 1994, 13-16; Hecllo 2003, 6).<sup>126</sup> Some versions of liberalism went further and sought to limit religion to the private world of the home and the individual.

It was this privatization of religion that EFC leaders contested, not secularism *per se*. Section one traces the evolution of their definition of, and interactions with, secularism. In the early 1980s, Stiller defined secularism as anti-religious, akin to atheism. While this definition was somewhat dualistic, it became increasingly nuanced over time. By the early 1990s Stiller began discussing the role that Christians played in the development of secularism in Canada. When he left the EFC in 1997, he advised evangelicals to support pluralism in an effort to counteract the privatization of religion. Section two locates the EFC’s definition within sociological conceptions of secularism and advances the argument that while EFC leaders challenged one type of secularism, they accommodated another type. The third section examines the political implications of the EFC’s interactions with various types of secularism and the secular Canadian state

### **3.1 Developing a definition of secularism**

EFC leaders typically viewed secularism as a worldview that seeks dominance in the public square. The concept of “worldview” has both Christian and secular roots. Discussed by church leaders Augustine and Aquinas in the fifth and thirteenth centuries respectively, the term entered the common

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their elimination do not impede the gospel. For Tarr, Christians cannot be dependent upon the props provided by privilege (1989, 14-15).

<sup>126</sup> Casanova rejects the interpretation of secularism as the emancipation of humankind from superstition, belief, and religion and a movement towards reason, unbelief, and science because the secular and the religious are bound together (1994, 17; 2006, 21).

lexicon when German philosopher Immanuel Kant referred to a *Weltanschauung* or “sense perception of the world” (Naugle 2002, 59). Subsequent German romanticists and idealists used the idea to connote “an intellectual conception of the universe from the perspective of a human knower” (59) and claimed that one’s *Weltanschauung* provides meaning to human life.<sup>127</sup>

Dutch theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper employed the Dutch equivalent of the term worldview (*levensen wereldbeschouwing*) to refer to a “*life system*” or “*life and world view*” (Kuyper 1931, 11n1, italics in original). In his Stone Lectures of 1898 held at Princeton University, Kuyper presented Calvinism as a system of belief that impacts the spheres of religion, politics, science, and art (1931)<sup>128</sup> and therefore an effective tool “in the spiritual and intellectual warfare being waged for cultural dominance” (Naugle 2002, 20). His followers insisted that one of the purposes of their political engagement was to transform or redeem culture so that all cultural activities glorify God. Another Kuyperian principle required them to seek justice for all. James Skillen of the Centre for Public Justice in the US contends that Kuyper modelled the latter principle when he rejected Christian imperialism and led the campaign to grant all Dutch citizens equal political, educational, and religious rights (1996, 85).<sup>129</sup>

Later in the twentieth century Francis Schaeffer popularized the concept of worldview among evangelicals when he identified “secular humanism” as a worldview that threatened Christianity. Schaeffer warned conservative Protestants that they were losing control of their culture to humanists, whom he identified as those who take to themselves that which belongs to God and create “a value system rooted in the belief that man is his own measure, that man is autonomous, totally independent” (1976, 60). He maintained that the humanist elevation of both human reason and the particular over

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<sup>127</sup> The terms “*weltanschauung*” and “worldview” have been used to advance a variety of political goals. For instance, Hitler and the Nazis employed it in their propaganda campaigns (see <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/schul01.htm> (accessed January 30, 2011)). In light of the many secular uses of the term, David K. Naugle desires to redirect the concept “along Christian terms” (2002, 259n13). Of specific concern to Naugle is what he perceives to be the postmodern relativist reduction of worldviews to personal narratives. For further reflections by some Kuyperians about the “dangers” associated with the Christian use of the term “worldview” see Marshall, Griffioen, and Mouw (1989).

<sup>128</sup> For Kuyper, Calvinism contained “a given form for political and social life, for the interpretation of the moral world-order, for the relation between nature and grace, between Christianity and the world, between church and state, and finally for art and science; and amid all these life-utterances it remained always the self-same Calvinism, in so far as simultaneously and spontaneously all these developments sprang from its deepest life-principle” (1931, 17).

<sup>129</sup> James K.A. Smith cautions those who focus on worldviews against reducing people to cognitive beings and ignoring the loves and desires of the heart. Smith suggests that a disproportionate emphasis on worldview may

the absolute resulted in the death of God movement (175-81). Without a transcendent God, he argued, human beings lose their dignity, which he believed was based on being created in the image of God, and their sense of meaning (55). In addition, he alleged that in the absence of absolutes, there is no basis for morality and laws become arbitrary (55, 128).<sup>130</sup>

While categorizing various systems of thought as “worldviews” was not unique to Schaeffer, his academic demeanour and trenchant apologetic against a twentieth-century Western culture that had rejected human sinfulness in favour of human perfection through scientific reasoning turned Schaeffer into one of the most popular evangelicals in the 1970s and 1980s. His warnings against secularism resonated with evangelicals in both Canada and the US. For Schaeffer, secular humanism was the source for much that was wrong with the world: abortion, the manipulation of society by elites or authoritarian governments, genetic engineering, and the loss of morality. Evangelicals continue to view Schaeffer, who died in 1984, as a modern day prophet and cultural outsider who saw more clearly and deeply into the culture than those immersed in it.

Despite Schaeffer’s popularity among evangelicals, some within the broader evangelical and Reformed communities either nuanced Schaeffer’s analysis or offered an alternative position. For example, while Schaeffer focused on secular humanism as a threat to Christianity and called evangelicals to reconstruct their Christian past, Paul Marshall followed Kuyper and emphasized the religious nature of all worldviews. For Marshall, one’s religion shapes “basic questions about the nature of reality—what human nature is, what sin is and how it is manifested, what the nature and direction of history is, what law is, what idolatry is, and what the root of meaning of human life is” (1991, 5). In short, one’s understanding of the world—one’s worldview—is a religious system that in turn impacts other areas of life. This conception of worldview assumed that every person is fundamentally religious.<sup>131</sup> Marshall communicated his views of religion in a number of EFC documents. For instance, in his contribution to the book of essays written by the EFC’s Task Force on

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result in an “insufficiently Augustinian” worldview. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009) 43-46.

<sup>130</sup> Ronald Wells defines secular humanism as a worldview informed by scientific rational thought that marginalizes revealed truth and promises progress and eventual human perfection. Wells, *History through the Eyes of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989) 116, 125, 136.

<sup>131</sup> In another context Wolterstorff describes the type of thought developed by Marshall as one that “begins with the anthropological claim that an ineradicable feature of human beings is the irresistible impulse to bring unity to life by taking something as absolute, by giving ultimate allegiance to something or other – be it the transcendent God or something immanent in the created order. If the former, this impulse is faith; if the latter, idolatry” (1989, 67). For his disagreement with this interpretation, see pp. 70-71.

Canada's Future, Marshall expanded the definition of religion to include philosophies and ideologies that attempt to provide ultimate meaning to their adherents, including fascism, communism,<sup>132</sup> and conceptions of culture, democracy, and human rights (1992, 5-6).<sup>133</sup> In an article published by the EFC on its website entitled "A Christian defense of religious freedom,"<sup>134</sup> Marshall argued that religion was about more than religious creeds and doctrines. Instead, it was "the fundamental shaper of human life, sometimes positively so, sometimes not" (1996, 1). In this conception worldviews are religious perspectives in that they provide answers to the perennial questions concerning the nature of the human person and the meaning of existence.

All three EFC presidents, but especially Stiller, exhibited the influence of both Schaeffer and Marshall. Schaeffer's influence was evident in Stiller's portrayal of secular humanism (often shortened to the term "secularism") as a worldview that impacts all areas of life. Throughout his tenure at the EFC Stiller presented secularism as a threat to human dignity and morality and insisted that the struggle against secularism required evangelicals to participate in public life. Yet Schaeffer's influence was limited as his desire to return to the past meant that he did not provide evangelicals with the necessary interpretive framework to constructively engage with the secularism in their culture. In search of a model of engagement more applicable to the Canadian context, Stiller and other EFC leaders (including Redekop and Marshall) rejected Christian reconstructionism and expanded the EFC's mandate to seek justice for all, not just evangelicals. The following section traces the thought of Stiller who, like Schaeffer, identified secularism as a significant threat for Christianity, and how he employed the threat to motivate evangelicals to re-enter the public sphere.

### **3.1.1 Stiller's identification of secularism as a threat**

Many of Stiller's early columns in *Faith Today* followed Schaeffer in their portrayal of secularism as a singular, monolithic movement that was in opposition to Christianity.<sup>135</sup> Stiller called evangelicals

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<sup>132</sup> Paul Bramadat finds such definitions of religion "too capacious" (2005, 11).

<sup>133</sup> George Grant adopted a similar view of religion. Using the Latin understanding of religion as that which binds together, he identified religion as "that system of belief (whether true or false) which binds together the life of individuals and gives to those lives whatever consistency of purpose they may have." Thus he described Marxism and liberal humanism as religious systems (1969, 46). He also identified "teaching about the virtues of democracy" which students accept on faith as religious in nature (49).

<sup>134</sup> The article was adapted from an "Occasional Paper" that Marshall wrote for the World Evangelical Fellowship.

<sup>135</sup> This position reflects the influence of Schaeffer. According to Susan Harding, Schaeffer created a warring dualism between undifferentiated humanists who permit abortions and Christians who do not (Harding 2000, 193).

to resist secularism by engaging in the public square in order to accomplish two tasks: protect the vulnerable that are inevitably marginalized by what he perceived to be the narcissistic and individualist culture spawned by secularism; and become cultural and political insiders in order to bring about spiritual renewal (1983b; 1993b, 70). The second task suggests that an important purpose of evangelical political engagement for Stiller was the transformation of culture.

Stiller's concern for those who were negatively impacted by secularism was evident in his book *A Generation under Siege*, published in 1983, the same year that he became the executive director of the EFC. In this book Stiller lamented how the search for success and personal fulfillment led too many Canadian adults to pay insufficient attention to the safety and welfare of their children. One explanation Stiller offered for the rise of this desire for self-fulfillment was secularism, which he identified as a worldview that refused to acknowledge the transcendent. A secularist "may still accept religious worship, culture, symbolism, holidays, artifacts, and even language," he noted, "but he does not have a religious worldview" (1983b, 60). It is important to note that this was the last time that Stiller described secularism as a non-religious worldview. As the EFC's executive director he would come to refer to secularism as a religious worldview.

A year later Stiller followed Schaeffer in linking secularism with humanism and identifying both philosophical systems as de-valuing human life and informing the pro-choice movement. After an Ontario jury found Dr. Henry Morgentaler not guilty of wilfully procuring a miscarriage in his abortion practice in 1984, Stiller described Morgentaler's underlying philosophy as secularist, that is, "a worldview adopted by a person, community or country that assumes there is no outside reference point, or in other words, no God. Life is lived with no reference to any source of life ... In short, our society measures itself within itself. That's secularism" (1984c, 46-7). Stiller argued that society replaced the worship of a transcendent God with the worship of cultural values such as individual rights and personal convenience. He defined the worship of cultural values as humanism and claimed that it fed the pro-choice movement. The collusion of secularists and humanists, he warned, resulted in "a moral bomb" as their devaluation of life lead people to view children as expendable (47). Although Stiller did not name the secularists and humanists against whom he spoke, the implicit suggestion was that the leaders of the pro-choice movement and those who sought to limit the influence of a transcendent God in public life and policy fit within the category. Stiller viewed the Supreme Court's 1985 decision to strike down the *Lord's Day Act* as another indication of the increasingly secular nature of Canadian society bent on erasing its Christian past (1985a, 61).



Four years later Stiller's conception of secularism as a religious worldview became more explicit. In 1989, as the lower courts began ruling on the constitutionality of religious (Christian) education in Ontario public schools, Stiller urged evangelicals to support organizations that intervened in legal cases to defend religious freedom. In *Faith Today* he wrote that a legal decision to ban religious education would "shape the educational curriculum within a secular framework. To remove the teaching of religion is to ensure that the educational mindset will be one of secular humanism, which, in effect, is itself a religious world view" (1989b, 78). For Stiller, then, the belief that religion was irrelevant to public life was as religious a statement as the claim that religion impacted all of life.<sup>136</sup>

During his early years at the EFC, Stiller continued to raise the same concerns about the vulnerable that he highlighted in *A Generation under Siege*. After witnessing the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 and 1990, he compared the economic and spiritual failures of communism with secularism. Just as Marxism advanced an ideology of materialism that views human beings in economic (material) terms, he argued, so "secularism pushes out of our economic considerations a view of humankind which sees people as spiritual beings" (1990a, 78). While Stiller believed the residual elements of the Judeo-Christian faith in the West militated against the abuses and excesses of communist materialism, he was worried that "secular democratic materialism ... may lead to narcissistic anarchism in which self-centredness rules" (78). Stiller's fear relied on a framework he developed in *A Generation Under Siege* that identified narcissism and secularism as linked worldviews opposed to a Christian worldview.<sup>137</sup>

Stiller contrasted the harm that he believed secularism posed for the vulnerable with what he understood to be the inherent commitment of the Christian faith to protect the dignity of each person, including the disenfranchised. In a *Faith Today* column published in 1992, he rejected the secularist appeal to human rights legislation in its attempt to limit the public expression of religion and thereby create a "neutral" public square. For Stiller, the term "human rights" was grounded in religious belief as it assumed "a universal, moral order from which the right of the individual derives its legitimacy" (1992d, 82). He pointed out that Christians believe human beings have significance because they are "created out of purpose" rather than "the result of happenstance" and are made in the image of God

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<sup>136</sup> In summarizing the arguments presented to the Supreme Court in *Rodriguez* (1994), a case involving doctor-assisted suicide, Stiller wrote that "all arguments are basically rooted in a religious worldview. The tragedy is that religious views dominating our culture have usually been secular and humanistic" (1994c, 78).

<sup>137</sup> In 1994, Stiller identified autonomous individualism as a threat because it elevated individual rights over self-restraint (1994b, 13).

(82). The term “rights” was an equally religious principle, he claimed, because it originated from the “belief that there is a universal body of truth from which our rights are derived” (82). He then posited the Judeo-Christian faith as the source of this universal order and body of truth which in turn provided the foundation for human dignity. He warned that ignoring the religious root of human dignity could result in the reduction of human life to utility, a situation in which “‘rights’ become that which people give you and ‘human’ exists only when it serves those in power” (82).<sup>138</sup> This fear of reducing human life to utility motivated Stiller and other EFC leaders to participate in public debates on the issues of pornography, prostitution, abortion, and new reproductive technologies. For the EFC and the evangelicals it purportedly represented, the Judeo-Christian faith best protects the vulnerable because its principle of the *imago Dei* supports human flourishing and dignity. In contrast, secularism was thought to degrade the human person.

Stiller’s early definition of secularism contained elements of a dualism that portrayed those who were religious and recognized the transcendent as “good” while those who were self-referentially secularist were labelled as idolatrous and “bad.” It appears that for Stiller the two worldviews were incompatible, with little potential or opportunity for reconciliation. As a result, the term “secularism” came to be coded as a “bad” ideology and the source for much of the sin and immorality that evangelicals and EFC leaders saw in the culture. This interpretation ignored the instances in which Christians supported regimes that violated human rights as well as examples of secular organizations challenging both the church and the state in an effort to protect human dignity.<sup>139</sup> In addition, the dualism led evangelicals to adopt an “us versus them” conception of the public sphere in which they were called to pursue truth by resisting a dangerous philosophy and its adherents. The presence of such a dualism reflected the influence of Schaeffer, who did not differentiate between secularists who were willing to create public space for religion and those who desired to privatize religion. Nor did he help evangelicals understand the degree to which they contributed to the development of secularism. The resulting “thin” representation of secularism was evident in leading evangelicals in the US, such as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell (Jelen 1993, 179; Harding 2000). However, the dualism was less

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<sup>138</sup> The argument may also suggest that Stiller was wary of granting the state the power to define the terms “human,” “rights,” and “human rights.” However, this avenue of thought was not further developed in either Stiller’s subsequent writings or in the EFC’s other literature.

<sup>139</sup> For example, Casanova notes that European working classes abandoned their faith and embraced socialism in much higher numbers than their American counterparts because the European state churches often supported state repression (1994, 244n56).

pronounced in Stiller's writings than those of Schaeffer and leaders of the American Religious Right, especially towards the end of Stiller's tenure at the EFC.

One of Stiller's purposes of identifying secularism as a threat to the Christian foundations of Canadian society was to mobilize evangelicals to re-engage with politics. He informed evangelicals that if they desired to preserve some vestiges of Christian beliefs in Canadian law and public policy, they had to participate in the process of creating new legislation. They had to be "at the table" where decisions were made. In essence, what Stiller sought was the continuation of what David Martin refers to as the "shadow establishment" of Christianity that exists in Canada (2000, 24). The following section examines how Stiller used the threat of secularism to gather evangelicals together and participate in public life.

### **3.1.2 Developing a discourse of resistance to mobilize evangelical political action**

Stiller traced the roots of secularism to the Enlightenment project of freeing people *from* religion in addition to supporting the freedom *of* religion (1994b, 67).<sup>140</sup> He saw the same desire to free people from religion in the political and legal changes that de-Christianized Canadian society, such as the Supreme Court's decision to strike down the *Lord's Day Act*, the curtailment of the ability of the evangelistic organization Gideons International to distribute free Bibles in public schools, and the disappearance of Christmas nativity scenes from some government buildings. In the aftermath of the decision to ban compulsory prayers in Ontario schools, he wrote, "the force that has blunted the role of Christian faith in society is secularism—the idea that God is irrelevant to life, including education" (1989c, 78). The result of secularism, Stiller warned, was a society that "refuses to acknowledge any practical difference in the life of the nation between worshipping God and watching pornographic videos" (1994b, 69). For Stiller, then, the destruction of the Christian foundation of society in favour of individual freedom and gratification created a confused people incapable of discerning which actions were beneficial and which ones harmed the nation's moral health. The antidote he proposed was evangelical political engagement in order to protect human dignity, the nation's moral health, and religious freedom. Put another way, the resistance discourse employed by Stiller against secularism mobilized the base to political engagement, which he believed was essential if the slide into narcissistic anarchy was to be halted.

Although EFC leaders had emphasized the need for evangelicals to be politically engaged since at least 1983, the link between political engagement and secularism was made explicit in 1987. A full-page ad in the November/December issue of *Faith Today* that year encouraged readers to join the EFC and have their voice count in the struggle against secularism (*Faith Today* 1987b, 33). This ad reflected a turning point in the EFC's self-definition. In contrast to previous statements of the EFC's purposes, which listed unity and the renewal of the church as the first objective (*Thrust* 1977, 6), the 1987 ad identified the tasks of reminding "the nation of the supremacy and reign of Jesus Christ" and encouraging "government to rule with truth and justice" as the first and second elements of the EFC's mandate (*Faith Today* 1987b, 33). Bringing about the unity of the church remained on the list, but only as the fifth and last element. The new emphasis on advocating for a nation under the reign of Christ was supported by the provocative words, attributed to the German pastor Martin Niemöller, which headlined the ad:

First they arrested the Communists, but I was not a Communist, so I did nothing. Then they came for the Social Democrats, but I was not a Social Democrat, so I did nothing. They arrested the trade unionists, and I did nothing because I was not one. And then they came for the Jews, and then the Catholics, but I was neither Jew nor Catholic, so I did nothing. At last they came and arrested me, and there was no one left to do anything about it. (33)<sup>141</sup>

The use of Niemöller's poem indicated the degree to which Stiller and EFC leaders in the late 1980s believed that conservative Protestantism was under attack by a worldview intent on destroying the religious heritage of the country and limiting the future participation of religious adherents in public debates and the development of public policy. Niemöller's "they" were Nazis, while the implied "they" in the EFC's usage were secularists who posed a threat to Christians and human dignity.

Stiller took Niemöller's implied plea for people to discern the philosophies of the age seriously. He argued that one way in which Christians could address harmful philosophies was to "be at the table" where decisions were made. As he told one journalist, "we have to be at the table debating with the others, to convince them that Christian values can construct laws that are good for them for their own reasons" (Graham 1990, 329). An important element of Stiller's desire to be at the table was to

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<sup>140</sup> This is a common understanding among those closely connected with the EFC. For example, see David M. Brown (1999-2000). Brown served as legal counsel for the EFC in a number of its court interventions until 2006, when Prime Minister Harper appointed him to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

<sup>141</sup> The groups addressed in the poem differ in its various versions.

persuade others of the benefits of the Christian faith. Indeed, he maintained that the best foundation for a society was healthy families, biblical literacy and faith, and strong churches that foster strong communities (Stiller 1994b, 14-17).

In an effort to provide evangelicals with a model of resistance against false ideologies, Stiller pointed to the members of the early church who refused to privatize their faith. Instead of turning inward, they participated in the public square knowing that they would clash with the Roman authorities (1994b, 5-8). Based on this history Stiller called Christians to challenge public beliefs and practices that limited the ability of believers to freely engage in their religion. They were to remind their leaders that Canada was a nation under God and that God was sovereign over all (2003a, 149). Reminiscent of Kuyper's claim that Calvinism addresses all aspects of life, Stiller advised evangelicals to become involved in more than politics. He encouraged them to be engaged in the arts, media, law, education, and business, because when Christians abandon these areas of life they fall under "the control of darkness" (1993b, 70). In contrast, involvement in politics would enable Christians to combat the secularist desire to privatize religion (1995b, 86). To facilitate evangelical political engagement, Stiller urged evangelicals to learn the language used in public discourse, to find ways to be present in public debates, and to offer ideas rather than moral diatribes. He recognized the power of secular discourse in the public square and advised evangelicals to learn its syntax and grammar. In Stiller's words, evangelicals were to speak the truth of Christ into public life by entering into public dialogues and appropriating secular discourse when necessary (1995a, 78). As he noted in *Faith Today*, the point was for evangelicals to be cultural and political insiders intent on strategically bringing about spiritual renewal (1993b, 70; 1995b, 86). The sub-text was that evangelical political engagement could help protect the ongoing influence of Christianity in culture.<sup>142</sup>

However, Stiller's call to appropriate secular language did not indicate that he was yielding ground to secularism or that he was advising evangelicals to rid their public speech of all religious language and reasoning. Rather, his strategy was pragmatic. If evangelicals wished to persuade others about the benefits of the Christian faith, then they must use the language that enabled them to be heard. As Stiller noted, "to use [the Bible] with those who do not believe is to invite their scorn and repudiation of the Bible. Instead, use biblical ideas expressed in non-biblical language" (2003a, 161). He also

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<sup>142</sup> Elsewhere Stiller listed the steps evangelicals must take if they wish to sit at the table: get their facts right; avoid being sidetracked from the real issue; digest the views and arguments of others; test one's approach before presenting to politicians or committees; meet the key players; learn the system; be present at the table; build coalitions; learn the art of compromise; and do not become weary (2003a, 162-64).

advised them to avoid uttering such phrases as “thus says the Lord” and proclaiming judgement. As a result of these positions, the EFC’s opposition to secularism was more moderate than that of many American Religious Right activists. There was no EFC equivalent to Pat Robertson’s prediction of a hurricane striking Orlando, Florida as condemnation for the city’s support of gay and lesbian rights or Pat Buchanan’s claim “that the founding fathers would have had one response if they had learned that public schools did not teach the Bible but taught about homosexuality: ‘Lock and load’” (Wilcox 2000, 62, 80). In terms of political mobilization, the EFC did not engage in voter mobilization like the Religious Right (82-83) nor raise money for political and school board candidates (83-84).

In another contrast with various elements of the American Religious Right, Stiller recognized the right of citizens to choose secularism as their worldview. For example, when the Supreme Court struck down the *Lord’s Day Act* he reminded evangelicals that although the Court appeared willing to erode the Christian view of humankind and society, “as Christians we cannot deny that option or attempt to enforce our view.” He went on to emphasize the importance of non-coercion, writing that “we have no inclination to call on the government to prescribe religious patterns for the rest of society by legislating morality. The nature of Christ’s Kingdom is inherently non-legalistic. Obedience to Christ must flow out of a heart that is open to Christ’s call and knows life will be enriched by that obedience” (1985a, 61). Stiller’s argument was that traditional Christian morality emerges from a converted heart that is attuned to God and therefore cannot be imposed by political authorities. This position was easier to make in the context of the *Lord’s Day Act* than abortion, when EFC leaders indeed attempted to have the law reflect a certain view of the human person they believed best protected human dignity and flourishing.

Although Stiller lamented the movement of Canadian society away from its Christian heritage, he refused to identify nineteenth-century Canada as a Christian country. In *From the Tower of Babel to Parliament Hill* (1997), published just as he was leaving the EFC, Stiller explained that his focus on Canada’s Christian roots was not to seek the return of a supposed by-gone Christian Canada, but to note “that the Kingdom of God invades, shapes, and brings health to a nation” (1997a, 22). After outlining a history of Christianity in Canada, which drew on many of the sources we discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Stiller concluded that Canada never was a Christian nation.<sup>143</sup> He

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<sup>143</sup> Stiller acknowledged that while early Canada had a Christian framework, it did not treat the Chinese immigrants and aboriginal peoples well. He warned Christians against yearning for what was. “The gospel,” he wrote, “calls us to engage the world as we find it – not as we wish it were. The kingdom of our Lord is not

understood nineteenth-century church culture as similar to the broader social culture and accused church leaders of the time of opting “for a cosy relationship with an emerging middle class” (43). Furthermore, he noted that “the period was hardly a model of biblical justice in its treatment of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, women, and Native peoples. One could even say that some of Canada’s social policies are more biblical today, largely because they have been informed by a biblical vision” (43). He then traced a history of secularism in Canada, from the disestablishment of the Anglican Church to the need for temperance and Sabbatarian movements, the separation of churches and schools, the appeal of Darwinism and higher criticism, and the liberal theology of the Social Gospel movement (46-63). Secularism was so successful in imposing its views upon Canadian society, Stiller argued, because Christians began abandoning the public square in the twentieth century; that is, when Roman Catholics became less engaged with culture after the Quiet Revolution, when mainline Protestants lost their spiritual energy, and when many evangelicals withdrew into sectarian communities (19-20).<sup>144</sup> Essentially, Stiller urged evangelicals to fill the void left by the Catholics, liberal Protestants, and an earlier generation of evangelicals. Given the significant cultural and political influence held by the Catholics, particularly in Quebec, and liberal Protestants in English-speaking Canada until the early 1970s, the call for evangelicals to replace these groups suggests an aspiration to seek considerable influence. Indeed, in a 2009 interview Stiller claimed that evangelicals were “moving from the back of the street to Main Street” (Longhurst 2009).

The thoroughness with which Stiller explicated the connections between actions taken by Christians and the development of secularism that he traced in *From the Tower of Babel* revealed the degree to which he nuanced his earlier conception of secularism as a monolithic, anti-religious ideology. Signs of increasing nuance may be seen as early as 1988, when Stiller argued that as evangelicals increased their personal wealth in the 1960s and 1970s, they began to emulate the very culture they previously preached against (1991c, 198). In addition, he insisted that sectarian withdrawal reinforced the belief that faith should be kept out of public life (1991c, 197, 199; 1995a,

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trapped in the past. It is powerful, breaking down the idols of this age and uprooting the violent and untruthful ideologies of this culture” (1994d, 70).

<sup>144</sup> Stiller identified a number of explanations for the evangelical withdrawal from public life during this time: the fundamentalist controversies; a pre-millennialist theology; fear of the problems evangelicals associate with the Social Gospel movement; and lower socio-economic status (1994b, 89; 1997a, 68-70). In addition, he charged evangelicals with being so busy preparing themselves for the Lord’s return that they ignored the “surrounding moral disintegration” (1991a, 78). In contrast, he urged them to remember that “churches win the right to speak as, from community to community, they gently and faithfully assert that this earth is God’s creation and this nation is his dominion” (78).

78).<sup>145</sup> In *From the Tower of Babel* Stiller developed the argument by paying greater attention to the historical interaction of Christians and secularism in Canada. For example, he noted that while Egerton Ryerson believed that public education should promote Christian values, his campaign to separate education from the control of the dominant churches “set up a dividing line which in the end served to support powerful forces already at work in the secularization of the system” (1997a, 52). Stiller further asserted that the involvement of Christian churches and individuals in the Sabbatarian and temperance movements convinced politicians “that the safest course of action was to stay clear of any religious issues” (50). Stiller’s move to locate at least some developments of the secularization process within the Christian community indicates a move away from the dualism evident in his earlier writings.<sup>146</sup> His other move in *From the Tower of Babel* was to shift his focus away from explicating the dangers of secularism to promoting pluralism as a means with which to limit secularism by broadening public debate and creating space for religious perspectives.

### 3.1.3 Stiller’s turn toward pluralism

In 1989 Stiller portrayed pluralism as a tool used by secularists to privatize religion (1989c, 78). However, it was a certain interpretation of pluralism that Stiller opposed, a type for which Marshall provided an analogy: “A principal looks around his school and says, ‘Some like to play hockey, others prefer football and still others would rather have soccer. Given the various preferences, I won’t allow any sports’” (78). It was this type of pluralism that Stiller opposed as it argued that because there were religious differences in the population, all religion had to be privatized. Over time Stiller came to promote an alternative conception of pluralism that did not eliminate difference but rather enabled all groups to be at the table where public policy decisions were made (1994b, 79-82). In *From the Tower of Babel* Stiller defined this alternative understanding by differentiating between religious and cultural pluralism, a distinction he learned from British Presbyterian missionary Lesslie Newbigin.<sup>147</sup> While rejecting the notion that all religions are equally true, Stiller nevertheless

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<sup>145</sup> Stiller suggested that secularists, sectarians, religious individualists, narcissists, and pessimists all share the humanist worldview that “neuters” God. “While believing [God] has all power, we assume he has no intention to intervene. Believing God can but won’t, we replace faith with fatalism” (1991c, 200).

<sup>146</sup> The other EFC leader to discuss the interaction between secularism and Christianity is Clemenger. In a *Faith Today* column he recognized that “liberalism and its secularist expression” is “very much a western ideology birthed out of Christendom” (2008b, 14). Unfortunately, there was no further explanation of the comment in the article.

<sup>147</sup> See Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) and *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).



affirmed cultural pluralism, which he defined as a social arrangement that recognizes diversity. In his view, cultural pluralism

is a basic Christian affirmation that we—as God does—are to give space and allowance for people to think, believe, act, and hope with different assumptions. It is Jesus, with the unexpected directive to love others ... who revolutionizes our way of treating others, including those who believe and act differently. (1997a, 162)

Stiller's point was that belief in Jesus cannot be coerced and that Christians are called to respect people of all faiths. In addition, he thought that cultural pluralism could provide a forum for debate in which those with divergent commitments "seek a way for coexistence, with neither side giving up what it believes to be true" (166). Stiller added that cultural pluralism may be an opportunity because a culturally pluralistic state is to protect and promote justice for all and not discriminate on the basis of religion. For Stiller, then, "cultural pluralism is a very strong defense against any ideological tyranny that might attempt to rule in our public schools and universities" (165-66). Put another way, Stiller suggested that cultural pluralism may offer protection against an ideological tyranny of secularism. In his mind conservative Protestants could use the fact of cultural pluralism to argue that the media, school boards, and government had to recognize the right of all religious people to participate in public debates (167).

The publication of *From the Tower of Babel* coincided with the release of a discussion paper written by the EFC's Social Action Commission entitled "Being Christian in a pluralist society: A discussion paper on pluralism."<sup>148</sup> The paper maintained that the liberal desire to privatize religion as a response to pluralism was misguided. Indeed, the desire "points towards the basic defect of liberalism—namely that it trivializes differences, especially religious differences" (EFC 1997a, 2). In the paper the Commission criticized the liberal advancement of a particular form of pluralism that claimed to be a neutral philosophy that promoted individual autonomy and choice within an atmosphere of toleration. Such liberal pluralism was an inadequate response to religious diversity, the Commission claimed, because it allowed for only one way to manage difference: impose individualism on all and ultimately create homogeneous societies (2).<sup>149</sup> As an alternative, the Commission urged Christians to bring religious differences into the public square so that they may be adequately and justly addressed (3). It called Christians to engage pluralism in a number of ways: (a)

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<sup>148</sup> Clemenger notes that the discussion paper was based on a previous paper written by Marshall (2008a).

<sup>149</sup> Stiller echoed the same concern of homogeneity in *From the Tower of Babel* (1997a, 63-66).

through the organizational structures and models of their particular religious traditions; (b) by persuading (as opposed to imposing) others to develop a Christian culture built upon respect, tolerance, honesty, and integrity; and (c) by coexisting with others. In those issues where diversity and coexistence are not possible (for instance, it is not possible to have a variety of national energy programs at the same time), the Commission wrote, “it is our Christian responsibility, politically, to seek to win that which is just for everybody and not only that which is good for us” (6). While the Commission acknowledged that the EFC had a common responsibility to advocate for the whole, it failed to address the issue of what happens when there are multiple conceptions of what is “just for everybody.”

In short, by the time Stiller left the EFC in 1997, the organization had a more nuanced definition of secularism than it did in 1983, one that recognized secularism as a complex concept with roots in Christianity. Stiller had distanced himself from Schaeffer’s dualistic understanding of culture and instead focused on pluralism. The Social Action Commission’s paper on pluralism identified a particular type of liberal pluralism that the EFC perceived to be misguided. The paper encouraged the development of a more robust pluralism that welcomed religious diversity rather than privatized religion. Both Stiller and the discussion paper reminded evangelicals that if they desired to counteract secularism, they had to become politically and culturally engaged and protect the rights of all citizens to participate in public debate. In this manner the term “secularism” operated as a motivating discourse of resistance. Indeed, Stiller was so successful in persuading evangelicals to be politically engaged that by the time he left the EFC he could write: “Today most of our church leaders recognize the need for Christians to engage our culture” (1997b, 62). Yet he persisted in posing secularism as a threat. As we will discover in the following sub-section, although the two presidents who succeeded Stiller further refined the EFC’s conception of secularism, they too employed the same discourse of resistance: “secularism” was the source for many of society’s problems and it had to be resisted.

### **3.1.4 Walsh and Clemenger**

The shift in strategy towards challenging the public sphere to be more pluralist was evident in the work of the both Walsh and Clemenger. Shortly after the 2000 federal election in which some media ridiculed some of the evangelical beliefs held by Alliance Party leader Stockwell Day, Walsh defended evangelicals by stating that they, like Christians generally, welcomed people of all faiths to Canada and accepted “comprehensive pluralism.” In a *Faith Today* editorial on the subject from early 2001, he wrote, “evangelicals know that a pluralism that does not favour one faith over another

actually provides an ideal context for mission and ministry. Nominal Christian structures have never satisfied us. Even during the ‘Christendom years,’ we were calling people to personal repentance and radical discipleship in obedience to Christ” (2001a, 7). Ultimately, Walsh claimed, it was not pluralism *per se* but “the secularist view of pluralism that we resist, a view that insists that because religions are different from each other, then faith must be privatized in the name of tolerance” (7). Walsh maintained that when religion was taken out of education, for example, values continued to be taught, but they were unidentified. He noted that in a truly pluralist state, such elevation of the “secularist faith” should not occur and promised that the EFC “will resist a religionless society and we will call public officials to respect people of all faiths and the faith of all people” (7). Examples of the presence of this secularist view bent on privatizing faith frequently mentioned in *Faith Today* included former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien’s prohibition against speaking the name of Jesus Christ in a public memorial service after the downing of a Swiss Air flight off Peggy’s Cove, Nova Scotia, and the exclusion of religious leaders from the public memorial to remember the victims of September 11, 2001 (Epp Buckingham 2002, 28).

While Walsh followed Stiller’s move to advocate for pluralism, he also drew from the work of Clemenger, at that time the director of the EFC’s Ottawa office. Clemenger distinguished between a secular and a secularist state. A secular state, he asserted, is inclusive and allows a variety of religious traditions to operate freely. In contrast, a secularist state privatizes religion and removes it from the public square. The more secularist the state, the more difficult it is for religious institutions to operate in civil society. For Clemenger, a truly secular civil society does not require religious actors to advance “de-religious or de-faithed rationale to engage in public life, for example, in the courts” (1999, 8). Instead, he called for a pluralist state in which all voices, including religious ones, were welcome to participate in public discourse. To combat the secularist creed of privatizing religion, Clemenger urged people of faith to engage in the public sphere as individuals as well as members of religious organizations, for when they limit their political engagement to working through their religious institutions, they unconsciously adopt a secularist position that relegates religious practice to private institutions (8). Like Stiller, Clemenger suggested that Christians contributed to the processes of secularization and privatization when they unwittingly adopted secular assumptions about the nature and role of religion in public life.

As EFC president, Clemenger continued to define and interact with secularism. His positions were clearly outlined in an article he wrote for the *Evangelical Review of Theology*, which was based on a

speech he gave at the Consultation on Globalization and Social Justice held in Kuala Lumpur in early 2001. In the article Clemenger defined a secular state as one that accommodates religious and cultural diversity and is “properly secular” when it does not interfere in matters of authority given to the church (for example, the development or enforcement of doctrine).<sup>150</sup> However, secular states are directed by a worldview or faith perspective, he argued, and for this reasons their interactions with different faiths can never be completely free from bias (2003, 160-62). According to Clemenger, then, it was impossible for states to be a-religious, even though an a-religious state was the goal of secularists. He thought that this mistaken search for an a-religious state often led secularists to privatize religion.

Following in the footsteps of the Social Action Commission’s paper “Being Christian in a pluralist society,” Clemenger’s article challenged the liberal assumption that secular, or non-sectarian, public discourse is free from any comprehensive doctrine, including conceptions of the good, and that it is therefore neutral, reasonable, and accessible to all. The problem with this position, Clemenger argued, “is that all citizens are expected to function publicly as liberals” (2003, 160). In contradistinction, he desired that all religions have the freedom to present their beliefs publicly and attempt to persuade others why their beliefs should undergird public policy.<sup>151</sup> When this occurs, the state can be said to be properly secular. At this point in his argument Clemenger was rejecting the assumption of some secularists that there is only one type of discourse and reasoning that is acceptable in the public sphere. For Clemenger there was no such discourse and reasoning as all types of discourse reflect views of the human person and society that in turn reveal a comprehensive doctrine (a worldview).

In a reversal of the dualism found in Stiller’s early definition of secularism, Clemenger accused liberalism (as articulated by John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas) and secularism of being dualistic. According to Clemenger, liberalism operates on the assumption that people are able to, and indeed should, separate themselves from their attachments to their family, culture, and religion when they participate in the public sphere (2003, 159). This is impossible, he maintained, because faith impacts all aspects of life. As he argued in *Faith Today*, the gospel message of redemption impacts the whole

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<sup>150</sup> There is a suggestion of the Kuyperian notion of sphere sovereignty in this argument, as the principle assumes the state does not generally interfere in the differentiated social spheres.

<sup>151</sup> Clemenger’s strongest statement about evangelical commitment to dialogue and common life rather than imposing their values may be found in the March/April 2008 issue of *Faith Today* in which he wrote: “We may also remind ourselves that our ultimate task *as Christians* is to engage our neighbours in a way that opens up conversation rather than closes it down, to listen carefully, to find common ground where we can and to offer

person as faith influences both private and public relationships as well as one's behaviour. One's interactions with others, he insisted, are never religiously neutral, and therefore privatizing religion does not yield a naked public square (2004d, 14).<sup>152</sup> Clemenger emphasized this public dimension of faith.

Clemenger's purpose for mobilizing evangelical political engagement was broader than Stiller's desire to be "at the table" as he encouraged evangelicals to participate in civil society. More specifically, he called evangelicals to become involved with the process of defining the "Canadian values" identified in the Charter. Given that Clemenger considered liberalism a religious worldview and that liberalism informs the Charter, Clemenger feared that liberalism was the only worldview informing the interpretation of such Charter values as life, liberty, and security (2003, 168).<sup>153</sup> He was particularly concerned about the definition of tolerance he saw emerging in the Canadian public and legal system. He perceived it to be a definition that incorporated not only the recognition of difference but also the affirmation and indeed celebration of difference and individual choice (156-57, 167-168).<sup>154</sup> Clemenger linked this notion of tolerance with the "secularist creed" or "secular fundamentalism" that labels as intolerant those who do not view choice and individual autonomy as the highest public virtues (2005c, 14). By using the term "secular fundamentalist," Clemenger appeared to suggest that the struggle against secularism was not against all secularists, but against the fundamentalists who were intent on privatizing religion in the name of tolerance. If this was indeed the case, it represented a further refinement of the manner in which the EFC portrayed secularism. At the same time, however, the term "secular fundamentalist" was a part of the motivational discourse intended to help evangelicals understand their culture and thus focus their involvement in public life. If secular fundamentalists have their way, Clemenger warned, they will chip away at religious freedom, privatize religion, and ensure that the beliefs and behaviour of all Canadians conform to

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up and live out a way of life that is an authentic expression of the gospel that will be both attractive and challenging to our neighbours" (*Faith Today* 2008b, 14).

<sup>152</sup> At the same time, Clemenger called evangelicals to live consistent and integrated lives in which all aspects of life are informed by the same worldview. When faith and values are separated from reason and facts, he insisted, the result was idolatry and unexamined habits (2006d, 14).

<sup>153</sup> Clemenger's concern about the interpretation of Charter values was a frequent theme in his columns for *Faith Today*. See 2005e, 14; 2006c, 14; 2007b, 14; 2009b, 14.

<sup>154</sup> Clemenger equated this view of tolerance with what Charles Taylor identifies as the 'politics of recognition' (2003, 158). For more on Clemenger's distinction between tolerance as respect for that which one disagrees and tolerance as affirming and celebrating difference, see Clemenger 2004b, 14.

secular values (2005d). Therefore the term “secularism” remained coded as a negative worldview that threatened the Christian foundation of Canadian society.<sup>155</sup>

While the target of the discourse of resistance had been narrowed from secularism generally to secular fundamentalists, the need for the discourse remained the same: to counteract the forces that seek the privatization of religion. To bolster his position, Clemenger insisted that it was distinctly Canadian to recognize that religion deserves public expression and cannot be separated from the rest of life. He characterized the privatization of religion as found in France and the American compartmentalization of society as un-Canadian attempts to limit religious expression in public life (2008c).<sup>156</sup> At the same time, Clemenger recognized that politicians work out the relationship between their personal convictions and political responsibilities in a variety of ways. Some believe that they must reflect the majority of their constituents while others apply the judgement of their party to the issues. Some vote their conscience while others are dualists who believe that private convictions should not impact political decisions. Clemenger did not advise evangelicals to push their MPs towards a particular conception of the relationship. In addition, he insisted that churches should not choose one candidate or political party over another.<sup>157</sup> It is apparent that Clemenger rejected the confrontational strategies adopted by the American Religious Right in the 1980s and 1990s, which called on evangelicals to support specific candidates, usually Republican, and pressured politicians to vote according to specific religious beliefs.<sup>158</sup> In order to understand how EFC leaders balanced their discourse of resistance with their nuanced definition of secularism and irenic engagement in Canadian public life, it is necessary to locate their work within the historical development of various types of secularism in the West.

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<sup>155</sup> However, a number of Supreme Court decisions in the mid-2000s led EFC leaders to change some of their language. For example, after the Court allowed Orthodox Jews to construct *succahs* on their condominium balcony, the sub-title of one of Clemenger’s columns in *Faith Today* read, “Canadians enjoy considerable freedom to practise their faith. Do Christians take full advantage?” (Clemenger 2004e, 14).

<sup>156</sup> In fact, neither the French nor the American states enforce radical separation. The French government funds religious schools that teach the national curriculum and employ accredited teachers (Seljak 2005, 194-95) and American Presidents regularly discuss how their religious faith impacts their values.

<sup>157</sup> Clemenger discussed the role of churches in the public square in a number of his columns in *Faith Today*. See Clemenger 2005f, 14 and 2005g, 14.

<sup>158</sup> Jonathan Malloy argues that while the Canadian political system does not provide the same opportunities to pressure individual MPs, it is important not to reduce the differences between Canadian and American evangelical political engagement to issues of institutional and resource mobilization (2009, 356).

### **3.2 Contextualizing the EFC's definition of secularism**

EFC leaders oppose the privatization of religion because they believe that it narrows the public sphere and limits the ability of religious groups to participate in public discourse and the development of public policy. They are not alone in re-thinking the role of religion in modern secular democracies. For example, Casanova rejects the premise that modernization necessarily leads to the privatization of religion. Instead, he finds that “privatization is mandated ideologically by liberal categories of thought which permeate modern political and constitutional theories” (1994, 39). The extreme form of the desire to privatize religion is often referred to as *laïcité*. Laicists desire to significantly reduce, if not eliminate, religious voices from the public sphere. However, EFC leaders do not use the term laicism; indeed, they do not make distinctions between any of the various types of secularism operative in the West. Their undifferentiated use of the term “secularism” masks the fact that they accommodate certain assumptions of a particular type of secularism that is dominant in the West. Before we are able to examine the EFC's interactions with secularism, we must first identify some of the types of secularism prevalent in the West and trace their development.

#### **3.2.1 The emergence of secularisms in the West**

With the collapse of the medieval dualist conception of “this” world, the social spheres differentiated and separated themselves from religion. Religion now had to find its place within a secular reality. Casanova identifies four developments that undermined the medieval system and aided in the process of secularization. The Protestant Reformation played a significant role by destroying the organic system created by the Roman Catholic Church and unwittingly liberated the secular spheres from domination by the Church. In addition, it legitimated the new “bourgeois man” and entrepreneurial classes while supporting the rise of sovereign states and the new science. The other three carriers of secularization identified by Casanova include the emergence of modern secular states, with their religious tolerance and concomitant commitment to religious neutrality, the rise of capitalism, which made the economy the most secular social sphere, and the differentiation of philosophy, theology, and science. Although the early English scientists, including Galileo and Newton, posed nature as a “separate but equal” way of knowing God, some of their continental peers radicalized science and became “militantly antireligious,” particularly in Lutheran and Catholic countries (21-24).

The role of the Protestant Reformation in the process of secularization has attracted the attention of many scholars. One of the earliest theorists to examine the impact of the Reformation on

secularization was German sociologist Max Weber, who argued that John Calvin's doctrine of predestination led his followers to seek assurance that they were indeed saved, that they were one of the elect. According to Weber, Calvin transformed Luther's understanding of calling into a "moral justification of worldly activity" (81).<sup>159</sup> Eventually his followers came to believe that one's faith was evidenced in one's worldly activity (1958a, 121), and thus good works became the conviction of salvation (115). For Weber, this justification of worldly activity, combined with the Calvinist/Puritan ascetic lifestyle and rationalization<sup>160</sup> of daily life, contributed to the development of capitalism and modernization. With regard to secularization, Weber believed that the Calvinist focus on "action in this world" devalued magic and the sacraments as means of grace and resulted in "the disenchantment of the world" (1958b, 290). For examples he pointed to the manner in which Puritans suppressed both rituals (1958a, 105) and the mystical (123)<sup>161</sup> and argued that the resulting "ascetic Protestantism" helped impel the emerging economic and political processes in a specific direction.

Weber's thesis led other scholars to further investigate the origins and development of secularism. Given that the four carriers of secularism identified by Casanova impacted countries differently and at different times, there were a variety of secularization processes. As a result, European countries and their former colonies developed a diverse array of relationships between the church and the state and between religion and politics. David Martin categorized the different types of relationships in *A General Theory of Secularization* (1978), basing his categories on whether a country was predominantly Catholic or Protestant, whether or not it had a religious monopoly, and whether its societal conflict originated from internal or external oppressors (17). For example, Martin claimed that in countries with a Catholic monopoly, society tended to split between internal forces who were militantly religious and those who were militantly secular. As a result of these struggles a rabid anti-clericalism developed, the Church moved to the political right, and confessional political parties

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<sup>159</sup> Marshall studied Weber's linkage of the notion of calling with the development of the Protestant work ethic and capitalism in his PhD dissertation, which he later re-worked into a book. After examining the development of Puritan and Anglican views of calling, Marshall concluded that although there was a relationship between the Puritan notion of calling and the rise of capitalism, Weber incorrectly attributed Puritan thinking on the subject to Calvin's notion of predestination (1996a, 99-101).

<sup>160</sup> For Weber, the rationalization of the economy and daily life referred to the process of basing social actions upon efficiency or calculation. Law and administration are important structures of rationalism and essential for capitalism (1958a, 25).

<sup>161</sup> Sociologist Steve Bruce, a proponent of the secularization theory, also argues that Judaism and Christianity hastened the rationalization of religion. "By having only one God, they simplified the supernatural and allowed the worship of God to be systematized. Pleasing God became less a matter of trying to anticipate the whims of an erratic force and more a matter of correct ethical behaviour" (1998, 10).



appeared (19, 36-41). However, in countries where Catholicism represented an oppressed culture struggling against outside rule, as in Poland under Soviet rule, the Church was more tolerant of minorities and anti-clericalism did not emerge (18-19). In these instances the Church tended to the political centre or, in some cases, the left (19-20, 44)

In contrast, Martin found that the Protestant churches in Germany, the Netherlands, and England generally accepted the changes wrought by modernity, in large part because they subordinated the church to the state and promoted individualism (1978, 37).<sup>162</sup> In addition, Protestant societies advanced various forms of religious pluralism: “segmented pluralism” where rival established churches have their own territorial concentrations; “qualified pluralism,” characterized by a state church that is associated with the elite and faces dissent from alternative churches associated with the lower classes; and “complete pluralism” as found in the US, where all religions compete with each other in the absence of an established church (56-57). According to Martin, Protestant states avoided the Enlightenment anti-clericalism found in many of the Catholic-dominated European countries because they engaged in political compromises and government by consensus (49).

Given these historical events and developments, Martin proposed eight patterns of secularization. The American pattern has high levels of religious pluralism and low levels of anti-clericalism, a stable democracy, a “religiously toned” civil religion, no religious parties, and no established church. The English pattern has a medium level of religious pluralism given its established church coupled with low levels of anti-clericalism, a stable democracy, a religiously toned civil religion, and the absence of religious parties.<sup>163</sup> The Scandinavian model has a low level of religious pluralism given continued established churches, medium levels of anti-clericalism, a civil religion informed by secularism, and minor religious political parties. The Mixed pattern evidences high religious pluralism, low levels of anti-clericalism, a stable democracy, a religiously toned civil religion and influential religious political parties. The Latin pattern has low religious pluralism, high levels of anti-clericalism, a less stable democracy, continuing conflicts between church and state, and influential religious parties. Other patterns include the Right Statist, Left statist, and Nationalist patterns, all with low levels of religious pluralism (1978, 59).

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<sup>162</sup> Indeed, Martin observes that “the Protestant political pressure is always weaker than the Catholics because the Protestants are more coextensive with state-bearing semi-secularist elements and because Protestantism is too atomized to achieve disciplined political expression” (1978, 74).

<sup>163</sup> Canada falls between the American and English pattern. Although there is no established church in Canada as in England, there is less religious pluralism than in the US. For more, see Martin (2000) and O’Toole (2000).

Veit Bader builds on Martin's patterns when he argues against those who view an American-style constitutional separation between the church and the state as an irresistible modern trend. He makes four observations about the relationship between the state and religion in modern societies. First, differentiation is possible in a variety of legal forms, from constitutional non-establishment clauses to the weak establishment of a church. Second, institutional differentiation occurs in degrees and does not occur as a package. Third, non-establishment clauses do not indicate a separation between the state and religion as there are a number of social and political institutions that interact with religion, such as political society, civil society, and culture. In addition, there are different types of establishment or disestablishment within a society. For example, in nineteenth-century America, Protestantism operated as a civil religion despite the legal separation of church and state. In some states where there is no established church, there are religious political parties. This point is related to Bader's final observation that the relationship between states and religions cannot be reduced to dualistic schemes. Instead, states interact with religion on a variety of dimensions, including their constitutional, legal, and legislative regulations of religion and their administrative interference. Bader reminds us that legal recognition is different from political and/or administrative recognition and that legal recognition does not necessarily imply actual protection. He points out that states are not monolithic and their different branches and departments do not always have the same goals, policies, and objectives. In addition, the states' regulation of religion extends to a variety of spheres, such as education, welfare, health care, and employment (2003a, 60-64).

The overarching conclusion of this sociological work is that the process of secularization can take a variety of paths. Indeed, there are many types of relationships between the state and religion, even within modern liberal democracies. Some, including Canada, grant religious organizations such legal and/or administrative privileges as exemptions from some taxes, military service, and laws while others do not. Some provide subsidies to religious organizations for their work in education or charitable activities while others draw a stricter line between state and religion. In addition, liberal states interpret religious freedoms in different ways. In terms of concrete examples, the situation of religion in France and the US is instructive. France is laicist in that it maintains a secular ideology or "personality,"<sup>164</sup> banning overtly religious symbols from such public institutions as public schools. The US Constitution has a non-establishment clause but its public ethos was largely Christian until after World War Two.

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<sup>164</sup> The term "personality" is taken from Asad and its significance is elaborated in the next two sub-sections.

In her study of secularism Hurd defines the laicism found in such countries as France as “an authoritative public morality based in a singular conception of reason” (2008, 26). Laicists view public references to theology or ecclesiastical involvement in the public square as dangerous, and therefore they attempt to exclude religion from power and authority (26, 29). Writing in the American context, Wilfred McClay describes this type of secularism as “positive” secularism, which establishes unbelief and restricts religion to the private sphere.<sup>165</sup> In their embrace of self-mastery, positive secularists feel obliged to dispel what they perceive to be damaging misperceptions among the public, particularly religious misperceptions, and thereby free people from the grip of priests and televangelists. Such liberation, they believe, enables people “to discover their ‘true selves,’ and help them along in the direction of greater and greater ‘autonomy’” (2000, 67). McClay alternatively defines this type of secularism as militant or establishmentarian secularism (65). It is this type of secularism that the EFC rejects.

In contrast, those whom McClay identifies as promoters of “negative” secularism desire an anti-theocratic secular state that is nevertheless compatible with religious freedom. Such a state is not anti-religious, and “the secular idiom is merely a provisional lingua franca that serves to facilitate commerce among different kinds of belief” (2000, 63). In this view of secularism religion is not privatized. Instead, it is seen as a social institution, meaning that the freedom to associate and form moral communities is of critical importance. As McClay observes, “pluralism is a necessary concomitant of liberalism, precisely because we are social creatures, whose social existence is a prior condition to all else that we value” (64). Within such a pluralist state, religions that wish to operate in the public sphere must respect those outside of their particular tradition as well as accommodate “the world.” For Christians, such accommodation is not a compromise of faith, McClay contends, because their faith affirms the world. For example, they believe that God created the world and despite sin, it remains endowed with beauty and intelligence. Since all people are created in the *imago Dei*, they benefit from common grace and deserve respect (68-69). McClay argues that negative secularism recognizes the need to protect the individual person against a view of liberty that includes “the sovereign right to do whatever one wants with the human body and mind, including the comprehensive genetic or pharmacological refashioning of both” (70). Such limits can be found, he maintains, in the Judeo-Christian principle of the *imago Dei*.

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<sup>165</sup> McClay draws his labels from Isaiah Berlin’s identification of positive and negative freedoms.

Given the wide array of types of secularism, it is necessary to evaluate more closely the EFC's definitions of, and interactions with, secularism. It is especially important to examine its undifferentiated use of the term "secular." That is the subject to which we now turn.

### 3.2.2 Analyzing the EFC's interactions with secularism

Clearly EFC leaders rejected laicism, interpreted as the privatization of religion, although they never actually used the term. Instead, they employed the term "secularism" in an undifferentiated manner to denote the desire to privatize religion. One explanation is that they simply did not make the intellectual distinction between different types of secularism.<sup>166</sup> If this was the case, they were not unique. As Casanova observed in 1994, classical forms of the secularization theory conflated the differentiation of the social spheres with the premise that religion inevitably declines in modern countries and the liberal desire to private religion.

Another explanation may be found in McClay's suggestion that there can be no evangelical counterculture without a secularist enemy. For McClay, the identification of secularism as the enemy provides the glue that holds socially conservative ecumenical coalitions together (2000, 59). This identification can be seen in the work of the EFC; indeed, the organization's opposition to secularism-as-laicism was part of its *raison d'être*. Its leaders defined secularism in laicist terms and charged that laicism must be rejected because it limited religious associations from having a voice at the table and influencing public policy. Their identification of secularism as a key cause for the societal drift away from traditional Christian values was an instrumental factor in their efforts to politically mobilize evangelicals. In this manner it was beneficial for EFC leaders to use the term "secularism" in an undifferentiated manner.

Yet at the same time as EFC leaders decried laicism, they accommodated the type of secularism McClay calls "negative" secularism. They supported a non-theocratic and differentiated state that was to protect religious freedom and enable greater pluralism. Indeed, the Kuyperian neo-Calvinism so

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<sup>166</sup> Clemenger recognizes that there are various accounts of secularism. In 2009 he advised his readers who want to know more about secularism to consult specific works by Charles Taylor and David Martin. See Clemenger's article in *Church and Faith Trends* entitled "Evangelicalism and the advancement of religion," January 2009, available online at [http://files.etc-canada.net/min/rc/cft/V02I02/Evangelicalism\\_Advancement\\_of\\_Religion.pdf](http://files.etc-canada.net/min/rc/cft/V02I02/Evangelicalism_Advancement_of_Religion.pdf) (accessed January 1, 2011). Occasionally writers in *Faith Today* referred to secularism in a more differentiated manner. For example, Stackhouse noted that there is no "great divide" between religious believers and the secularists who oppose them. Rather, there are many divides as those who self-identify as secular are an internally diverse group and some of them actively support religious freedom on some issues (2010, 54).

influential among various EFC leaders assumes differentiation.<sup>167</sup> As a result, EFC leaders spent significant resources on issues of religious freedom. They sought to expand the public sphere so that a variety of groups, including secular ones, could participate. In addition, they lobbied for increased public space for religious associations and individuals to practice and express their beliefs as well as their right to be “at the table.”

In their public writings EFC leaders typically struck a balance between resisting the privatization of religion, advocating for pluralism, and accommodating a version of secularism that acknowledged the differentiation of the church and state. However, the balance was sometimes lost in their fundraising letters. Stackhouse observed this tension and in 1995 he wrote:

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada ... bemoaned the erosion of the marks of Christianity on society. The EFC, however, did not reflect the ‘insider-become-outsider’ ambivalence of American evangelicalism. In its more reflective and detailed publications, it generally refused to sound proprietorial about Canadian society, eschewing a parallel rhetoric of a ‘Christian Canada’ in favor of an explicit acceptance of a pluralized culture. ... Its fundraising literature, however, frequently flirted with this theme, especially in terms of the ‘erosion’ of the ‘presence’ of Christianity in the culture, and it was clear that by the early 1990s, at least, the EFC had not fully resolved this tension in its identity. (1995b, 176)<sup>168</sup>

The fact that its fundraising appeals did not lend themselves to nuanced analysis should come as no surprise since the purpose of the letters was to raise money, not educate the membership. Furthermore, the EFC’s use of a “discourse of loss” was not unusual for a Christian group struggling to address and come to terms with the de-Christianization of Canadian society.<sup>169</sup> Stackhouse’s observations are important for other reasons. First, he distinguished EFC leaders from their American counterparts by noting their acceptance of religious diversity and pluralism. Second, the last sentence

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<sup>167</sup> As Chaplin writes, Kuyper and Dooyeweerd viewed differentiation “as an expression of the historical unfolding of our many-sided divine callings” (2004, 3). He acknowledges that such a view reads the biblical story through a modern, Western interpretation of history. In addition, he highlights some problems that result from differentiation, such as the social inequality that arises from the concentration of economics in the market.

<sup>168</sup> Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox note the same phenomena in the American Christian Right. “Although conservative Christian leaders emphasize the importance of appealing politically to the mainstream, these leaders communicate in a different language when talking to each other or to activists. To mobilize the grassroots activists requires pushing their hot buttons.” See their article entitled “Second coming: The strategies of the New Christian Right,” *Political Science Quarterly* (111 [2], 1996) 290.

<sup>169</sup> Bramadat and Seljak use the term “discourse of loss” to refer to the manner in which some Christians and denominations view the loss of power historically enjoyed by Christians in Canada (2008, 15).

reflects an earlier conclusion drawn by Stackhouse that evangelicals were undecided about whether to work to make Canada as Christian as possible or create a more open pluralism. Despite this indecision, however, Stackhouse portrayed EFC leaders as playing “by the rules of Canadian public discourse” by being civil and presenting their arguments cogently (1993b, 171). Third, the theme of loss of Christian cultural dominance was common among American evangelicals (Jelen 1993, 179) and may have influenced EFC leaders.

In the 15 years following Stackhouse’s observations, the language of loss and fear continued in various fundraising appeals. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, EFC leaders became increasingly concerned with the public portrayal of faith as intolerant and with some Supreme Court decisions that, in their view, limited the freedom of religious adherents to publicly practice their beliefs (EFC 2003a, 3). Some of the fundraising letters included Niemöller’s poem that warns against the dangers of silence in the face of oppression and injustice. For Stiller, the significance of the poem was that it cautions those living in countries with a Christian heritage against complacency (Stiller 2003, 35). As with so much that Stiller did when he was the EFC’s president, he used the poem to mobilize the base to political action against secularism.

Clemenger used Niemöller’s poem in his appeal to raise funds for the EFC’s involvement in the Hutterian Brethren case. When the Alberta government required photo identification on all provincial driver’s licenses in an effort to protect Albertans against identity theft, members of the Hutterian Brethren of Wilson Colony refused to comply because they believe having their picture taken violates the second of God’s commandments, which prohibits the making of “graven images.”<sup>170</sup> EFC leaders decided to intervene in the case because it raised the possibility of governments ordering religious communities to change their articles of faith that do not comply with governmental regulations. As Clemenger wrote in his fundraising letter, “if we cannot accommodate religious communities that pose no threat, break no law and which seek to live out their faith in peace and integrity, then our religious freedoms are fleeting indeed” (2008d). Clemenger titled his appeal “Religious freedom under attack again” and included Niemöller’s poem. While the comparison of secularists with Nazis was not very nuanced, it was an element of the discourse of resistance used to mobilize the base. However, in coding everything secular as bad, Clemenger did not acknowledge the fact that the EFC accepts a type of secularism that acknowledges the state as differentiated and adopts such elements of

liberalism as pluralism and religious tolerance. In a sense, the need to raise money reduced the ability of EFC leaders to delineate the different types of secularism with which they interacted.

The last task in this chapter is to evaluate the political implications of the EFC's accommodation of negative secularism and its positive conception of the state. As EFC leaders seek a place "at the table," they are challenging the liberal secular desire to privatize religion. For Talal Asad, however, there are political implications to being at the table, not least of all the encounter of participants with the power of the state to structure social spaces in an effort to create certain types of citizens. While not everyone may agree with Asad's interpretation of the state, his concern about the degree to which secular liberal states require political subjects to subordinate their religious beliefs and practices to political ends is relevant for EFC leaders.

### **3.3 Political implications of being "at the table" in a secular liberal state**

When the EFC enters the public square, it does so as a Protestant organization. For Asad, the Christian religion is part of the landscape of power in the West. As he observes, "Christianity is regarded as a central tradition in 'the West,' even for atheists, and the constant reinterpretation of its history is part of what 'the modern West' is about" (Scott 2006, 282). In this context the term "power" does not denote the ability to use force in order to impose one's views on others. Rather, power for Asad is "a kind of fit between the individual's ability and all the practical conditions that have helped shape her desire and exercised it in a particular way" (Asad 2006, 213). Power is having the ability to determine what is and is not knowledge and, in Hurd's words, to pre-structure public discourse and practice about both religion and politics (2008, 24). It is the ability to establish the "normal" against which other religions are measured. Hurd believes that both laicists and what she terms "Judeo-Christian" secularists (similar to the "negative" secularism described by McClay) have this power in Western societies in that their conceptions of religion and its role in society are considered normative.<sup>171</sup> She claims that laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism are historically contingent and "forms of authorized knowledge that emerged out of the contested theopolitics of Latin Christendom and rely upon particular assumptions about the secular and the religious" (33).

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<sup>170</sup> The majority of the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the province. See *Alberta v. Hutterian Brethren of Wilson Colony*, 2009 SCC 37, [2009] 2 S.C.R. 567. Available online at <http://scc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/2009/2009scc37/2009scc37.html> (accessed February 21, 2011).

<sup>171</sup> Hurd contends that as Judeo-Christian secularism continues to portray Islam as a threat to the religious, moral, and cultural foundations of the Western world, it is involved with power. Therefore religion is by no means personal and private (2008, 47).

Any Christian organization, then, that participates in the public sphere in a Western country engages with power. This is particularly true of Christian organizations that interact with secularism and mobilize around the legal and political protection of religious freedom.

During Stiller's early years at the EFC, the desire for access to the "table" was at times overtly linked with political power, as seen in some early advertisements in *Faith Today* that urged evangelicals to join the EFC and publicly voice their response to Canada's "moral and social climate," a climate presumably understood to be lacking in virtue. One ad featured a picture of Stiller with then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. The words under the picture read, "Brian Stiller, Executive Director of EFC, represents the concerns of its members to the highest level of government" (*Faith Today* 1986a, 71).<sup>172</sup> The message was that Stiller had access to political power and could get the job done. Such ads quickly disappeared as the EFC intentionally became more non-partisan and over time the discourse centred on asking the state to be properly pluralist by protecting religious freedom and enabling groups to live according to their beliefs.

The stance taken by EFC leaders to "be at the table" accords well with the liberal elevation of the state as well as the Kuyperian neo-Calvinist desire to reform the state but less so with the historic Anabaptist distrust of the state. In Kuyperian thought the state is viewed as the institution that, among other things, promotes public justice, meaning that it protects the sovereignty of each social sphere to operate according to its own inner authority without oppression from other spheres. Another factor that pushes EFC leaders to hold a high view of the state is the influence of Canadian political culture, which views the state in generally positive terms and is more open to an interventionist state than American political culture. Yet another possible explanation is the increased role of the courts since the introduction of the Charter in 1982. Indeed, the courts now adjudicate between the different factions of religious associations and institutions fractured by disagreements about same-sex marriage (Stackhouse 2010, 54).

The high level of engagement that EFC leaders have with the state begs the question of what they view as the purpose of gaining a seat at the table. They must answer the same question José Casanova

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<sup>172</sup> Also in 1986, the EFC printed a picture of Stiller and Paul Marshall with MP Benno Friesen and Prime Minister Mulroney. According to the account in *Faith Today*, "Stiller was invited to meet with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney" to share the EFC's concerns about government proposals to include the issue of "sexual orientation" in the federal government's *Human Rights Act* (*Faith Today* 1986b, 52). The magazine recorded another meeting between Stiller and the Prime Minister in 1992 during the unity debate when EFC leaders helped write a preamble to the proposed new Constitution (*Faith Today* 1992, 30).



posed for the US Religious Right. Writing in 1994 when the Religious Right enjoyed significant influence in the Republican Party, Casanova remarked that “if all they wanted was inclusion and recognition, they have earned it.” However, for Casanova the greater issue was “now that they have a seat in the republican banquet on equal terms with all the other guests, what are they going to do with their voice” (1994, 165). Indeed, EFC leaders want more than inclusion. They work to deprivatize religion, protect religious freedom, and have public policy reflect the Christian principles that they believe best protects human dignity. The last point suggests a desire for some degree of Christian cultural establishment. To develop this idea, we need to return to the work of Asad.

Having grown up in the Middle East and possessing detailed knowledge of Muslim conceptions of the relationship between the church and the state, Asad challenges the liberal relegation of religion to the private sphere, albeit from a different perspective than the EFC. The key issue for Asad is “what conception of religion makes our secular moral and political practices possible?” (1999, 192-93). In response to the question, he outlines the Christian influence on Western secularism, especially its conception of secularism as the separation between church and state. In his opinion, Christianity shapes modern Western conceptions of secularism that portrays the state rather benignly and hides its power and willingness to use that power to enforce particular conceptions of the human person, religion, the state, and secularism. For Asad, then, power is inherent in definitions as they impact not only public policy but the “personality” of a state and its citizens.

Therefore Asad does not interpret secularism as the separation of church and state, or religion and politics, nor as a religiously neutral state (Asia Society 2002, 2).<sup>173</sup> Instead, he defines secularism as “an enactment by which a *political medium* (representation of citizenship) redefines and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion” (Asad 2003, 5, italics in original). For Asad, then, secularism is revealed in a particular type of state that defines the nature of its citizens by the degree to which they agree with the fundamental values that the state identifies (2006, 219). Difference, including religious difference, is taken out of the public or political sphere and shunted into the private sphere. The state is then positioned as the institution that transcends difference and provides identity to those within its borders. A type of homogeneity is enforced as the state regulates “normality” (2003, 5, 123) and calls for religious

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<sup>173</sup> If this was an accurate description of secularism, Asad contends, then secular states would accord religion more or less the same amount and type of space. However, this is not the case as France and the US, both secular states, define religion differently and provide different types of political space for religious adherents (Asia Source 2002, 2).

toleration. Ultimately, the concept of religious tolerance is a political tool used by the state to increase its power and remove morality from the political realm. The result is the subordination of religion to the state (1993, 206). Asad believes that Western governments are secular in this fashion and therefore he identifies the state as a significant threat to the freedom of religious expression and practice.

Asad's basic argument is two-fold. First, secularism is a political project whereby the state defines and regulates religion, promotes a way of life, and forges a national personality. Second, this political project is undergirded by the dominant religion. When EFC leaders interpret secularism as laicism, they do not acknowledge the degree to which Christianity remains a part of the Canadian personality and is the foundation for much of Canada's legal code, political structure, and culture. As Bramadat and Seljak note, there are "subtle networks of power in which Canadian Christianity is embedded," such as various legal guarantees of funding for Roman Catholic schools (2008a, 29, 43n44). The interpretation of secularism as laicism, then, masks the continuation of Christian privilege in Canadian law, politics, and culture.<sup>174</sup> Clemenger is somewhat aware of the issue as he wrote in 2003 that Christians are grappling with "the appropriate place and influence of a dominant religion in a pluralist society" (2003, 172). However, there is no significant attempt in subsequent EFC literature to help evangelicals think through the issue.

As described in chapter 1, there has indeed been a close relationship between the state and the Christian church in Canadian history. One implication of this relationship is that some Christian groups, including many evangelicals, have not critically engaged the state and its power.<sup>175</sup> Yet it is precisely the state's vast array of powers that makes Asad uncomfortable with religious groups using the state to advance an agenda, moral or otherwise. He believes that it is difficult for religious groups operating in modern liberal states to do little else but reinforce the state because the latter legislates every aspect of both public and private life. Especially worrisome for Asad is the degree to which the state controls most, if not all, interpersonal relations. Such "juridification" of life, he claims, "constrains the scope for moral suasion in public culture" (1999, 181), including the ability of religious organizations to persuade fellow citizens of the superiority of their values and beliefs. Asad suggests that when religious movements encounter the reality of moral heterogeneity and discover

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<sup>174</sup> For a summary of how Christianity remains privileged in Canadian society, see Bramadat and Seljak (2008, 13).

<sup>175</sup> One group that resisted the state and did not champion a close church-state relationship in early Canadian history was the Mennonites (Bramadat and Seljak 2008, 38n5).

that they are unable to persuade others, they are easily reduced to emulating secular politicians who manipulate citizens by propaganda or mobilize them on the basis of their desires or fears (2003, 187; Chatterjee 2006, 59). In essence, deprivatized religious actors who desire a public presence must “act as secular practitioners do in liberal democracies” (Asad 2003, 187). This includes developing public liberal discourse and playing “by the rules” created by secular liberals. As Stanley Fish observes: “If you persuade liberalism that its dismissive marginalizing of religious discourse is a violation of its own chief principle [of toleration], all you will gain is the right to sit down at liberalism’s table where before you were denied an invitation; but it will still be *liberalism’s* table that you are sitting at, and the etiquette of the conversation will still be hers” (1996, 6, italics in original).<sup>176</sup> While the EFC desires to change the composition of the guests at the table by insisting that religious voices must be present, it does not significantly question the power of those who set the table and decide the menu.

In his study of *Christianity and American Democracy*, Hugh Hecló reflects the same concerns about the engagement of Christians in the American public sphere. He observes that thoughtful Christians who engage in politics in order to derive “a reasoned public ethic” (2007, 135) face “insuperable” barriers as they come to realize “that engagement in the ‘public square’ must invariably take place on the terms set by America’s modern political arena for a so-called democratic discourse. This arena and its rules are not designed to search for truth or to compare rational ‘deliberative justifications.’ It is a sophisticated, cynical game designed to manipulate imagery and opinion” (136). Hecló concludes that while American Christianity contributed positively to the development of American democracy, American democracy negatively influenced Christianity (79). This American experience suggests that engagement in the public square runs the risk of secular politicians manipulating religious groups and adherents.

Another implication of the EFC’s interpretation of secularism as laicism is that the organization’s leaders do not focus on the most secular of all spheres, the economy. The emphasis on politics and securing the rights of religious freedom means that EFC leaders do not critically engage the norms operative in the market. While Clemenger suggests that the lack of an evangelical political strategy to address poverty is due to the different conceptions of the role of the state held by evangelicals (2003, 172) (the EFC did create a roundtable of poverty and homelessness in 2003), it is equally possible

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<sup>176</sup> As Hecló puts it, “the by-product of this equal-seat-at-the-table doctrine has been to confirm religion’s place as simply another set of private personal preferences” (2007, 91).

that evangelicals disagree about the degree to which they are willing to critique the market.<sup>177</sup> All social groups run the risk of being manipulated by specific political and economic interests. The issue for evangelicals who hold socially conservative views but do not critique the market is that political and economic actors who desire a more unregulated market may use socially conservative language in an attempt to solicit evangelical political support. For instance, research suggests that there is a new alignment between evangelicals and the Conservative Party. Now that the Party has a majority government, it remains to be seen whether those in the Party who desire a freer market are willing to enact the type of social policy wanted by evangelicals.<sup>178</sup>

The point of this section is not to argue that the EFC should not be engaged in the public sphere or that the EFC must adopt Asad's conception of the state. Rather, it is to suggest that the EFC engages in a public sphere that is formed by power, and some of that power is undergirded by Christianity. If Asad is correct, organizations that participate in the public sphere participate in, perpetuate, contest, or reconfigure power. Like any politically engaged organization, then, the EFC interacts with the state and is in turn impacted by the state. The following chapters explore how the EFC navigated through this challenge as its leaders engaged in specific issues. Chapter 4 studies how they developed a model of political engagement in the "life" issues of abortion, euthanasia, and reproductive technologies. Chapter 5 examines their efforts to protect religious freedom while chapter 6 traces how they participated in the public debates about the definitions of marriage and the family. The point of such studies is to investigate the manner in which the EFC interacted with the power of the modern secular liberal state and whether these interactions in turn impacted the manner in which its leaders participated in the public sphere.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I outlined the development of the EFC's definition of secularism. Initially Stiller adopted the dualistic conceptualization of secularism propounded by Schaeffer, but by the early

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<sup>177</sup> It is instructive to compare the EFC on this point with Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), another organization with deep roots in Kuyperian neo-Calvinism. CPJ links human dignity with economic equity and critiques the infatuation with growth that underlines the market economy. In one of its publications Gerald Vandezande discusses the "idols" of the marketplace and argues that when Christians submit "to the dominant ideology of the marketplace," justice and faithfulness are squeezed out of the political dialogue. See Vandezande, "Challenges: Political action in an era of budget cuts, what faith communities can do about poverty" (Vandezande, 1996), 4.

<sup>178</sup> This will be a difficult issue for the Conservative Party given the differences of social and economic policies present in its two founding parties, the Progressive Conservatives and the Alliance.

1990s he employed the concept of pluralism to advocate for a public role for religion. Nevertheless, the term “secularism” remained coded in negative terms and functioned as a tool to mobilize evangelicals to political engagement. Clemenger further refined the definition by distinguishing between a secular and a secularist state. He contended that while evangelicals were comfortable with the separation of church and state, they could not abide the secularist argument that religion must be privatized in order to protect public peace. Even so, he and other EFC leaders continued to use the term “secular” in an undifferentiated manner in order to rally the base, especially in their fundraising letters. Coding secularism as bad masked the EFC’s accommodation of a type of secularism that differentiated the church and the state but assumed that the state would promote religious pluralism.

One of the ways that the EFC contested secularism-as-laicism was to reject the privatization of religion. Rather than privatize religion, it insisted that religious voices should be present at the table where decisions about public policy are made. However, Asad argues that being at the table has political and perhaps religious implications as the table is dominated by liberal principles and state power. The state may, and for Asad often does, use its power to control public discourse and social space in an effort to create a national personality and a type of citizen. Asad is concerned that politically engaged “public” religions may have to participate in the public sphere in a manner that subsumes their religious identity.

## Chapter 4

### Developing a model for political engagement

When Henry Morgentaler received the order of Canada in 2008, many evangelicals and Roman Catholics voiced their disapproval. Morgentaler had spent much of his career as a medical doctor challenging the 1969 abortion law that considered abortions to be medical procedures under the control of doctors and hospital boards. In violation of the law, Morgentaler opened abortion clinics, first in Montreal in 1969 and then in other cities outside Quebec. After a series of arrests and trials in Quebec and Ontario, he eventually appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada. On January 28, 1988, the Court struck down the section of the *Criminal Code* limiting access to abortion because it infringed on Charter rights and was unequally applied throughout the country.<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, the Court recognized that the state had an interest in protecting the fetus, prompting the federal government to draft new legislation. The subsequent public debate propelled evangelicals into politics with a fervour not exhibited since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when they lobbied for temperance and Sabbath day observance. Many evangelical and Catholic organizations, including the EFC, framed the issue of abortion within the contexts of the common good and the *imago Dei*.

To provide a context and interpretive framework for understanding the nature of the EFC's political engagement in the secular public sphere, I employ the work of José Casanova, who studied the re-emergence of religious voices in the public square of various Western countries during the 1980s and early 1990s. In his book *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994), Casanova disagreed with those social scientists who argued that the differentiation of society, the modern process by which the "secular" spheres of the state and the economy become separated from religion, necessarily leads to the decline and the privatization of religion (19-20). Instead, Casanova posited that the process of secularization is neither linear nor irreversible, as seen in the renewed political activism of the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II. He lauded Catholic leaders for assuming "the vacant role of spokesperson for humanity, for the sacred dignity of the human person, for world peace, and for a more fair division of labor and power in the world system" (1997, 133) and coined the term "deprivatization" to refer to those religious traditions that refuse to be relegated to the private and

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<sup>179</sup> *R. v. Morgentaler*, [1988], 1 S.C.R. 30. Available online at <http://www.canlii.org/en/ca/scc/doc/1988/1988canlii90/1988canlii90.html> (accessed February 19, 2011).

individual spheres of life as mandated by liberalism and theories of modernism.<sup>180</sup> It is my argument that the EFC participated in the public sphere in a similar manner as the deprivatized religions described by Casanova.

This chapter explores how the EFC advanced a model of political engagement in its interventions in the “life” issues of abortion, euthanasia, and reproductive technologies. Although its emphasis on the moral aspects of these issues reflects the concerns of many evangelicals around the world, the approach tends to ignore the manner in which the market may also harm human life and dignity. Nevertheless, the EFC developed its model of political engagement as it interacted with these issues, especially during the abortion debate. While the *imago Dei* principle provided the theological foundation for this model, the development of a pragmatic approach to politics that stressed incremental change, the common good,<sup>181</sup> ecumenism,<sup>182</sup> pluralism, and persuasion was equally important. The model was a crucial element of the evangelical identity to which the EFC contributed as described in chapter 2 and it helped EFC leaders gain access to the public sphere and a place at “the table.” As we will discover in this chapter, the EFC used the same model of mixing the theological principle of the *imago Dei* with pragmatic politics and conceptions of the common good in its responses to the issues of doctor-assisted suicide and reproductive technologies. To conclude this chapter I draw on the work of Casanova to explain the significance of the EFC’s participation in these issues.

## 4.1 Abortion

Although American and Canadian evangelicals became involved in the abortion debate at approximately the same time, they were responding to different legal and cultural contexts. In the US, the American Supreme Court recognized women’s right to abortion in its landmark 1973 decision in

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<sup>180</sup> In applying Casanova’s theory to Canada, Stackhouse argues that the term “deprivatization” does not fully capture the Canadian reality as the Canadian public sphere was never completely privatized (2000, 123-25).

<sup>181</sup> In 2005 Noll identified the Canadian commitment to “a Catholic-rooted concern for the ‘common good’” as an important element of Canadian politics and one of the religious differences that separate Americans and Canadians. Quoted in Douglas Todd, “U.S. Religious Right pushing into Canada” in the *Vancouver Sun* (Saturday, July 30, 2005). Available online at <http://communities.canada.com/vancouver/sun/blogs/theseach/pages/u-s-religious-right-pushing-into-canada.aspx> (accessed December 30, 2009).

<sup>182</sup> When Noll participated in an EFC event in 1994, he was struck by the casual treatment of ecclesiastical and theological boundaries and the ability of people from different religious traditions, or no tradition, to discuss issues in a reasonable manner. In addition, he identified the ability of such different traditions as the Reformed and Pentecostals to work together to be quite distinctive in Canada (although it is now also occurring in the US) (1997, 12).

*Roe v. Wade*. However, American evangelicals did not mobilize against abortion until the late 1970s, when Francis Schaeffer and Dr. C. Everett Koop, who later became Surgeon General in the Reagan administration, urgently called them to political engagement in order to defend human life. Schaeffer and Koop portrayed abortion in dualistic terms as a struggle between those who viewed human life as worthwhile and those who saw it as “expendable raw material.” The latter group, Schaeffer and Koop claimed, operated from a “humanist base,” meaning that they derived standards from themselves and therefore had “no fixed standards of behaviour, no standards that cannot be eroded or replaced by what seems necessary, expedient, or even fashionable” (1979, 16-17). As George Marsden puts it, Schaeffer portrayed abortion as an example of “the secular takeover of government to promote an anti-Christian or licentious agenda” (2006, 245). Schaeffer counselled evangelicals to get involved in politics if they wished to resist such secularism. Although the evangelical community historically held a variety of views about abortion, Schaeffer was so successful in constructing what Susan Harding calls a “pro-life gospel” that by the end of the 1980s almost all alternative evangelical positions were either squashed or had silently disappeared from evangelical discourse (2000, 191).<sup>183</sup>

While the Canadian Supreme Court decision on abortion came over a decade after *Roe v. Wade*, Canadian evangelicals began joining the pro-life movement at approximately the same time as their American counterparts. While some Canadian Christians had mobilized against access to abortion throughout the early twentieth century, the issue became politically charged in the late 1960s when Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau liberalized the abortion law by medicalizing it (O’Leary 1988). In response, some Roman Catholics created the pro-life movement in Canada.<sup>184</sup> By the late 1970s, evangelicals had joined the Catholics, perhaps, as Michael Cuneo suggests, because they were

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<sup>183</sup> One of the few remaining alternative voices was ethicist Stanley Hauerwas, who challenged the secular presuppositions he saw in both the pro-choice and pro-life movements. He dismissed the view that abortion was an issue of laws or rights. Christians, he stated, “do not believe that life is a right or that we have inherent dignity. Instead, we believe that life is the gift of a gracious God” (1993, 58). Instead of becoming involved in debates about when human life starts, he called on Christians to contemplate “what kind of people we are to be as the Church and as Christians” (50). The church, he insisted, is to practice hospitality, to be a people and a place that welcomes new life, including those born with disabilities. In this manner “the church does not translate its message directly into the language of the wider society. Instead, the Church witnesses in its own language” (Stallworth 1993, 118), which is the language of faith, hope, and love, not that of individual rights and the sanctity of life.

<sup>184</sup> Michael Cuneo suggests that elements within the laity opposed abortion more strongly than the Catholic hierarchy (1989, 35).



inspired by the political engagement on the issue by their American counterparts (1989, 13).<sup>185</sup> Another possible explanation was the influence of Schaeffer on Canadian evangelical leaders.

Although the Canadian pro-life movement initially based its arguments on the liberal principle of human rights and on scientific data about the development of the fetus, by the early 1980s its discourse was more theological (41-42). Cuneo posits the arrival of conservative Protestants as one reason for this change in strategy and discourse. Although conservative Protestants at first viewed Catholic pro-lifers as co-belligerents of necessity in the struggle to protect the unborn, upon entering the pro-life movement they discovered that they shared the same “religious world” as pro-life Catholics; that is, they shared conservative doctrine and had similar experiences of estrangement from the secular culture. As Cuneo notes, “though they cringed at the ardent Marian piety and ultramontanist of grass roots Catholics, conservative Protestants were willing to tolerate certain excesses when so much else seemed right” (42). Evangelicals, who comprised the majority of conservative Protestants in the movement, discovered that they had more in common with pro-life Catholics than Protestants in the mainline churches, although it must be remembered that the mainline churches did not have a unified position. For example, the United Church supported women’s right to control reproduction while the Presbyterian Church in Canada opposed abortion on demand.<sup>186</sup> Catholic-evangelical cooperation on the issue of abortion led to many other instances of later collaboration among some Catholic and evangelical leaders, including opposition to the expansion of spousal benefits to homosexual couples and the recognition of same-sex marriage.

When Stiller assumed the leadership of the EFC in 1983, the organization was already firmly ensconced in the pro-life movement, with its emphasis on the sanctity of life. In late 1983, the EFC’s General Council adopted an “EFC charter on human life” that affirmed the high value of life, recognized that life begins at conception, and acknowledged “the special relationship of all humans to God as His image-bearers” (*Faith Alive* 1983a, 40). In the December 1985/January 1986 issue of *Faith Today*, the EFC published a 14-page exposé about abortion in Canada in which the authors noted that abortion profoundly challenged evangelical faith and that “God will judge this present generation on how we handle this and other social issues” (O’Leary and Mitchener 1985/1986, 16-

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<sup>185</sup> In 1985, Ken Campbell, an evangelical pastor and founder of Renaissance Canada, launched Choose Life Canada for the purpose of bringing more evangelicals into the pro-life movement (Cuneo 1989, 13). A *Faith Today* article noted that a jury acquittal of Morgentaler in Ontario in November, 1984 politicized Campbell (O’Leary and Mitchener 1985/1986, 28).

17).<sup>187</sup> Following Malcolm Muggeridge, the British reporter turned Christian, the authors charged that legalized abortion leads the public to devalue human life and view killing as “a private privilege,” resulting in euthanasia and genetic engineering on human embryos (25-26). The unstated argument was that limits on abortion would protect the common good by defending the rights of the disabled and elderly.

The language of the *imago Dei* was central in the position paper on abortion adopted by the EFC in 1987. In the paper the EFC declared that it based its opposition to abortion on the biblical view that human beings are created in the image of God. The biblical call to love one’s neighbours and seek justice, the paper claimed, required Christians to alleviate human suffering, address exploitation, unemployment, pornography, and family breakdown, and protect the security of the unborn and the disabled against “social dehumanization” (*Faith Today* 1988, 38).

Although EFC leaders firmly believed that the *imago Dei* principle required them to oppose abortion (along with euthanasia, pornography, and prostitution), they also wanted to participate in the public sphere in order to influence policy makers. This desire required them to state their opposition to abortion in ways that were publicly accessible. Developing this strategy was central to Stiller’s work, as he sought a distinctly Canadian response that was more moderate than those espoused by many leaders of the American Religious Right at the time.<sup>188</sup> For example, in its “Charter on human life,” the EFC called on the government to “restrict unnecessary abortions” rather than an outright ban on all abortions. The “Charter” also called on the Christian community to extend grace and reconciliation to those who suffered from the effects of abortion and those who were pregnant and unwed (*Faith Alive* 1983a, 40).

Further evidence of the EFC’s moderate position can be found in its refusal to support capital punishment. Although the federal government formally abolished capital punishment in 1976, some evangelicals lobbied for its return until the late 1980s. While the EFC acknowledged the diversity of evangelical opinions on the matter, it did not publicly take a position. In 1986 *Faith Today* published the views of Clark Pinnock, a theologian who favoured capital punishment, and John Redekop, who

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<sup>186</sup> For the Presbyterian Church in Canada statement, see [http://www.presbyterian.ca/webfm\\_send/5604](http://www.presbyterian.ca/webfm_send/5604) (accessed September 28, 2010).

<sup>187</sup> According to Statistics Canada, doctors in hospitals and clinics performed 66, 446 abortions in Canada in 1985. The number of abortions peaked in 1997 at 111,526 and fell to 97,254 in 2005. See <http://cansim2.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-win/cnsmcgi.pgm> (accessed January 30, 2011).

opposed it. After examining the only direct reference to capital punishment in the New Testament, the story of the woman caught in adultery and brought before Jesus (John 9: 1-11), Redekop concluded that the first spiritual principle of the story was that people are created in God's image. He affirmed "that death is not God's highest will for mankind. The theme of God's overall dealing with man is life, not death. This affirmation means that in grey areas Christians lean towards life" (Redekop 1986, 34). In a 2008 interview, Redekop recalled that there were many conversations about the death penalty among members of the EFC's General Council throughout the 1970s and 1980s. When a Council member called for a vote on the issue to determine whether there was consensus among the group, those opposed to capital punishment carried the vote. "The old establishment" Redekop claimed, "was quite surprised that the combination of Reformed and Mennonite and a few others carried the day" (2008). In contrast, many American evangelicals continued to promote capital punishment throughout the 2000s.<sup>189</sup>

Another indication of its moderate position may be seen in the EFC's critique of what it saw as the excesses of the pro-life movement. Shortly after the Supreme Court struck down the abortion law in 1988, *Faith Today* published an article by Denyse O'Leary, who identified five mistakes made by the Canadian pro-life movement in its campaign to reduce access to abortion. First, O'Leary claimed that in its effort to repeal Section 251 of Trudeau's 1969 Omnibus legislation liberalizing social policy, the movement ignored how the pre-1969 era marginalized and disempowered unmarried pregnant women. Second, the movement viewed differences regarding legal and political strategies as theological differences, creating internal divisions and eliminating political options. Third, the movement's constant reactions against the pro-choice movement robbed pro-lifers of creativity and opportunities for education. Fourth, the alignment of the pro-life movement with the political right, and thus with the latter's opposition to day care and public financing of affordable housing, made it difficult for pro-lifers to claim that they really were pro-life. Finally, continually seeking publicity for its cause signalled the movement's exclusion from the centers of power where the decisions are made. O'Leary concluded the article by urging the movement to become more strategically political (1988). Instead, the movement fractured when the Progressive Conservative (PC) government of Brian Mulroney attempted to create new legislation limiting access to abortion. In the ensuing debate the

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<sup>188</sup> Gilgoff portrays James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, as a purist regarding abortion, unable to compromise and unwilling to expand his interest to include non-life issues (2007, 109-10).

EFC took a more moderate position than some other evangelical and Catholic organizations such as REAL Women and Campaign Life.

It is important to remember that the Supreme Court did not recognize a woman's right to an abortion. Rather, it acknowledged that the state had an interest in protecting the fetus and that new legislation could restrict some access to abortion and still be constitutional. The Court favoured a gestational approach that would limit access during the third trimester of pregnancy. However, the pro-life element of the Conservative Caucus did not support such an approach and the government struck a committee to propose new legislation.

Benno Friesen, an evangelical PC Member of Parliament from British Columbia, and Lisa Bourgault co-chaired the caucus committee that drafted Bill C-43 while John Reimer, another evangelical PC Member of Parliament, was a committee member. Introduced into the House of Commons in November, 1989, the committee's proposed Bill kept abortion in the *Criminal Code* but reduced the limitations for procuring an abortion by requiring only one doctor to determine whether having a child would harm the woman's "health," including her psychological health. By using the deliberately vague term "health," the committee hoped to appease pro-choice activists, pointing out that the Bill created a standard of entitlement, did away with hospital boards, and allowed for the establishment of abortion clinics (Brodie 1992, 106). At the same time the committee attempted to appease the pro-life lobby by rejecting a gestational approach in favour of the principle that life begins at conception (Reimer 2008).

When the EFC appeared before the Legislative Committee studying the Bill in early 1990, it based its opposition to abortion on the biblical call to seek justice, with its conception that all people have dignity because they "bear the divine image" (EFC 1990, 1). In its submission to the Committee, the EFC linked negative social consequences with abortion, including forms of individualism that threatened social survival. For the EFC, all people, including the unborn, are interconnected. Likewise, it portrayed social policy as interconnected. As the submission stated: "If we devalue the life of the unborn, we will be less motivated to do much for those who are marginalized by poverty or other disabilities" (2). The idea here was that abortion served as a bellwether for a good deal of social policy. Consequently, EFC leaders argued that support for abortion indicated a slippery slope towards

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<sup>189</sup> As late as March 2008, *Christianity Today* reported that evangelicals were the strongest supporters of the death penalty in the US. See Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra's "Capital doubts," available online at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/march/6.20.html> (accessed August 18, 2010).

neglecting such vulnerable populations as the disabled. Given Canada's declining birth rate since 1960,<sup>190</sup> the EFC urged policy-makers to link the issue of abortion with "the long-term building of our nation" (2). In effect, the argument was that abortion did not serve the common good because it harmed the long-term health of the nation and jeopardized the lives of the marginalized.<sup>191</sup> The organization grounded its conception of the common good in the biblical call to practice justice and mercy (1). Indeed, caring for the weak and oppressed was a significant element of how the EFC defined the common good. Other social considerations mentioned in the brief included the possibility that the logic supporting abortion might one day be used to legitimate fetal farming and abortion based upon gender.<sup>192</sup>

Bill C-43 created significant controversy within the evangelical community. While most pro-life groups expressed their disappointment with the lack of interest exhibited by the Legislative Committee to amend the Bill, evangelical organizations could not agree on a common strategy to secure changes, much less a common response to the Bill. On the one hand, Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) supported the Bill with the hope of eventually improving it. In an interview with *Faith Today* in the spring of 1990, Gerald Vandezande, then CPJ Director of Public Affairs, said, "simply saying how bad the bill is plays into the pro-abortion forces that want to defeat the bill. We don't want it defeated; we want it improved" (*Faith Today* 1990, 60). On the other hand, a REAL Women spokeswoman explained that, "we would prefer it not be passed than have it enshrined into law that you can kill a human being" (60). For its part, the EFC adopted a similar position to CPJ. While its leaders continued to decry abortion and the Bill's overbroad conception of the mother's "health," they nevertheless supported the Bill because it acknowledged that life begins at conception.<sup>193</sup> Stiller thought that over time more restrictions could be placed on abortion as Canadians came to see that the issue was about the right to life rather than the right of choice (Stiller 1991d, 78). In addition,

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<sup>190</sup> For more on Canada's declining birth rate, see Statistics Canada at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/kits-trousses/issues-enjeux/c-g/c-g1-eng.htm> (accessed August 9, 2010).

<sup>191</sup> In 2008, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling squashing the abortion law, the EFC's Don Hutchinson posited abortion in common good language. As Canada's population ages, he wrote, "we find ourselves wondering where the next generation of workers will come from. They'll have to come from somewhere else because Canada has buried the generations that should have been born to us." See Hutchinson's webitorial "20 years since Morgentaler – Nothing to celebrate" at <http://www.christianity.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=5407> (accessed January 30, 2011).

<sup>192</sup> During the process of creating legislation to regulate new reproductive technologies, the federal government sought to prohibit gender selection practices (EFC 2001a, 5).

<sup>193</sup> Jonathan Malloy interprets the EFC's support for the Bill as indicative of its moderate position on the issue (2009, 356). Stiller recalls that EFC members generally agreed with the decision to support the Bill (2008).

knowledge of the political and legal processes involved in developing and amending legislation contributed to the EFC's position. Through his relationships with John Reimer and Health Minister Jake Epp, Stiller witnessed first hand the process by which public policy is developed and how change often occurs slowly and incrementally. With this bit of sober political pragmatism in mind, Stiller pleaded with pro-lifers engaged in civil disobedience (i.e., blocking entrances to abortion clinics) "to be tolerant of the long-term strategy," which for Stiller was convincing the majority of Canadians who were undecided on the issue to support the pro-life cause.<sup>194</sup>

However, the long-term approach did not appeal to all pro-lifers. While Stiller and Reimer together lobbied MPs to support the Bill (Reimer 2008), those who opposed it lobbied with equal dedication. The net result was that the conservative Protestant community sent mixed messages to parliamentarians.<sup>195</sup>

Despite the divisions in the pro-life camp, the House of Commons passed the Bill in May, 1990.<sup>196</sup> As a result, many doctors across the country stopped performing abortions for fear of litigation by the pro-life movement (Brodie 1992, 112). Forces on both sides of the debate then turned their attention to the Senate. According to Janine Brodie in her study of the abortion debate, although the Progressive Conservatives held a majority in the Senate,<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> While Stiller focused his attention on the creation of a new law, he acknowledged that civil disobedience might push the federal government to write new legislation (1989e, 78; 1991d, 78).

<sup>195</sup> According to Janine Brodie, feminists understood the central issue of the abortion debate to be "about the social construction of women" (1992, 71) while the pro-life movement interpreted the central debate to be one of competing rights between the mother and the fetus (similar to the position taken by the pro-life movement in the US). In response, Jane Jenson claims, the pro-choice lobby also turned to rights discourse and as a consequence dropped many of its social policy arguments (1992, 55). Soon the debate centered on the nature of personhood, with the pro-life members turning to science in an attempt to prove that life begins at conception and the pro-choice camp linking personhood with viability (79). Some pro-choice advocates labelled the pro-life understanding of personhood at conception as the "social construction of the foetus" (80) and understood the movement in general as "expropriating the female body and disenfranchising the female subject" by privileging society over women (81). Feminists found such privileging of society to be contradictory because pro-life advocates also asserted the absolute right of the fetus to life "irrespective of the values of the collectivity" (85).

<sup>196</sup> When the Bill passed the House, Stiller wrote that although it was unknown how many abortions the Bill would prevent, he added that "we expect that hospitals and doctors will be reluctant to perform abortions for fear of legal action" (1991b, 120).

<sup>197</sup> In order to pass the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in the Senate, passed just prior to the vote held on the abortion Bill, the Progressive Conservative government used an obscure constitutional provision to appoint new Senators, meaning that the Conservatives had a majority in the Senate at the time of the free vote on abortion (Brodie 1992, 169n111).

On the eve of the vote in the Senate, parliamentary insiders began to suspect that the federal government was ambivalent about the bill's passage. There had been very little pressure exerted on Conservative Senators to toe the party line and the Justice Minister had indicated that, even if passed, the bill might not be implemented, at least initially. (1992, 115)

Such political indifference, coupled with the objections of the doctors and the protests of those who believed the Bill did not adequately protect the fetus, contributed to a tie vote in the Senate in January 1991, almost three years to the day after the Supreme Court struck down the abortion law in 1988 (114).<sup>198</sup> Under Canadian law, a tie vote in the Senate means a Bill is defeated.

In his analysis of the defeat Stiller focused on the role played by those Christians who rejected the Bill because it did not do enough to protect the unborn. While Stiller recognized that the Bill was imperfect and did not in his opinion go far enough to protect and respect human life (1991b, 118-23), he nevertheless took umbrage with those whom he labelled "religious fundamentalists," defined as those who advocated for legal sanctions as a means to enforce a certain moral position. For Stiller, these fundamentalists were more comfortable with arbitrary restrictions than trusting "God to bring about transformation by his grace" (1991d, 78).<sup>199</sup> He particularly objected to their legalism. "Legalism," he wrote, "says that the way to transform is to superimpose a code of laws on people. But that denies grace. Jesus saw it differently. The letter kills but the Spirit gives life. Grace is essential for transformation" (1991c, 199). With these words Stiller called Christians to practice grace when engaging in the public square and rely on persuasion rather than using the law to impose a particular moral view on other Canadians.<sup>200</sup> Reflecting on the issue in 1994 he wrote, "Grace is essential for transformation. Or, to put it in terms of the abortion issue, a society must first be led to care about the unborn children before laws to protect them will be accepted and before other ways of dealing with problem pregnancies will be sought" (1994b, 209). This emphasis on grace allowed the EFC to think about change in incremental terms, work with politicians who were not Christian, and adopt a type of political pragmatism that acknowledged all people are sinful creatures who make mistakes and need forgiveness. People of faith who adopted a legalistic approach to politics, Stiller claimed, were co-

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<sup>198</sup> Each side received 43 votes (Brodie 1992, 115).

<sup>199</sup> Stiller also noted the role of secular fundamentalism in the defeat of Bill C-43. Secular fundamentalists, he claimed, resist laws that limit personal choice and permit moral anarchy (1991d, 78).

<sup>200</sup> In a 2008 interview Stiller singled out the Catholic organization Campaign Life as an example of a religious fundamentalist group. He ascribed his distrust of fundamentalists to their reductionism, as they take the big

opted by the culture in that they desired “to benefit by the application of the gospel rather than to give because of the gospel” (1989d, 78).

The model in turn contributed to the creation of a Canadian evangelical identity. EFC leaders desired that evangelicals participate in a particular manner that accommodated political processes and the slow pace of political change, especially in a pluralist country. In contrast, organizations such as the Catholic Campaign Life and REAL Women shunned accommodation and viewed compromise as a “sell out.” Instead of accepting incremental change, these organizations adopted an “all or nothing” approach. Stiller rejected such an approach. Instead, he believed that the Bill “provided pro-lifers with an opportunity to shift the debate in the direction of forcing society to talk about the essence of the unborn. It would have robbed the pro-choice movement of their inherent argument, which insisted the issue was one of choice” (1991d, 78). Stiller’s strategy was to advance persuasive arguments, get the ear of the authorities, and convince the public rather than impose legal sanctions (78). The model was pragmatic in that it worked for what was possible at the time, although Stiller’s ultimate goal was to limit the number of abortions performed in Canada.

At first glance it appears that the EFC’s model of moderation, incremental change, and persuasion failed to attract the support of significant numbers of evangelicals. Although the EFC continued to lament unlimited access to abortion in Canada and called for the protection of human life at all stages of development, including prior to birth,<sup>201</sup> there was no political will among any of the political parties to develop another law. Canada became the only industrialized country with no limitations on the procurement of abortion.<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, evangelical political engagement largely dissipated, with the evangelical community fractured over the degree to which evangelicals should accommodate and compromise when involved in politics. As Stackhouse noted in 1995, not all evangelicals agreed with evangelical political engagement, let alone the EFC’s support for a partial solution to the abortion issue (1995b, 176).

Yet the abortion debate did not create permanent fissures within the evangelical community, in large part because most evangelicals continued to oppose abortion on the basis of the beliefs that life

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issues and create “a legalism around them, [so] that if you’re not on the right side, not only are you wrong on the issue, but you are somehow morally or spiritually deprived” (2008).

<sup>201</sup> See the EFC’s website at <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=462> (accessed January 30, 2011).



begins at conception and that all human life reflects the image of God. By 1994 so many Canadian evangelicals supported the pro-life movement that commentators claimed membership in an evangelical church was “related to a conservative abortion attitude” and “a powerful source of political socialization” (Chandler et al. 1994, 137, 142). Put another way, the disagreement between evangelicals during the abortion debate was political, a difference of strategy, rather than theological.<sup>203</sup>

Despite the failure of the EFC to achieve consensus with regard to how evangelicals would participate in the public sphere, evangelicals learned from their experiences in the abortion debate. In subsequent debates they accommodated a greater variety of political strategies. Not all issues required such accommodation however. For example, in the early 1990s they presented a unified public front as they supported an existing law that criminalized doctor-assisted suicide. In their political and legal interventions in the issue, EFC leaders continued to develop their model of political engagement, with its emphasis on the *imago Dei*, the common good, and ecumenism.

## 4.2 Euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide

In the early 1990s, Sue Rodriguez, who suffered from Lou Gehrig’s disease, challenged the law that criminalized doctor-assisted suicide. Because she did not want to burden her family with her care when she became incapacitated, she petitioned the court to allow her doctor to assist her in the act of suicide when she could no longer carry out the act by herself. The EFC, together with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB), intervened in the case when it reached the Supreme Court in 1993. In describing its organizational objectives at the beginning of the joint legal argument, or factum, the EFC described its objectives as being “a public advocate of its members’ values and

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<sup>202</sup> An Environics poll conducted in 2007 revealed that 6 out of 10 Canadians desired some sort of protection for the unborn. See <http://www.lifecanada.org/html/resources/polling/2007PollReport.pdf> (accessed January 30, 2011).

<sup>203</sup> The EFC continued to be involved in legal cases that involved the unborn. In 1997 it intervened with The Christian Medical and Dental Society in a case in which a pregnant woman addicted to solvents was mandated by Winnipeg Child and Family Services to undergo treatment in order to protect her fetus. The interveners supported Child and Family Services on the basis that pregnant women have a duty of care for the unborn. A year later the EFC supported a young boy who sued his mother for reckless driving after he sustained injuries in *utero*, resulting in a caesarean section and the boy being born with cerebral palsy. In this case the EFC again argued for legal recognition of a duty of care and insisted that the law should treat the mother and the fetus as distinct and separate from each other. Then in 2007 it participated in a BC case as a member of the Canadian Religious Freedom Alliance in order to support two abortion protestors who were arrested because they contravened the bubble zone around an abortion clinic. In all three cases the courts ruled against the positions taken by the EFC and its co-interveners.

beliefs to government, courts and other public institutions and [promoting] a life affirming ethic within contemporary culture” (CCCB and EFC 1993, ¶3). The factum began with the argument that since “the Charter is an expression of the basic rights and values held in common by our society,” (¶6), it must be interpreted within the framework of its Preamble, which recognizes the rule of law and the supremacy of God. Or put another way, the values of the Charter are not self-defining. Instead, they must be interpreted, and the interveners wanted the Court to interpret the right to life and security within the framework of the sanctity of life.<sup>204</sup> A life-affirming ethic, they claimed, was integral to Canadian law, pointing to a 1982 report by the Law Reform Commission of Canada which recognized the “sanctity of human life” and recommended against de-criminalizing doctor-assisted suicide (¶16-17).<sup>205</sup> Legalizing doctor-assisted suicide, the interveners stated, would erode the trust necessary to live in community, undermine patients’ trust in their doctor, and pressure the elderly and infirm to end their life rather than burden others for their care (¶31-33). In contrast, they insisted that the law, which they understood as a moral system, should advance the common good by upholding trust and protecting human life. The legalization of doctor-assisted suicide, they argued, implicates all of society and therefore is a matter of public policy rather than an individual decision (¶29-31). According to Bruce Clemenger, who, at the time of the Rodriguez case was the director of the EFC’s Centre for Faith and Public Life, only the EFC and CCCB promoted “the sanctity of human life” argument in front of the Court (2003, 171). By a margin of 5 to 4, the court agreed with their position, citing the consensus among Canadians for the principle of the sanctity of life.<sup>206</sup> Clearly EFC leaders viewed the decision as a victory.

The EFC’s involvement in the Rodriguez case furthered its model for political engagement in two ways. First, it maintained the ecumenical collaboration seen in the abortion debate. Intervening in the case with the Bishops made sense given the Christian valuation of the theological principle of the *imago Dei* that both Catholics and evangelicals share. Second, the interveners made extensive use of papers produced by the Law Reform Commission of Canada in their argument that a legal code can

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<sup>204</sup> The EFC developed this point more fully in a submission to the Senate Special Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide in 1994. In the paper the EFC stated that “the identification and interpretation of [the principles of fundamental justice as found in the Charter] is a task in which all Canadians can participate. Various communities in our society will bring their own perspective to bear in this discussion. In this, religious communities have a unique contribution to make” (1994a, 2). Clemenger has continued to make this argument.

<sup>205</sup> The factum quoted from The Law Reform Commission of Canada, Working paper no. 28, “Euthanasia, aiding suicide and cessation of treatment,” 1982, pp. 3 and 7.

<sup>206</sup> *Rodriguez v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*, [1993] 3 S.C.R. 519. Available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/1993/1993scr3-519/1993scr3-519.html> (accessed March 9, 2011).

never be morally neutral. Although life-affirming legislation has a Christian pedigree, the interveners insisted that one does not need to be religious in order to support it because such legislation protects the weak, particularly the physically and mentally challenged, the elderly, and the terminally ill. The interveners combined theological principles with practical politics and contributed to the Court's decision that recognized a shared Canadian affirmation for the sanctity of human life.

Subsequent events kept the issue of euthanasia in the spotlight. Within one month of the *Rodriguez* decision, Robert Latimer killed his daughter Tracy, who suffered from cerebral palsy. Approximately one year later Sue Rodriguez ended her life with the help of an unknown person. These actions by Latimer and Rodriguez placed the complex questions of euthanasia and assisted suicide squarely in the public sphere. To help evangelicals think through the issues, the EFC's Social Action Commission released a discussion paper in which it attributed the general acceptance of euthanasia to "the rise of individualism and personal autonomy" (EFC 1994b, 1). Advocates of euthanasia, the Commission claimed, presented the issue as a personal matter and a compassionate response to suffering. While the Commission rejected such arguments, it recognized the complexity of the matter, noting that the professionalization of health care has led to depersonalized care and that technological advancements prolong life but are expensive. It differentiated the refusal of treatment from involuntary euthanasia and assisted suicide. In a section labelled "A Christian response," the Commission noted the need "to develop our Christian understanding of suffering" and urged its readers to support palliative care options and protect the vulnerable (6). In addition, it called for compassion and stated the need to bring the Christian message of hope to those who believe that their lives are useless (7).

Despite the recognition of the complexities of the issue, however, the Commission ended its paper by portraying the issue in dualistic terms similar to those advanced by Schaeffer and Koop. It stated,

The presence of a movement to legalize euthanasia in Canada is symptomatic of the general tendency in our society to devalue human life. When God is no longer recognized as the source of life, then the measure of a life's worth will be narrowed down to uncertain, utilitarian terms. When God is no longer recognized as sovereign in the course of our living and dying, human beings are likely to claim their "right" to die.

On the other hand, when God is acknowledged as Life-giver, then all human life is recognized to have inherent worth and dignity. When God is acknowledged as sovereign in all matters of life and death,

then life and death will be treated with great care and humility.  
(1994b, 7)

There is little complexity in this statement; those who do not believe in God are portrayed as holding utilitarian views of life and are willing to kill human beings for the sake of convenience, while Christians are portrayed as those who believe in the dignity of the human person. As a simplistic reduction of a complex issue, this statement ignores the historical fact that many non-Christians are also committed to human dignity and that Christians have not always treated human life “with great care and humility.” While the actions of adherents cannot refute the legitimacy of a religious belief, meaning that actions taken by Christians that ultimately de-value life cannot invalidate the sanctity of life argument, neither can Christians gloss over such actions and assume that a belief in God necessarily leads all believers to protect and promote human dignity for all. For whatever reason, subsequent EFC papers and interventions did not repeat the Social Action Commission’s dualistic argument. Regardless, its leaders continued to maintain the position that the Christian faith offers the best protection for human dignity.

EFC leaders clearly outlined their theological assumptions in a submission to the Senate Special Committee established in 1994 to study the issues of euthanasia and assisted suicide. The submission, entitled “Walking together in the shadow of death,” began with a quote from Dr. Margaret Somerville, an ethicist who argued in a 1994 EFC-produced video that euthanasia was “the vehicle through which we are fighting about which world view will govern our society in the future” (EFC 1994a, 1). Somerville’s statement helps explain the fervour with which evangelicals participated in both the abortion and euthanasia debates. What was at stake for them was whether the worldview that defined Canadian society would be Christian, meaning that it adopted the sanctity of life argument, or if it would be influenced by another worldview that might not value human life to the same extent or in the same manner that Christianity did. The submission softened the dualism that could emerge from such a conception of the issue by quoting the Law Reform Commission’s support of the sanctity of life argument. Such use of the Commission’s work suggested that EFC leaders recognized that not all non-Christians necessarily reduce human life to utility and convenience. The submission went on to argue that all Canadians must have the opportunity to participate in identifying and interpreting the Charter principles of life, liberty, and security of the person. It posited the contribution of religious communities as a unique but by no means exclusive voice in the discussion. The unstated assumption was that religious communities should have the same public space as any other group to persuade others that their position was beneficial for society (2). The paper noted that Canadians who ascribed

to the liberal conception of the human person could support the EFC's desire to affirm the "inherent dignity" (3) of each person. This promotion of pluralism was an essential element of the EFC's model of political engagement.

The submission identified four principles that the EFC believed should guide Canadian society on the issue of euthanasia: a) "The sanctity of life;" b) "The stewardship of life," which required that human life must be nurtured, in part by creating laws that discourage destructive behaviour; c) "Compassion for life;" and d) "Communal responsibility for life" (1994a, 2-3). These principles, the EFC noted, were "widely shared" (4) and provided the foundation for the "life-affirming ethos" of the legal system. The organization rejected euthanasia as ungovernable and raised the spectre that one day patients, the elderly, and other vulnerable people might have to justify their existence. Instead of permitting euthanasia and assisted suicide as a means to address suffering, the EFC called on the government to support palliative care. It also noted that society must find better ways of incorporating and valuing the elderly and disabled (5).<sup>207</sup>

Although the language of the common good was not used in the EFC's submission to the Senate, the concept was the foundation for the organization's position. EFC leaders assumed that palliative care promoted the common good in a way that assisted suicide could not, because it protected the lives of those generally considered weak and oppressed. For these leaders, the degree to which societies follow the biblical injunction to care for the marginalized indicates the degree to which they are good. For instance, if the terminally ill or disabled fear that their doctors may over-prescribe medication in order to hasten their death, the common good is harmed because trust is broken and the helping professions betray their oaths to care for others. Given that human beings live out their lives

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<sup>207</sup> As a result of its hearings, the Senate committee wrote a report entitled *Of Life and Death* (1995). The report called for a clarification of law on withholding/withdrawing treatment and more emphasis on palliative care. It recommended that assisted suicide as well as non-voluntary and voluntary euthanasia remain criminal offenses, although it suggested lesser sentences for cases involving compassion, with the parameters and sentence to be established by Parliament. The report is available online at <http://www.parl.gc.ca/35/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/Com-e/euth-e/rep-e/LAD-TC-E.HTM> (accessed January 30, 2011). Another Senate committee updated the report in 2000, choosing to focus on the need for a national strategy to provide end-of-life care. In this second round of hearings the EFC made a submission as part of the Care-in-Dying Coalition, an organization dedicated to advocating for more palliative and home care for the terminally ill. The Coalition lamented the absence of palliative care in provincial health care systems and supported the recommendation of the 1995 committee that the Criminal Code be clarified to distinguish euthanasia from withholding or withdrawing treatment in particular circumstances and the administration of drugs that dull pain but as a side effect hasten death. However, it opposed the Senate's 1995 recommendation that mercy killing on the basis of compassion carry less severe penalties. See the Coalition's 2000 paper entitled "Five years later, where is the care in

in communities and are involved in a variety of relationships, what happens to the weak impacts the entire society. If the lives of the disabled are de-valued, the EFC submission argued, then all human life is eventually de-valued (1994a). The concept is closely linked to the principle of the *imago Dei*; it is precisely because each person, regardless of their abilities or health, is made in the image of God that it is in the best interest of society to protect human life and dignity.

The issue of euthanasia came to the public's attention again in the late 1990s with new developments in the Latimer case. After a complex series of trials, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal held that Latimer had to serve a minimum of 10 years of his life sentence in jail before he would be eligible for parole. When Latimer appealed the sentence to the Supreme Court in 1999, the EFC intervened, together with the Christian Medical and Dental Society (CMDS) and Physicians for Life. In their factum these interveners argued that Tracy must be seen as a person entitled to the same dignity and protection as every other Canadian. Her personhood could not depend on her physical and mental abilities or her freedom from pain. Perhaps the strongest statement in the factum occurred when the interveners discussed the significance of allowing Latimer's argument that he felt "compelled" to kill Tracy. "To grant this appeal" they stated, "will harden the Canadian soul, will foster and encourage a culture of death in our country, and will say to the disabled that they are lesser beings who do not enjoy the full protection of Canadian law" (EFC, CMDS, and Physicians n.d. [2000], ¶5). They noted that the Charter's guarantee of such universal freedoms as one's right to life are informed by theological and philosophical sources that are beyond positive law. They identified two such theological sources as Judaism and Christianity, both of which base personhood and dignity on the principle that human beings are created in the image of God. The *imago Dei* principle, they claimed, yields two legal principles: a) that all people enjoy equal dignity; and b) that no one may take another's life (¶12). The interveners maintained that according to the international rule of law as found in the United Nations Charter, Tracey's personhood was grounded in her inalienable human rights and inherent human dignity, the same sources that grounded these protections in the Canadian Charter and provincial Human Rights Codes (¶14-17). In 2001, the Supreme Court upheld Latimer's 10 year minimum sentence.<sup>208</sup>

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dying?" available online at <http://files.efc-canada.net/si/Euthanasia/EuthanasiaSenateBrief2000/pdf> (accessed February 20, 2011).

<sup>208</sup> R. v. Latimer, [2001] 1 S.C.R. 3, 2001 SCC 1. Available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/2001/2001scc1/2001scc1.html> (accessed March 9, 2011).

Throughout the 2000s the issue of euthanasia remained alive as several backbench Members of Parliament introduced private members' bills into Parliament, all of them unsuccessful.<sup>209</sup> In 2005, Clemenger wrote in *Faith Today* that those seeking the legalization of euthanasia, like the advocates for same-sex marriage, had a flawed understanding of the origin of human dignity in that they conferred human dignity dialogically rather than deriving it from the principle of the *imago Dei*. By dialogical dignity Clemenger was referring to the notion that “you have dignity only if others affirm you in your choices and the identity you have constructed for yourself.” Clemenger suggested that evangelicals combat this flawed understanding of personhood by persuading others in word and deed about the benefits of the biblical conception of human dignity as based on the principle of the *imago Dei* (2005a, 14).

The EFC's model of political engagement that was grounded on the *imago Dei* and emphasized moderation and pluralism was apparent in its participation in the euthanasia debate. By calling attention to the issues of palliative care, EFC leaders attempted to move the discussion beyond a for or against dualism, or a liberal/conservative dichotomy, to include such issues as how society values the elderly and cares for the ill. By focusing on the universality of the sanctity of life argument and the need to protect the weak and vulnerable in society, EFC leaders sought to persuade others, including non-Christians, about the benefits of the *imago Dei* principle for society. Indeed, the EFC often pointed to the affirmation of the sanctity of life in documents by the Law Reform Commission to argue that one does not have to adhere to a specific religious doctrine in order to support human life. As Clemenger wrote in an article in *Faith Today*:

We will not seek to impose—that is not our task nor our calling. We will seek to persuade and give faithful witness to the wisdom entrusted to us as witnesses to the gospel of grace. We are loved by God and bear His image. Life is something that we should cherish and care for. We should love others as we love ourselves, in word and deed. (2005a, 14)

Here Clemenger argued the same position as Stiller; namely, if evangelicals use the law to impose their views of life, they are not modeling the grace of God. Instead, they are to cherish life and care for others in practical ways. One of the ways to do so was to persuade others about the sanctity of life, using both religious and non-religious sources and arguments. The same commitments may be

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<sup>209</sup> For more details, see <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/919-e.htm> (accessed July 21, 2010).

discerned in the EFC's attempts to have legislation concerning reproductive technologies acknowledge the sanctity of life. In many of their papers on the issue, EFC leaders pointed to the *Rodriguez* decision as evidence of a common Canadian support of the sanctity of life.

### 4.3 Reproductive technologies

Scientific advancements such as “test tube babies” and cloning animals led many countries, including Canada, to create legislation to regulate new (or “assisted”) reproductive technologies. To study the issue, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appointed a Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies in 1989. In its 1993 report entitled *Proceed with Care*, the Commission offered almost 300 recommendations, including the prohibition of selling eggs, sperm and embryos as well as paying surrogate mothers. It also called for a regulatory body to oversee genetic technologies. When Parliament began the process of drafting legislation and holding hearings, the EFC participated in every step of the process. Its leaders worried that the new technology would change social conceptions of the family, because “biological ties and parenthood would become unrelated. At worst, parenthood would be reduced to a transaction, depending solely on the will of the adult parties to a contract” (1996a, 2).<sup>210</sup> EFC leaders urged Parliament to de-commercialize reproductive technologies by banning experimentation on embryos at all stages of development either within or outside the human body;<sup>211</sup> the creation of embryos for the purpose of research; the destruction of embryos; selling or buying eggs, sperm, zygotes, embryos and fetuses; patenting cells; cloning;<sup>212</sup> genetic alteration, and paying surrogate mothers (1996a; 1997b; 1999c). In many of its interventions the EFC called for public funds to support research intent on curing infertility rather than introducing third (or more) parties into the process of creating a child (1996a, 4-5). Especially troubling for EFC leaders was the use of anonymous egg or sperm donors, which made it difficult for the resulting children to discover their biological identity (1998a). In addition, they disputed the term “donor”

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<sup>210</sup> This argument is similar to the one advanced by EFC leaders in the same-sex marriage debate. See chapter 6.

<sup>211</sup> A report issued by the Standing Committee on Health in response to draft legislation introduced by then Minister of Health Alan Rock allowed research on excess embryos from *in vitro* treatments. While pleased with many other aspects of the report, the EFC issued a press release saying it was “truly disheartened at the lack of protection for the human embryo.” In March 2002, the Canadian Institute for Health Research decided to fund research on embryonic stem cells. The EFC issued another press release indicating its deep disappointment with the decision, given that such research results in the death of the embryo. See <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1087> (accessed January 30, 2011).

<sup>212</sup> This prohibition would include therapeutic or non-reproductive cloning, even for the most altruistic or compassionate reasons, as the immediate and long-term effects were unknown. The EFC viewed the process as objectifying people and disregarding the best interest of children (1999c).



because it devalued children and reduced reproduction to a transaction (1997b). They found the terms “human organism” and “human reproductive material” equally problematic, preferring the terms “human being” and “embryo” respectively (1996a; 2001a, 4).

In all of its submissions, the EFC urged caution and elaborated a number of principles to help guide the decisions of law-makers. It insisted that the nature of the law is important because its underlying principles reflect “the moral framework that underlies the interactions of the individuals within a society” and it acts “as a teacher, shaping and influencing how individuals view a specific legal or moral problem” (1995, 9). Identifying principles, then, was not an abstract and philosophical activity, but an essential aspect of how citizens live and reason together and necessary to determine the common good.

The EFC’s Social Action Commission formed a Biogenetics Committee, which published a paper entitled “Changing genes: A Christian approach to human genetic testing and therapy” that defined the relevant terms and helped evangelicals think through the issues related to genetic testing. First published in 1995 (and amended in 1998), the paper identified what the Committee considered to be the central principles involved in the issues, principles which were consistent with those articulated in the EFC’s submissions regarding euthanasia, such as the sovereignty of God, the sanctity and dignity of life, an emphasis on the community, living in hope, “and resisting the temptation to usurp God’s place” by gaining power to reengineer life (EFC 1995, 2). Furthermore, the Committee claimed that it was not the responsibility of human beings to eliminate suffering from the world. At the same time, it recognized the positive elements of genetic testing.

Our generation may have the unique opportunity to use genetic research, testing and therapy as new avenues by which Christians can demonstrate compassion and love. However, as Christians, we also have a responsibility to be vigilant in protecting humanity from the possibility of being abused by this technology. We must ensure that people with genetic disorders are neither exploited for scientific or commercial advantage, nor discriminated against on the grounds of their differences or “abnormalities.” (2-3)

For instance, the Committee noted that prenatal testing for such genetic mutations as cystic fibrosis could lead to increased abortions. While the Committee acknowledged that most Canadians believed that abortion for the purposes of convenience or on the basis of gender was unacceptable, it worried about the increasing tolerance of abortion on the basis of genetic abnormalities. Yet it recognized that the discovery of genetic abnormalities via genetic testing could help parents prepare for the child and

celebrate his or her birth. It counselled evangelicals to show compassion to parents caught in difficult situations regardless of whether the parents chose to keep or abort the fetus (6). Other fears arising from genetic testing involved eugenics and cloning. However, the Committee recognized that most scientists were concerned about curing old genetic diseases and that most Canadians found human cloning repulsive. Such repulsion, the Committee claimed, rested on biblical principles. “In this manner, the Christian is fully equipped to offer witness in the public sphere to God as a God of hope, who uses but is not dependent on our technologies” (7). To protect against the negative elements of genetic testing, the Committee urged the government to create legislation guided by the principle of the sanctity of life. Such a position would not rule out genetic technology but would prohibit such applications as human cloning, creating human-animal hybrids, and genetic testing for the purposes of eugenics (9).

To help Canadian MPs and the public think through the issues of biotechnologies, the federal government created the Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee in 1999 (the mandate for the Committee expired in 2007). The EFC urged the Committee to probe more deeply its underlying principles by studying such things “as the nature of life, the ownership of life, and the effects of these new technologies” (2001b, 2). It claimed that biotechnologies should be assessed by their impact on principles that shape common life and interpreted within the Charter’s dual commitments of the supremacy of God and rule of law. In addition, EFC leaders argued that the intent behind the development and use of biotechnologies was as important to discern as how they should be done (2) and principles should not be developed as simply compromises between divergent positions (2001c, 2).

The various discussion papers and proposed legislation issued by the federal government on the issue of reproductive and genetic technologies were largely consistent with the EFC’s position (1996a; 1997b, 1). In 2000 an EFC submission noted that the latest version of the legislation at the time included amendments formerly introduced by the EFC (2000b, 3). The proposed legislation criminalized human cloning, the development of human-animal hybrids, experimentation on human embryos beyond their first 14 days of existence, and the selling and buying of eggs, sperm, and embryos.

In 2004 the federal government passed legislation regulating biotechnologies that prohibited many of the activities the EFC found objectionable, with the exception that the legislation allowed for the destruction of human embryos for the purposes of research. Human cloning remains illegal in

Canada, as is the creation of embryos for the purpose of research, using technology to select gender, altering a cell genome that will be transmitted to future generations, creating hybrids, selling or buying eggs, sperm, and embryos, and paying for surrogacy. Contrary to the EFC's request, however, the terms "donor" and "human reproductive material" remain in the legislation.<sup>213</sup> In 2006 the government created the Assisted Human Reproduction Agency of Canada, a regulatory body to regulate human reproduction. From the mid-1990s onward, the EFC had supported the creation of such a regulatory body but urged the government to ensure that the agency would not become "a vehicle of social engineering" and that its members include ethicists, representatives from religious communities, and people with disabilities as well as scientists (1996a, 3).

In the midst of all this Parliamentary action, a legal case over the ability of companies to patent life forms ensued. The case began in 1985 when the president and fellows of Harvard College sought patents in Canada, the US, the UK, Europe, and Japan for a mouse with a genetically modified genome. In an effort to help cancer research, Harvard scientists injected a cancer-promoting gene (an oncogene) into fertilized mouse eggs and then transplanted the eggs into a female mouse host. The resulting baby mouse had the altered gene in every one of its cells. When the Harvard fellows sought the patent however, they desired a patent not only for the process but also for the product and its offspring. The Commissioner of Patents and the Patent Appeal Board allowed for patents on the methods and somatic cell cultures but not for the mouse itself. Upon appeal, the Federal Court Trial Division upheld the decision against patenting the mouse but the Federal Court of Appeal reversed the decision and allowed it. In 2001, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the appeal, granting the EFC and Canadian Council of Churches intervener status.<sup>214</sup>

In their factum, the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and EFC noted the concern expressed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health about the lack of a specific disallowance of patenting human genes, their DNA sequences, and human cell lines within Canada's *Patent Act*. They also noted the distinction in Canadian law between lower and higher forms of life. Lower forms of life include bacteria and moulds and can be patented. Higher forms of life are more complex and

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<sup>213</sup> Further information on the *Assisted Human Reproduction Act* can be found at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/ShowTdm/cs/A-13.4///en> (accessed February 19, 2011).

<sup>214</sup> Background information taken from the website of The Canadian Bar Association, "The Harvard mouse case: Developments in the patentability of life forms" by Angela Furlanetto and Dimock Stratton Clarizio LLP. Available online at <http://www.cba.org/cba/newsletters/ip-2003/ip2.aspx> (accessed January 30, 2011).

because they are produced by the laws of nature, they cannot be patented.<sup>215</sup> The arguments of the interveners were different from those generally advanced by the EFC. Indeed, it was an unusual case for the EFC in that it did not pertain directly to human beings and was the first and only time that it intervened in a case with the CCC. Of particular concern to the interveners were the moral issues arising from the patenting of higher life forms. If crop and/or livestock patents were granted, economic power would be concentrated in the agri-food industry, resulting in multinational corporations controlling prices. Environmental risks include genetically modified animals escaping into the wild and upsetting “the natural balance within a species which could have an unpredictable domino effect” (CCC and EFC 2002, ¶46). Another concern was the negative impact upon research if patents for higher life forms were allowed as scientists would be in danger of infringing patent rights and therapeutic applications could become too costly. A final concern addressed the animals involved in the experiments. Given the absence of Canadian regulations protecting genetically altered animals, the interveners were concerned about animal suffering due to experimentation. They argued that human beings are to practice stewardship, “to care for all that God has entrusted to them.” Ownership of higher life forms was “objectionable” because it granted rights without responsibilities for the care of animals involved, resulting to their objectification (¶50). “The notion that a part of a species of complex animal life should be viewed as an invention of an actual person or corporation is based on the metaphysical position which holds implicitly that nature and/or the environment is simply composed of manipulable data - a ‘standing reserve’ of calculable forces, completely subject to human manipulation” (¶51). Ultimately all life forms found in the natural world would be objectified and reduced to their biological and chemical components, including human beings.

The Supreme Court found that the “Harvard” mouse did not qualify as an invention and therefore could not be patented under Canadian patent law.<sup>216</sup> Canada became the only industrialized country to refuse the patent, although the European countries granted a patent with amendments. The ruling stated that changes to the *Patent Act* must come from Parliament, not the judiciary.

With the exception of the *Harvard Mouse* case, EFC leaders grounded their positions regarding reproductive technologies on the common good and the *imago Dei* principle. Using similar arguments

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<sup>215</sup> According to the Canadian *Patent Act*, patents are granted for inventions, defined as “any new and useful art, process, machine, manufacture or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement in any art, process, machine, manufacture or composition of matter” (section 2 of the *Patent Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. P-4 and quoted by the CCC and EFC in their factum 2002, 4n2).

to the ones it developed for the euthanasia debate, the EFC insisted that reproductive technologies and experimentation on human embryos were not personal decisions or a-moral acts. Instead, decisions pertaining to these issues would impact the meaning and value of human life and dignity within society. Given that the various drafts of the legislation limiting reproductive technologies and its final form contained many of the prohibitions promoted by the EFC, it appears that the EFC's concerns and perhaps some elements of its conceptions of human life found some resonance outside the evangelical community.

Collaboration with the Canadian Council of Churches indicated the degree to which the EFC was willing to work ecumenically and to focus on common concerns rather than theological or doctrinal differences. Over time the EFC collaborated with various Catholic organizations and participated in a variety of inter-faith coalitions in the issues of religious education, religious freedom, and same sex marriage. Such collaboration generally occurred in legal interventions, but it brought EFC leaders into regular contact with leaders from a variety of religious traditions. Ecumenism came to be a key element of the EFC's model of political engagement and was a natural outcome of its emphasis on pluralism.

The elements of the EFC's model of political engagement reveal the political moderation of the organization. While EFC leaders occasionally employed dualistic rhetoric, they attempted to persuade by advancing reasoned arguments they believed could be accepted by evangelicals and Canadians of other faiths or no faith. Their accommodation of political processes and adoption of pluralism and ecumenism granted the EFC more political authority in the public sphere than other organizations perceived to be extreme and their refusal to advocate for capital punishment gave credence to their pro-life position. The moderation and political pragmatism of their model, its political pragmatism, and their commitment to defend the vulnerable, particularly those with disabilities, all helped EFC leaders gain access to "the table" and participate in decision-making. The last section of this chapter examines their contributions to the public sphere.

#### **4.4 EFC contributions to the public sphere**

At the heart of the EFC's interventions in the moral issues discussed in this chapter was a desire to shape legislation and influence the law in order to contribute to what it perceived to be the common

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<sup>216</sup> *Harvard College v. Canada* (Commissioner of Patents), 2002 SCC 76, [2002] 4 S.C.R. 45. Available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/2002/2002scc76/2002scc76.html> (accessed March 9, 2011).

good by protecting the weak and vulnerable. In many instances the EFC was competing with socially progressive groups to define the Canadian moral character. This is a historical role for evangelicals (Malloy 2004, 5) and is reflected in evangelical associations around the world. As David Martin notes, “in all Protestant cultures the emphasis on conscience in politics tends to produce associations concerned to promote this or that moral issue” (1978, 74). Such concerns are often prompted by progressive social legislation.<sup>217</sup>

The socially conservative positions advanced by the EFC concerned liberals and social progressives. According to Saba Mahmood, social conservatism alarms liberals because it defies such normative liberal assumptions “as the belief that all human beings have an innate desire for freedom, that we all somehow seek to assert our autonomy when allowed to do so, that human agency primarily consists of acts that challenge social norms and not those that uphold them, and so on” (2005, 5).<sup>218</sup> Indeed, throughout the debates discussed here EFC leaders emphasized the common good rather than championing individual autonomy.

Another cause of concern for some social progressives was the intensity with which evangelicals held their views. As Clemenger suggested, some commentators assume that because evangelicals are committed to their beliefs, they are therefore “not willing to be reasonable or to seek to accommodate or respect the views of others. [Such commentators] assume that believers are unimaginative, unforgiving, intolerant and close-minded. In other words, not only are believers unwilling, but they are unable to participate in public discourse” (2005b, 14). Clemenger reminded his readers that the biblical call to care for the vulnerable is “a positive, life-affirming message ... of faith, hope, and love” (2005, 14). For Clemenger, then, theology grounds evangelical participation in public life and the principle of the *imago Dei* may be employed to counteract secular views of evangelicals as doctrinaire and fundamentalist.

Easy dismissals of evangelicals as fundamentalist, un-Canadian, and anti-intellectual do not take seriously the political and social impacts of the EFC’s promotion of the *imago Dei* principle. As Casanova argues, the principle can be interpreted and practiced in such a manner that it challenges and mitigates “the inflexible, inhuman logic” of modernity and may “unintentionally help modernity save itself” (1994, 234). It is his belief that “religion has often served and continues to serve as a

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<sup>217</sup> Marsden identifies the changing sexual mores of the 1960s and 1970s as a key catalyst for the political mobilization of American fundamentalists (2006, 240-42).

bulwark against ‘the dialectics of enlightenment’ and as a protector of human rights and humanist values against the secular spheres and their absolute claims to internal functional autonomy” (39). Religious groups do this by insisting that the economic, political, and philosophical spheres are subject to external norms (5-6) and offering “counterfactual normative critiques of dominant historical trends” (43). They offer such critiques by questioning the established boundaries between the public and the private spheres and call for the (re)introduction of morality, that is, discourse about the common good, into the affairs of the state and economy (217).<sup>219</sup> According to Casanova, the public impact of such critiques cannot be measured by their ability to persuade the state and autonomous spheres to adopt and enforce their agendas. Instead, their impact can be measured by their contributions to public debates about the importance of extraneous morals for the autonomous spheres and the location of boundaries between the public and private spheres (43).

In this chapter we saw that the EFC called for the reintroduction not only of the principle of the common good into social policy but also of the *imago Dei*, to which it linked the sanctity of human life argument. For EFC leaders these matters were related as they believed that the sanctity of life argument serves the interests of the common good. The implicit belief was that the Christian (and Judaic) view of the human person as created in the image of God establishes the best ethos for human flourishing and the best protection for human dignity. As Clemenger argued in a letter to a newspaper editor, Christianity “provided the very foundation for the affirmation of the equal dignity of all persons upon which freedom of religion, expression and conscience are rooted” (2006f). In *Canada Watch*, the EFC’s quarterly update to its members, he wrote: “the EFC plays an essential role reminding the courts and governments of Canada that there are Biblical principles that profoundly impact the decisions they make (2006g, 2). It was the role of the EFC, he noted, to equip legislators and EFC members about those principles. He summarized the EFC’s role by stating that the organization helps governments be “truly good” and citizens to be “truly responsible.” Therefore all of the EFC’s briefs and position papers outlined the Christian principles its leaders believed were the best guides for the development of policy.

The EFC shared its desire to protect human dignity with the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church described by Casanova. Indeed, Catholic and evangelical leaders collaborated in their

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<sup>218</sup> In contrast, Mahmood believes that the desire for freedom is “profoundly mediated by cultural and historical conditions” (2005, 14) as “all forms of desire are discursively organized” (15).

<sup>219</sup> Casanova later suggested that “without normative traditions neither rational public debate nor discourse ethics is likely to take place” (1997, 205).

responses to abortion and euthanasia. For EFC and Catholic leaders, the principle of the *imago Dei* led them to recognize the importance of social policy. Unlike various leaders of the American Religious Right, they did not argue for a limited state that leaves charity in the hands of churches and other voluntary organizations.

There is another aspect of the EFC's work that may be desirable in a secular society and again, it shares this aspect with the Roman Catholic Church. Casanova suggests that the Church after the Second Vatican Council could be deemed a desirable public religion because "it criticizes the radical individualism that accompanies privatization and stresses the collective and communal—the ecclesial—character of the proclamation of faith and of religious practices, while simultaneously upholding the absolute rights of the individual conscience" (2006b, 27). The EFC served a similar function in Canadian society. During the abortion and euthanasia debates the EFC critiqued what they saw as radical individualism, insisting that human life is lived in community and that communities are impacted by individual actions. However, it must be stated that the EFC did not promote a collectivist school of thought that elevates the state as the most significant social institution.

The manner in which EFC leaders participated in the public square was consistent with Casanova's model for public religions. Although they called for the introduction of ethics into the public spheres, they did not question the differentiation of such social institutions as the state, economy, and legal system from the church or religion. At the same time, however, they refused to separate religion from politics and public life. For EFC leaders, religion can never be privatized as it is comprehensive and impacts all aspects of a believer's life, including their political and economic choices. The support of EFC leaders for social differentiation reflected their acceptance of modernism. They did not question the freedom of individual conscience nor seek a theocratic state. Instead, they presented arguments that they believed people of all faiths and those with no faith were able to adopt without compromising their particular doctrines or beliefs.

Casanova insists that the acceptance and accommodation of modernity by public religions does not indicate increasing secularization as the religions involved do not accept the private role assigned to them by liberalism (1994, 163). The move into politics, then, cannot be interpreted as an indication of increasing secularization. As Mahmood observes, since the secular liberalism of modern states operates as "something like a form of life," all groups must necessarily engage with its agency (2005, 191). She argues that because the state regulates almost every aspect of life, the entry of conservative religious groups into the public sphere does not politicize the spiritual domain. Instead, the



“conditions of secular-liberal modernity are such that for any world-making project (spiritual or otherwise) to succeed and be effective, it must engage with the all-encompassing institutions and structures of modern governance, whether it aspires to state power or not” (193-94). For Mahmood, then, conservative religious groups wishing to preserve their way of life or protect their doctrines are inevitably drawn into the political sphere of the state as it operates with a significant degree of power in society. The following two chapters investigate more thoroughly the EFC’s interactions with secularism and the modern secular liberal state in order to discover how these interactions influence the manner in which the EFC participates in the public sphere.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter I continued the argument first developed in chapter 2 that the EFC helped create a particular type of evangelical identity that operated ecumenically and was politically engaged. The subject of this chapter was the model of political engagement promoted by EFC leaders, a model based on arguments promoting the common good and the principle of the *imago Dei*. The model accommodated the processes of creating legislation, accepted incremental change, assumed pluralism and ecumenism, and sought to persuade rather than impose. It helped EFC leaders interpret and respond to Canadian society and shape Canadian evangelical identity. In short, the EFC operated in the public sphere within the model developed by Casanova as acceptable public religions in the modern world.

EFC leaders continue to monitor the issues discussed in this chapter. Indeed, the issues remain politically volatile. For instance, in 2010 Prime Minister Harper informed Canadians that foreign aid for maternal health would not include funding for abortions. In May of that year, 15,000 pro-lifers gathered in Ottawa for a March for Life rally. The EFC’s Don Hutchinson addressed the crowd, which included approximately 20 Conservative and Liberal MPs and hundreds of students (Delacourt 2010). Clearly, abortion remains a salient issue for evangelicals.<sup>220</sup>

The continuing importance with which evangelicals view the life issues discussed in this chapter suggests that evangelicals will remain active in politics for the foreseeable future. In fact, many of them are gearing up for a debate on euthanasia, which Clemenger suggests will be the next significant

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<sup>220</sup> A 2008 study of young American evangelicals under the age of 30 indicated that while younger evangelicals are more supportive of homosexual rights and same-sex marriage than their parents, they are as opposed to

and potentially divisive public debate (2005a, 14). In 2009 he dedicated two columns in *Faith Today* to the issue, telling evangelicals that “commitment to human dignity ... is a principle that lies at the core of our understanding of self and other” (2009c, 14) and reiterating the necessity of protecting vulnerable Canadians (2009d, 14).

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abortion. See a poll conducted by Religion & Ethics News Weekly in September, 2008, available online at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1204/survey.html> (accessed July 22, 2010).

## Chapter 5

### Protecting religious freedom

EFC leaders are so concerned about secularism because they believe that the privatization of religion negatively impacts religious freedoms, particularly the right of religious adherents to publicly practice their faith and the right of religious communities to live in a manner consistent with their beliefs. This focus on the communal aspect of religion challenges the general trend in Canadian constitutional law, which, according to legal scholar Benjamin Berger, conceptualizes religion as individual, private, and “an expression of human autonomy and choice” (2007, 283, 295). Between 1987 and 2009, approximately one-third of the EFC’s approximately 40 legal interventions involved issues of religious freedom in some manner. In most of these cases the EFC appeared with a fellow intervener or as a member of a coalition.

In this chapter I examine the EFC’s promotion of religious freedom within the context of Talal Asad’s observation that when religious organizations enter the public sphere in Western, secular liberal states, they must contend with the state’s power. According to Asad, definitions of religion in Western democracies often reflect Christian conceptions and are an element of state power. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd elaborates by suggesting that such definitions pre-structure public discourse.

In its engagement with the issues of religious freedom covered in this chapter, the EFC defined religion broadly as a belief system that helps people understand the nature and meaning of human life and society. This definition enabled EFC leaders to argue that secularism was as religious a belief system as organized religion, which in turn permitted its leaders to insist that there was no such thing as religiously neutral broadcasting and education and that it was impossible to privatize religion. The specific issues covered in this chapter include: 1) religious broadcasting; 2) religious education in Ontario’s public day schools; 3) sexual orientation and educational institutions; and 4) the right of minority religious groups to practice their beliefs.<sup>221</sup> The EFC’s interventions in these issues stressed the need for governments to protect religious freedom, pluralism, and identity. Before commencing a more in-depth investigation of the issues, I provide an overview of how the Charter of Rights and Freedoms defines and protects religious freedoms.

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<sup>221</sup> Via the Religious Liberties Commission the EFC monitors the religious freedoms of Christians around the world. Such work is beyond the scope of this thesis.

## 5.1 The legal protection of religious freedom in Canada

Canada differs from the US in that the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (hereafter referred to as the Charter) does not require the separation of church and state. In fact, the Preamble to the Charter states that “Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.”<sup>222</sup> While a number of the legal submissions produced by the EFC ask the Supreme Court to interpret the Charter in light of the Preamble, many legal scholars believe that the Justices view the statement as symbolic and consequently ignore it (Barnett 2008; Brown 1999-2000).

The Charter explicitly protects the freedom of religion in Section 2(a), which recognizes the fundamental “freedom of conscience and religion,” and in the guarantee of 2(b) to protect the “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression” of Canadians. In addition, Section 15(1) protects the right to equality without discrimination on the basis of religion, ethnicity, sex, age, race, or disability, and is employed in some freedom of religion cases. According to Benjamin Berger, the intention of these Sections is to protect the rights of the individual (2002, 53n43). Some religious freedom cases invoke Section 27 of the Charter, which preserves Canada’s multicultural heritage, thereby suggesting that religion is a cultural matter (Barnett 2008). The ability of the state to curtail religious freedom is limited by Section 1, which “guarantees the rights of freedoms set out in [the Charter] subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.” According to this section, if the government restrains the freedom of religion in order to achieve a social objective, the onus is on the government to prove that the restriction is justified as an appropriate compromise.<sup>223</sup> Section 1 tends to be invoked in cases involving a conflict of competing rights, such as the freedom from discrimination based upon sexual orientation and the freedom of religious expression.

Many legal cases concerning religious freedom originate from one of two motivations. In the first instance religious individuals or groups seek an exemption from secular laws that contravene a particular religious obligation, as in the case of the Hutterian Brethren in Alberta who protested against the mandatory picture identification on driver’s licenses. Such requests are an example of

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<sup>222</sup> The Charter is Part 1 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, available online on the Department of Justice’s website, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/1.html> (accessed February 21, 2011).

<sup>223</sup> In *R. v. Oakes* (1986) the Supreme Court devised four criteria to help determine whether state violations of Charter rights are reasonable. See *R. v. Oakes*, [1986] 1 S.C.R. 103, ¶70 and 71, available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/1986/1986scr1-103/1986scr1-103.html> (accessed March 9, 2011). For a summary of how the criteria may be applied to education, see Dickinson and Dolmage 1996, 369.

religious adherents seeking freedom *for* religion and are often argued on the basis of cultural and group identity using the language of equality. In the second instance, individuals or groups attempt to persuade the court to strike down a law that they believe is based on a religious belief or promotes one particular religion, as in the cases involving religious education in Ontario public schools. These cases reflect a desire to be free *from* religion (Brown 1999-2000).

The first freedom of religion case to come before the Supreme Court after the introduction of the Charter in 1982 was *R v. Big M Drug Mart* in 1985. In this case the Court found the *Lord's Day Act* as unconstitutional because it imposed a Christian view of the Sabbath on non-Christian citizens. In his reasons for the Court's ruling, Justice Dickson, later Chief Justice Dickson, defined religious freedom in the following manner:

A truly free society is one which can accommodate a wide variety of beliefs, diversity of tastes and pursuits, customs and codes of conduct. A free society is one which aims at equality with respect to the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms and I say this without any reliance upon s. 15 of the *Charter*. Freedom must surely be founded in respect for the inherent dignity and the inviolable rights of the human person. The essence of the concept of freedom of religion is the right to entertain such religious beliefs as a person chooses, the right to declare religious beliefs openly and without fear of hindrance or reprisal, and the right to manifest belief by worship and practice or by teaching and dissemination. But the concept means more than that.

Freedom can primarily be characterized by the absence of coercion or constraint. If a person is compelled by the state or the will of another to a course of action or inaction which he would not otherwise have chosen, he is not acting of his own volition and he cannot be said to be truly free. ...

What may appear good and true to a majoritarian religious group, or to the state acting at their behest, may not, for religious reasons, be imposed upon citizens who take a contrary view. The *Charter* safeguards religious minorities from the threat of "the tyranny of the majority."<sup>224</sup>

Both positive and negative dimensions of religious freedom arise from Justice Dickson's definition. The positive dimension enables religious adherents to practice their beliefs while the negative

dimension ensures that no person is directly or indirectly forced to follow a particular religious belief or act against their beliefs (Barnett 2008).<sup>225</sup> Those seeking positive freedoms generally assume a more interventionist government whereas those desiring negative freedoms call for the state to stay out of the private lives of its citizens. Many EFC submissions to Parliamentary Committees and legal factums about issues pertaining to religious freedom refer to Justice Dickson's definition of religion. Depending on the issue, they advocate for either positive or negative religious freedom.

## 5.2 The EFC's involvement in issues of religious freedom

Already in 1981 EFC leaders identified the protection of religious freedom as central to their work (Stackhouse 1995b, 167). In 1999 they named religious freedom as a critical issue facing Christians in Canada (EFC 2003a, 3) and the headline of a 2003 issue of *Canada Watch* read, "Our freedoms threatened: If you don't act to protect your religious freedom, who will?" (1). The issue of religious freedom, then, has long been an integral part of the EFC's discourse of resistance against secularism. For example, in the booklet *Withering Rights: Religious Freedom in Canada*, published by the EFC in 2004, Janet Epp Buckingham surveyed a number of legal cases of religious freedom in the areas of education, work, family life, churches, and religious expression.<sup>226</sup> She concluded that Christians continued to experience discrimination and that the Charter "has been used to restrict rather than enhance religion in public life" (EFC 2004a, 17). Epp Buckingham argued that secularism was not value neutral and that it threatened religious freedom, particularly in the realm of public education (10, 25, 31-32, 53).<sup>227</sup> Typical of EFC literature, she did not delineate with which type of secularism

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<sup>224</sup> *R. v. Big M. Drug Mart Ltd.*, [1985] 1 S.R.C. 295, ¶94-96. Available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/1985/1985scr1-295/1985scr1-295.html> (accessed March 9, 2011).

<sup>225</sup> According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the distinction between positive and negative freedom is common in political and legal philosophy, available online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/liberty-positive-negative/> (accessed December 23, 2010). Although the conceptions of these two freedoms can be traced back to such philosophers as Kant, they were thoroughly developed by Isaiah Berlin in *Two Concepts of Liberty*. For an abridged version of the essay, see Berlin, *Political Philosophy*, edited by A. Quinton (Oxford University Press, 1967) 141-52, available online at [http://jmaggio.typepad.com/no\\_call\\_me\\_jay/files/two\\_concepts\\_of\\_liberty.pdf](http://jmaggio.typepad.com/no_call_me_jay/files/two_concepts_of_liberty.pdf) (accessed December 23, 2010).

<sup>226</sup> At a Christian Leaders Connection conference held in Edmonton on January 19, 2010, Hutchinson said that when the EFC reprints the booklet in the future, it will change its title to reflect some of the more positive rulings in the 2000s, such as *Chamberlain* and *TWU*, which are discussed below.

<sup>227</sup> In *Withering Rights*, Epp Buckingham mourned the loss of a Christian Canada more strongly than Stiller ever did, writing, "Some people would like to regain the Canada that seems to have been lost since 1982. But it is not likely that we will see the Christian character of Canadian society restored through legal or political action. The reality is that Canada is now a secular, pluralistic country where no one religion will be permitted to dominate. It is only through the regeneration of Christians and the advancement of the gospel that Canada could become in any sense a 'Christian country'" (EFC 2004a, 11).

she was engaging. In the same year she wrote an article for *The Voice of the Martyrs Newsletter* under the headline “Religious liberty under stress,” in which she acknowledged that Canadian jurisprudence both protected and restricted the freedom of religion. However, she noted that those seeking social change and the privatization of religion—in other words, secularists—were able to make good use of the Charter (Epp Buckingham 2004a).

In the context of same-sex marriage, Clemenger emphasized the importance of religious freedom in the following manner:

The freedom of religion is the first freedom. It is the foundation of all other expressive freedoms. When it is proscribed, all other expressive freedoms are threatened. Religious freedom entails the pursuit of truth: the enquiry into the nature of reality, openness to transcendence, and the affirmation of sovereignty and authority beyond the temporal powers and institutions. Though not boundless, it must be given broad scope or the pursuit of truth will be compromised. (2005h, 1)

For Clemenger, the freedom of religion was central to the protection of other freedoms, especially that of expression. However, Clemenger’s definition of religion was distinctly theistic in its emphasis on transcendence and allusion to a God beyond the temporal world. This theistic conception of religion was narrower than the definition promoted by the EFC in its support of religious broadcasting.

### **5.2.1 The CRTC and religious broadcasting**

A critical juncture in the history of religious broadcasting in Canada occurred in 1928 when the federal government revoked the licenses of all religious broadcasters after one group in Quebec used its air time to denigrate the federal government and the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>228</sup> The prohibition of single-faith broadcasters forced religious groups to find existing “secular” stations that were willing

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<sup>228</sup> The group in question was the Jehovah’s Witnesses. In response, the Liberal government established the Aird Commission to suggest how the federal government might best manage and regulate Canada’s airwaves. In 1929 the Commission recommended, among other things, the establishment of a publicly owned radio broadcaster, but with the Depression, Prime Minister Mackenzie King did not act upon the recommendations. Conservative Prime Minister Bennett created the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, later the CBC, in 1932. For more information see “The birth and death of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (1932-1936)” at [http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/index3.html?url=http%3A//www.broadcasting-history.ca/networks/networks\\_CRBC.html](http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/index3.html?url=http%3A//www.broadcasting-history.ca/networks/networks_CRBC.html) (accessed January 30, 2011). The relationship between the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Quebec provincial government remained contentious until the 1960s (Brown 1999-2000, 555-58).

to air their programs. One of the earliest religious television programs in Canada began in 1962 when David Mainse, a Pentecostal pastor, broadcasted a weekly 15 minute segment on a local television station in Ontario. Mainse called the show “Crossroads,” and by 1976 over 150 stations carried the show. By then Mainse had a vision for a daily show featuring in-studio guests and live telephone calls. Toronto’s Global Television Network agreed to air the show but could not provide studio time, so Mainse leased premises at 100 Huntley Street where he could produce his show. Mainse named the show “100 Huntley Street,” which was under the domain of Crossroads Christian Communications, Inc. (Mainse 1979). By 1985 Crossroads Christian Communications had a budget of \$17 million and raised another \$2.5 million for relief projects in Africa (Stiller, Mitchener, and Dorsch 1985, 13).

Despite the presence of Mainse and other Canadian evangelists such as Terry Winters in British Columbia, Canadian evangelicals continued to support American televangelists. In 1985 *Faith Alive* reported that Canadian evangelicals donated \$18 million to American televangelists, including Billy Graham and Jimmy Swaggart, in addition to the \$21 million they gave to Canadian television ministries (Stiller, Mitchener, and Dorsch 1985, 12). Given the visibility and influence television provided American evangelists, some Canadian religious adherents began lobbying for a religious television station in Canada, but they quickly encountered an obstacle in the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), a regulatory body created to control the Canadian air waves. The CRTC refused to grant licenses to religious broadcasters until 1987, when VISION TV, an interfaith station, became the first licensed religious broadcaster since 1928.<sup>229</sup>

To meet CRTC requirements, VISION had to provide a balance of religious viewpoints. A year later the CRTC clarified its rules, stating that only issues of public concern and controversial issues had to be balanced, and then not in every program but in the general programming. As this balance requirement applied only to religious broadcasters, EFC leaders maintained that it was a discriminatory requirement. In a submission to the CRTC, the EFC’s Social Action Commission noted how MTV was not required to supply a diverse range of music and sports channels did not have to address religious faith. Instead of placing the burden of balance upon individual broadcasters, the EFC argued for proportional balance, in which the broadcasting system as a whole offered balance. For instance, the CRTC could license different broadcasters that reflected different views present in the broadcasting region. This solution, claimed EFC leaders, avoided such difficult issues as the

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<sup>229</sup> The CRTC further stipulated that VISION had to be owned and operated by members who represented a variety of faiths (EFC 1992, 6).



(impossible) search for objectivity, who decided when balance was achieved, and how to ensure that the decision was free from bias. EFC leaders claimed that they did not oppose balanced coverage of controversial issues. Rather, they argued that when the requirement of balance was limited to religious broadcasters, the implicit assumption was that only religion was controversial (EFC 1992).

At its most fundamental level, the EFC's main argument was with the CRTC's definition of religion. The Social Action Commission claimed that the CRTC defined religion as involving a relationship with a divinity. Such a conception, the Commission argued, excluded non-theistic faiths, such as Buddhism, and non-theological faiths. The Commission maintained that political movements such as communism and fascism resemble traditional religion in that they "articulate an ordered understanding of the whole world" (EFC 1992, 2). Given that the ideas of democracy, freedom, and rights are premised on particular understandings of human nature, the Commission considered them religious as well. For the EFC, religion had to be more broadly defined as that which instructs one's understandings of "the meaning of life, of the nature of society, of what human beings really are, of their essential responsibilities, whether to self, society or another source" (2-3). This broad definition of religion permitted EFC leaders to assert that all programming revealed some type of religious commitment, meaning that "religious broadcasting" could not be limited to specifically denominational or church programming and that religion could not be privatized.<sup>230</sup>

When the CRTC permitted single faith broadcasters in 1993, with the proviso that they provide some programming for other religions, a minority of CRTC directors disagreed with the decision because they believed that racial and cultural intolerance "'is often rooted in religious intolerance.'"<sup>231</sup> EFC leaders disagreed with these directors' conception of religion as inherently intolerant, arguing that different religious traditions in Canada regularly collaborate on such issues as funding for religious education and protecting a traditional definition of marriage. As one EFC submission to the CRTC stated, "it is possible to co-exist and to work together on common goals while living according to different religious beliefs. EFC's experiences serve as examples that religion does not breed conflict or destruction. We support the access of these religious groups to the public airwaves" (1998b, 2). In response to the concern that religion was controversial and divisive because it addressed ethical matters, the EFC submitted that many existent and supposedly non-

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<sup>230</sup> This expansive definition of religion mirrored the definition advanced by Paul Marshall in 1991 and 1992 (see section 3.1 above).

<sup>231</sup> Public Notice CRTC 1993-78 section V. 18 as quoted by the EFC (1998b, 2).

religious programs already tackled controversial issues, such as *Black Harbour* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (2-4).

By 2002 the CRTC had granted licenses to 22 single faith radio broadcasters.<sup>232</sup> The EFC noted the significant benefits of these broadcasters, especially their contributions to “Canadian Christian identity.” According to an EFC submission to the House of Commons in 2002, fewer Canadians than previously listened to Christian radio stations produced in the US. The submission further contended that Canadian Christian stations contributed to national unity as they crossed theological and ethnic lines, provided Christian music artists with a venue to launch their careers, and helped advertise Christian music (2002). The EFC remained concerned, however, about the unfair burdens placed on religious broadcasters in the name of balance. To meet this requirement, the EFC claimed, some single faith religious broadcasters were compelled to offer free air time in order to attract the participation of other faiths. Five years later the EFC argued that with the addition of multi-cultural and multi-lingual stations, balance was already present in many markets and thus the balance requirement should be dropped for single-faith broadcasters (2007). However, at the time of writing the CRTC has neither redefined religion nor modified its requirements for religious broadcasters.

To summarize, the EFC identified the worldview expressed by the CRTC as secularist, intent on limiting public discord by muzzling religious voices and limiting their access to the air waves. The EFC’s expansive definition of religion permitted the organization’s leaders to argue that it was impossible to privatize religion as some type of faith perspective animated all programming. If all programming was religious, they maintained, then it was unfair to restrict the public expression of some religious adherents, in this case Christian broadcasters. This argument appealed to the liberal tenet of equality rather than a theological principle. The organization relied on the argument of pluralism in its interventions in the issues of religious education in public schools and public funding for religious schools in Ontario.

### **5.2.2 Religious education in public schools**

Much of the early evangelical engagement in education involved the creation of post secondary theological schools, which were largely focused on preparing men and women for Christian lay ministry. Over time some of these theological schools became degree-granting colleges. By the 1980s evangelicals were increasingly interested in religious education for their younger children in day

schools.<sup>233</sup> In his comments celebrating the tenth anniversary of *Faith Today*, John Stackhouse noted that “no evangelical interest has surfaced as often in [*Faith Today*] as education” (1993b, 43). Some of this interest originated in the conservative Protestant struggle against the secularization of public day schools. Nowhere was this struggle more evident than in Ontario during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Beginning in the late 1980s, public day schools in Ontario became secularized as some parents took umbrage with the Christian nature of the province’s public education system. The first court ruling to find the Christian nature of Ontario’s public schools discriminatory occurred in 1988 when the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled against the use of the Lord’s Prayer in opening school exercises because it violated the Charter by compelling students to participate in a Christian religious practice (*Zylberberg* 1988).<sup>234</sup> Two years later another Ontario Court of Appeal decision found the mandatory weekly periods of religious instruction in public schools and the religious education curriculum then used by the Elgin County Board of Education to be indoctrination, and hence a violation of the Charter (*Elgin* 1990).<sup>235</sup> When Epp Buckingham summarized the ruling, she noted that while the Court permitted schools to teach about religion, it prohibited the imposition of a particular religious view, indoctrination, attempts to convert, and a devotional approach (2005a, 13). Despite having the freedom to provide instruction about religion, the Ontario Ministry of Education largely excised religion from public schools and their curriculum. Some parents who wanted their children educated in a Christian worldview withdrew their children from the public system and enrolled them in independent religious schools, but as these schools received no public funding, the financial burden on parents was often onerous. A number of parental groups and various religious coalitions went to the courts in an attempt to force the Ontario government to extend public funding for religious schools beyond the Roman Catholic “separate” schools. Both the Ontario courts and the Supreme Court of Canada preserved the unique status of Roman Catholic schools in Ontario as mandated in the *British North America Act* (1867)<sup>236</sup> and did not find the limitation of funding to Catholic schools to

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<sup>232</sup> The CRTC approved Crossroads Television System’s application for a broadcasting license in 1998.

<sup>233</sup> When Stiller became the EFC’s executive director in 1983, one of the 3 Commissions existent at the time studied issues related to education. The other 2 were the Social Action and Worldwide Missions Commissions (EFC, Together we can, *Faith Alive* 1 [1], 1983, 21).

<sup>234</sup> *Zylberberg v. Sudbury Board of Education*, 1988 CanLII 189 (ON C.A.), available online at <http://www.canlii.org/en/on/onca/doc/1988/1988canlii189/1988canlii189.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2011).

<sup>235</sup> *Canadian Civil Liberties Association v. Ontario (Minister of Education)* (1990) 71 O.R. (2d) 341 (CA) (accessed February 21, 2011).

<sup>236</sup> Also known as the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

be discriminatory against other religions (*Adler* 1996 and *Bal* 1997).<sup>237</sup> A Jewish parent then took the issue to the United Nations Human Rights Committee,<sup>238</sup> which ruled in 1999 that the funding of day schools of one religious group but not others was discriminatory.<sup>239</sup> The EFC intervened in the *Elgin County* case and supported the religious parents in *Adler* and *Bal* through its involvement in the Ontario Multi-faith Coalition for Equity in Education and the Coalition for Religious Freedom in Education respectively (Fledderus 1997, 20; EFC 2001d, 1).

The EFC's intervention in the *Elgin County* case marked its first foray into the legal system. In order to gain support for the intervention, Stiller had to shift evangelical thinking, which historically frowned on evangelical involvement in the courts. He refashioned evangelical conceptions of the courts by persuading them that they had a role to play in helping the courts interpret the meaning of such lofty Charter phrases as the "freedom of religion." He portrayed the opponents of religious education, particularly the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, as seeking the "total secularization of our public schools and, indeed, a total separation of church and state in all aspects of Canadian society" (1989b, 78). If evangelicals desired to contest such secularization, Stiller claimed, they had to promote "the Judeo-Christian values and heritage" of Canada (78). In essence, Stiller was reminding evangelicals that religion had a public role. This position required him to challenge evangelicals who preferred to withdraw from public life and preserve the integrity of their churches against "the world." By asking evangelicals to support the EFC's forays into the legal sphere, Stiller was rejecting evangelical isolationism and sectarianism and redefining the term "evangelical" to include public engagement. Clearly he had to explain the nature and purpose of the EFC to Parliamentarians and evangelicals alike.

Three principles informed the EFC's position on religious education. The first located the primary responsibility for educating children with parents, which in turn required a sufficient number of choices of publicly funded schools to enable parents to find at least one that taught the desired values.

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<sup>237</sup> According to Dickinson and Dolmage, in *Adler* and *Bal* the Ontario courts ruled that Ontario schools were secular, interpreted as religiously neutral, not as humanist (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996, 373, 375). The legal citations for *Adler* at the Supreme Court is *Adler v. Ontario*, [1996] 3 S.C.R. 609 and for *Bal* at the Ontario Court of Appeal is *Bal v. Ontario* (1997) 34 O.R. (3d) 484.

<sup>238</sup> The legal citation for the case is Canada [1999] UNHRC 45; CCPR/C/67/D/694/1996 (5 November 1999). For the committee's ruling, see <http://www.worldlii.org/int/cases/UNHRC/1999/45.html> (accessed January 30, 2011). The Ontario government claimed that it did not have the money to change the funding structure for religious day schools.

The second principle challenged the supposed neutrality of public schools by stating that all education was shaped by a worldview, “a particular value system, based in ultimate beliefs.” Indeed, it considered “the denial of the supernatural [as] no less a statement of faith than the affirmation of a Creator God” (EFC 2000c, 2). According to Epp Buckingham, secular public schools espoused a value framework that defined religion as unimportant to, or separate from, public life. She charged them with promoting “ideological pluralism,” a term she employed to refer to the belief that all religions are equal and all lead to God. The result of such ideological pluralism, she claimed, was the elimination of distinctive doctrines and religious differences, the reduction of religious beliefs to points of view, and the privatization of religion (2005a, 7).<sup>240</sup> The third principle confirmed the role of the government in providing education and then called on the government to work with parents and provide the type of education desired by parents if it could be provided responsibly (EFC 1999b;<sup>241</sup> 2001d).

The perception of an increasingly secular nature of public day schools prompted the EFC’s Education Commission to ask in 2000: “How then can we properly recognize diverse religious and cultural values in education? How can we give shape to a public education culture that neither excludes nor discriminates, but engenders respect and opens space for the study and celebration of the plurality of religions?” (EFC 2000c, 1). For its part, the Commission rejected what it perceived to be Enlightenment assumptions about religion, tolerance, and values. Rather than equating religion with intolerance, the Commission stated that despite some abuses, “religion gives birth to strong commitments that define the limits of tolerance” (3).<sup>242</sup> It contested Enlightenment rationalism, with its elevation of scientific knowledge and conception of religious truth as irrational, and stated its preference for the post-modern understanding that “facts” cannot be separated from the situation of the knower, including her values and worldview. The Commission challenged schools and teachers to

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<sup>239</sup> In 2001 the Conservative government introduced a tax credit to provide some tax relief for parents paying tuition for religious schools and as a means with which to respond to the 1999 UN decision, but in 2003 the newly elected Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty repealed the legislation.

<sup>240</sup> In his study of religion and education in Canada, David Seljak notes that the various religious education coalitions portrayed the secular nature of public schools as a quasi-philosophy or religion that is imposed upon all and thereby violates the right to freedoms of religion and conscience (2005, 187). This is an apt description of the view held by the EFC.

<sup>241</sup> The EFC presented this document together with The Ontario Multi-Faith Coalition of Equity in Education.

<sup>242</sup> The Commission provided a number of examples, including the ancient Hebrews who abhorred human sacrifice and did not tolerate the practice of abandoning children and the British Puritans who led a campaign to end the sale of children and, two centuries later, ended slavery. For examples beyond Christianity, the

provide the space for students to critically explore their own worldview and that of others (5-6). In the words of Epp Buckingham: “By engaging in dialogue with others with different points of view, we hope to develop attitudes and mentalities within the common public culture that welcome the various cultures and lifestyles within a society” (2005a, 7). This was especially important for the Commission as it believed that religion is a foundational element of students’ identity (EFC 2000c, 5). Like many other EFC documents on education, the Commission quoted the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, which stated that “there is no such thing as value-free education.”<sup>243</sup> The ultimate issue for the Commission was not whether religious views should be taught, but which ones (2).<sup>244</sup> In general, EFC leaders did not advocate for the continuation of Christian dominance in the form of specifically Christian prayers and religious instruction. Rather, on the basis of religious diversity, they argued that public school students should learn about religion, appreciate how religious beliefs influence individual and collective identities, and identify how the various religions answer the ultimate questions of life (5).

The Supreme Court’s rulings in *Adler* and *Bal* ended the struggle for public funding of religious schools in Ontario. In their promotion of such funding, EFC leaders endorsed the notion of structural pluralism, which encourages the creation of single faith institutions such as schools, credit unions, labour unions, and radio programs in order to strengthen and support particular religious communities. However, the request for the public funding of religious schools revealed a particular view of the state that held it at least partially responsible for protecting, if not enhancing, the ability of religious individuals and communities to live in a manner consistent with their beliefs. Epp Buckingham stated in her study of religious freedom and education that “the government must protect the ability of different groups to live in conformity with their convictions” (2005a, 8). This appeal to positive rights was a common approach in various EFC interventions and is discussed in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

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Commission pointed out that the Hindu faith inspired Ghandi’s campaign against British rule in India and inspired Martin Luther King’s struggle to obtain civil rights for African-Americans (EFC 2000c, 3).

<sup>243</sup> Quoted from the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning entitled “For the love of learning,” (Toronto: 1994), I, 60.

<sup>244</sup> David Seljak raises two additional concerns arising from the same issue. First, he argues that the absence of religious education produces “religiously illiterate students” unprepared to interact with the religious diversity of fellow Canadians and unable to adequately understand world events inspired by religion such as the events of September 11, 2001.<sup>244</sup> Second, the lack of “positive support for minorities to socialize their children into their unique religious identities” is problematic. Seljak suggests that religious groups may find secular schools to be as inhospitable as their Christian predecessors (2005, 179).

After the *Adler* and *Bal* judgements, other educational issues drew the attention of EFC leaders. More specifically, they became concerned about how school curriculums and policies were promoting homosexual rights and how those policies impacted religious adherents. Increasingly, evangelical educational institutions faced criticism about their opposition to homosexual practice. As a number of cases pitting religious freedom against the right of homosexuals to be free from discrimination slowly made their way through the courts, EFC leaders prepared to intervene.

### **5.2.3 Sexual orientation and educational institutions**

In 1996 the British Columbia College of Teachers (BCCT) initiated the first of the two cases examined here when it refused to accredit a teacher preparation program at Trinity Western University, an evangelical liberal arts university that first opened its doors to students in 1962.<sup>245</sup> The BCCT refused accreditation because the University required its students to sign a code of conduct that was rooted in Christian values and prohibited students from, among other things, engaging in homosexual activity while attending the school. The BCCT argued that such opposition to homosexuality inevitably produced teachers who would discriminate against gay and lesbian students.

EFC leaders viewed the case as important because it was the first time that the Court had to rule on a conflict between the right of gays and lesbians to equal treatment and the right of religious freedom (Epp Buckingham 2005a, 4). In its factum the EFC identified the central issue of the case as whether religious institutions can be denied benefits and licenses if their views of sexual morality differ from the majority.<sup>246</sup> It advanced three arguments in support of its position. First, the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Charter cannot be limited to what occurs within the confines of religious institutions. Instead, the EFC maintained that religious freedom includes “the public expression and practice of religious belief” (EFC n.d.d [2001], ¶6). Second, the Charter cannot be used to identify “Canadian values” and “public interest.” The EFC held that the Charter and human rights codes address conduct and do not establish moral beliefs because moral choices reside with individuals and their consciences (¶21-22). It further argued that the Charter does not attribute more weight to some freedoms than to others. In other words, gay equality rights do not trump religious freedom, and therefore religious adherents have the right to believe in the traditional Christian view of

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<sup>245</sup> The denomination which founded the University (at that time Trinity Junior College) was the Evangelical Free Churches of Canada and America.

<sup>246</sup> *Trinity* was one of only a few cases in which the EFC intervened by itself.

“homosexual conduct as sinful” (¶24, 27).<sup>247</sup> Third, the BCCT could not grant or withhold public privileges on the basis of conscience because such actions would be akin to a “religion test” (¶35). When the Supreme Court ruled in favour of Trinity,<sup>248</sup> citing a lack of evidence that Trinity students discriminated against gay and lesbian students in the classroom, Epp Buckingham noted with approval that the ruling supported the claim that one Charter right cannot be privileged over another (2001). The Court also permitted codes of conduct such as that required by Trinity.<sup>249</sup>

The second case, cited as *Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 3*, pitted some religious parents on the School Board in Surrey, British Columbia, against supporters of gay and lesbian equality rights. In 1997 the Surrey School Board refused to approve three books for use in kindergarten and grade one. As the books presented families led by lesbian or gay parents as morally equal to families led by heterosexual couples, the Board found the books too controversial and not age-appropriate for use in primary classrooms. The fact that some of the Board members opposed the books on religious grounds created controversy because the province’s *School Act* mandated that all public schools in the province be secular. When the British Columbia Supreme Court quashed the Board’s decision, the School Board appealed the ruling to the Court of Appeal, at which time the EFC, together with the Archdiocese of Vancouver, intervened. Their factum focused on how the *Act* interpreted the term “secular.” According to the two interveners, the *Act* intended the term “secular” to mean non-denominational or non-sectarian and therefore it could not be used to exclude moral views that flow from religious beliefs (EFC and Archdiocese 2000, ¶10, 17). Moreover, the etymology of the term indicated that it was used as a jurisdictional term to separate the religious from the public sphere (¶14). In their factum the EFC and Archdiocese insisted that the *Act*’s mandate ordering schools to teach the “highest morality” in an effort to promote civil society had its roots in religious traditions. They further argued that just because “a moral concern stems from and may have

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<sup>247</sup> This statement ignored the diversity of views about homosexuality within Christianity at the time.

<sup>248</sup> *Trinity Western University v. British Columbia College of Teachers*, 2001 SCC 31, [2001] 1 S.C.R. 772, available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/2001/2001scc31/2001scc31.html> (accessed March 9, 2011).

<sup>249</sup> Some of the issues in the case are similar to those in *Vriend* (1998), in which Delwin Vriend, a laboratory instructor, lost his job at The King’s College because he acted in an inconsistent manner with the College’s statement prohibiting homosexual practice. Vriend then sought to have protection against discrimination on the basis of “sexual orientation” read into Alberta’s Individual Rights Protection Act. The EFC’s legal factum in the case noted that the College’s policy forbade homosexual practice, not orientation. It argued that “the ability of religious institutions to adopt and maintain codes of conduct for their communities is fundamental to the exercise of their freedoms of conscience, religion and association” (EFC n.d.b [1997], ¶21). If the Supreme Court was going to read “sexual orientation” into the Act, then the EFC asked that there be an exemption for “those whose religious beliefs require that certain sexual behaviours not be condoned” (¶52).



its origin in religious faith in no way disentitles advocates of that moral concern from advancing this as a social good deserving of acceptance of Canadians generally” (§20). For the EFC and the Archdiocese, if an issue is able to be debated on its own merits without recourse to its religious origins, it meets the “secular” standard. A moral principle is religious only when it requires faith in a particular religion in order to be accepted (§21). In addition, they insisted that a morally neutral education system was inconceivable. Therefore it would be unfair to allow those with no faith to dictate what was taught in public schools while disallowing those with religious faith to contribute to educational content. If religious voices were silenced, and in this case they involved members of the evangelical, Roman Catholic, Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim communities, then only one type of moral consideration could be advanced, to the detriment of democracy and open debate (§23, 27- 29).

The EFC/Archdiocese factum in *Chamberlain* drew from the EFC’s argument in *Trinity* when it stated that the Charter could not be used as “a national statement of virtues.” Therefore it rejected the lower court’s reading of equality rights for gay and lesbian persons into the *School Act*’s mandate to teach the “highest morality.” Instead, the interveners interpreted the purpose of the Charter in classically liberal terms as the protection of individuals and groups against illegal governmental infringements (EFC and Archdiocese 2000, §35).

When the BC Supreme Court ruled in favour of the School Board in 2000, the case went to the Supreme Court of Canada, where the EFC once again intervened, this time in a broader coalition with the Archdiocese of Vancouver, the Catholic Civil Rights League, and the Canadian Alliance for Social Justice and Family Values Association. The Court agreed with the coalition’s arguments that religious views could not be eliminated from public debate and that the term “secular” did not indicate non-religion.<sup>250</sup> Nevertheless, in a 7 to 2 decision the Court ordered the school board to review its decision, stating that although religious parents have the right to express their concerns, they and the Board could not exclude other legally recognized groups such as gays and lesbians.<sup>251</sup> In

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<sup>250</sup> The EFC used this decision to support its argument that prayer should continue to be used in the Ontario Legislature. Hutchinson reminded the committee studying the issue that in *Chamberlain* “the Supreme Court of Canada identified the need to allow inclusion of the religiously informed mind in the Canadian ‘public square’” (EFC 2008, 3).

<sup>251</sup> *Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36*, 2002 SCC 86, [2002] 4 S.C.R. 710, ¶19, 25, 59, and 72. The decision is available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/2002/2002scc86/2002scc86.html> (accessed March 9, 2011). Clemenger found the Court’s definition of toleration and respect concerning because “In choosing sides, the Court did not make the public system more inclusive but less public—in the sense that many parents will be compelled to find alternatives to the public system.” See “The EFC responds after Supreme Court overturns

short, the Court mandated the School Board to base its decision on toleration and non-sectarianism.<sup>252</sup> EFC leaders focused on the dissenting opinion, which emphasized that all people, including agnostics, atheists, and religious adherents, believe in something.<sup>253</sup> Essentially the two dissenting Judges adopted the same expansive definition of religion as the one promoted by EFC leaders and therefore they declared that it was impossible to privatize religion.

The EFC considered the judgements in both *Trinity* and *Chamberlain* as partial victories.<sup>254</sup> It celebrated the fact that in *Trinity* the Supreme Court protected the right of a religious institution to promote a broadly held evangelical conception of sexuality and to have a “discriminatory” code of conduct. EFC leaders welcomed the Court’s recognition in *Chamberlain* that the term “secular” in public policy does not mean a-religious. They continued to employ their broad conception of religion in their interventions in cases involving the religious freedom of minority religious groups.

#### **5.2.4 Protecting the religious freedom of minority groups**

The EFC initially supported religious minorities from the sidelines. For instance, Stiller told reporters that he supported the decision that permitted Sikh RCMP officers to wear their turban rather than the traditional Stetson hat (Stiller 2008). In 2006 the EFC’s legal counsel celebrated the ruling of the Supreme Court in *Multani v. Commission Scholaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys* that permitted a Sikh student to wear his kirpan to school.<sup>255</sup> In the 2000s the EFC took a more activist approach by intervening in legal cases.

The first case began after members of the Orthodox Jewish community in Montreal constructed succah huts on the balconies of their condominium in contravention of the condominium rules.

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Surrey School Board Decision,” press release dated 12/20/02, available online at <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1623> (accessed January 30, 2011).

<sup>252</sup> In June 2003 the School Board again rejected the three books, citing their poor grammar and intolerance of different views on same-sex marriage. The following month it approved two other books depicting same-sex parents for use in the classroom.

<sup>253</sup> *Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36*, 2002 SCC 86, [2002] 4 S.C.R. 710, ¶137.

<sup>254</sup> Epp Buckingham headlined her summary of the *Trinity* decision with the words “A strong decision for religious freedom in Canada: The Supreme Court of Canada rules in favour of Trinity Western University.” Issued in May 2001, the summary is available online at <http://files.efc-canada.net/si/Education/TWUdecisionsummary.pdf> (accessed February 20, 2011). In the EFC’s response to the *Chamberlain* decision, Clemenger celebrated the Court’s ruling that secularism did not preclude decisions made on the basis of religious considerations and that secular institutions were not required to ignore religion.

<sup>255</sup> See the analysis of *Multani v. Commission Scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys* written for the EFC by its legal advisor at the time, Rickcola Slawter Available online at <http://files.efc-canada.net/si/Religious%20Freedom%20in%20Canada/EFC/Multani.pdf> (accessed April 28, 2008).

Succahs remain in place for eight days and are part of the Sukkot celebration that is similar to Thanksgiving celebrations in North America. The festival reminds Jews of the 40 years they spent in the desert after fleeing Egypt and before entering Canaan as documented in the second book of the Bible. When the case arrived at the Quebec Superior Court, the judge heard from both Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jewish rabbis on the issue of whether succahs were required by the Jewish faith. The judge sided with the liberal interpretation and ruled against the Orthodox believers. In doing so the judge interpreted doctrine, an action the EFC found distressing. When the case reached the Supreme Court in 2004, the EFC and Seventh-day Adventist Church submitted a joint factum in which they argued that courts could not rule on matters of religious doctrine and how belief is publicly manifested. As their factum noted, in matters of faith there are typically contrary views and the courts may not rule on the validity of those views. Instead, they should be limited to ruling on the sincerity with which beliefs are held. In addition, the interveners insisted that case law and the *Québec Charter of Individual Rights and Liberties* protected the freedom of religious expression and did not distinguish between obligatory and voluntary religious expressions and/or practices. The two interveners also identified the freedom of religious expression as a fundamental aspect of human dignity (EFC and The Seventh Day Adventist Church in Canada 2003a). In a 5 to 4 split the Supreme Court found in favour of the Orthodox believers, recognized the comprehensive nature of religion, and ruling that the state cannot adjudicate between contesting interpretations of religious dogma. This case is cited as *Amselem*.<sup>256</sup>

The EFC's press release about the decision observed that the judgement accommodated individual beliefs and practices.<sup>257</sup> Benjamin Berger viewed the decision as "telling because the Court reject[ed] the notion that, for the purposes of law, religious freedom depends in any way on collective conceptions of religious precept" (2007, 286). Berger did not claim that courts "erred" when they conceived of religion in individual terms; rather, his point was simply that the law's understanding of religion was ideologically informed by liberalism (291). It was this liberal individualism that the EFC challenged in a case involving a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Quebec.

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<sup>256</sup> *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem*, 2004 SCC 47, [2004] 2 S.C.R. 551, available online at <http://files.efc-canada.net/si/Religious%20Freedom%20in%20Canada/EFC/Multani.pdf> (accessed February 20, 2011).

<sup>257</sup> See the EFC's press release, "The EFC applauds Supreme Court of Canada decision to protect religious freedom" dated 6/30/04 and available online at <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1554> (accessed January 30, 2011).

In the early 1990s, the village of Lafontaine, Quebec, refused to grant a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses a permit to construct a house of worship. Initially the congregation discussed with the village the possibility of building a church in a residential neighbourhood but the village claimed the church would adversely affect tax revenue as houses of worship are tax free. The village then directed the community to look for land in areas already zoned for such construction, but the community could find no such land available. In 1992 the community purchased land in a commercial zone, very close to another house of worship, but the village refused to re-zone the land and offered no explanation for its refusal. When the case came before the Quebec Court of Appeal, the Court found no limitation of religious freedom in the village's actions as the village had other lands zoned for houses of worship. The congregation then appealed to the Supreme Court. The factum of the EFC and the Seventh Day Adventist Church focused on the necessity of religious communities meeting together if they are to enjoy the freedoms outlined by Justice Dickson in the 1985 judgement on Sunday shopping. Given that the interveners viewed religion as having both individual and communal aspects, they considered the village's refusal to grant the construction permit an infringement of the congregation's right to worship collectively. They argued that the village's actions amounted to a state-imposed burden, and, referring to the Court ruled in the *Trinity* case, insisted that the state may not limit or burden the freedom of religious expression (EFC and *The Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Canada* 2003b). However, the interveners did not acknowledge the fact that churches do not have an unlimited right to construct houses of worship where they will, a fact that the Court's majority decision noted. The Court side-stepped the issue of the congregants' right to worship publicly and based its decision on a technicality, finding that the village did not properly and fairly exercise its duties. Consequently, the Justices sent the matter back to the village for consideration and ordered it to address the request in a proper and fair manner.<sup>258</sup>

The EFC further developed its conception of the communal aspect of religion in its legal documents supporting the members of the Wilson Colony of the Hutterian Brethren in Alberta who opposed the photo identification requirement for driver's licenses. The EFC, together with the Christian Legal Fellowship (CLF), intervened in the case when it reached the Supreme Court. Their factum argued that "religion, is by definition, and in practice a personal commitment manifest in and through community" (EFC and CLF 2008, ¶16). This definition of religion expanded the protection of

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<sup>258</sup> *Congrégation des témoins de Jéhovah de St-Jérôme-Lafontaine v. Lafontaine (Village)*, 2004 SCC 48, [2004] 2 S.C.R. 650, available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/2004/2004scc48/2004scc48.html> (accessed March 9, 2011).

religious freedoms guaranteed in the Charter to include group rights. Indeed, the factum noted that there would be no individual Wilson members without the existence of the Colony. “Therefore, in order for the Wilson Members to exercise their freedom of religion, they must do it in community, because the community is the means by which they can exercise their s. 2a) rights” (§24). As Wilson members believed that the Bible required them to live communally in rural areas, not having access to driver’s licenses would impair their ability to live on their rural colonies. Although the Supreme Court unanimously agreed that religion has collective aspects, the majority nevertheless found that the desire of the Alberta government to maintain the integrity of its driver’s licenses and protect its citizens against fraud justified the infringement of the Brethrens’ religious freedom.<sup>259</sup> Despite the negative decision against the Wilson members, Hutchinson celebrated the Court’s recognition of the collective aspects of religion (Hutchinson 2009b).

The Supreme Court’s decisions in *Trinity*, *Chamberlain*, *Amselem*, and the *Hutterian Brethren* were all significant cases that clarified the legal protection of religious freedom in Canada. In many ways the judgements supported the desires of the EFC to a) expand the conception of religious freedom to include the rights of religious communities; b) have the courts protect the right of religious adherents to express publicly their religious convictions; and c) persuade Parliament and the courts to protect religious pluralism. However, EFC involvement in these cases involved more than winning the freedom for religious adherents. Participation involved the EFC in the power dynamics of the public sphere. The last section of this chapter identifies four challenges facing the EFC as it interacts with these dynamics.

### **5.3 Challenges associated with the EFC’s legal work**

The introduction of the Charter provided a new avenue for evangelicals to clarify and extend the legal protection of religious freedom, given that other Canadian political institutions such as legislatures, executives, and bureaucracies are fairly closed to external influences (Malloy 2004, 9-13).<sup>260</sup> Dennis Hoover and Kevin den Dulk offer further reasons for why the EFC began to intervene in legal cases. They trace evangelical and Catholic involvement in cases involving abortion, euthanasia, and religious education and conclude that the liberalization of the judiciary and cognizance of the

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<sup>259</sup> See *Alberta v. Hutterian Brethren of Wilson Colony*, 2009 SCC 37, [2009] 2 S.C.R. 567, available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/2009/2009scc37/2009scc37.html> (accessed March 9, 2011).

<sup>260</sup> Malloy suggests that municipal and school board politics are more open to influence than the other levels of government (2004, 12).

importance of legal decisions motivated conservative Christian associations to litigate. Hoover and den Dulk reject the argument that evangelicals entered the legal system because they did not experience success in the political realm. Instead, they contend that evangelicals perceived the justice system to be adverse to their worldviews but nevertheless recognized the saliency of the issues before the courts. As a result, they participated in both legal and political interventions simultaneously (2004, 18).

Hoover and den Dulk identify Brian Stiller as one of the most important Canadian leaders in the evangelical turn towards mobilization in the legal sphere. They note that by the early 1990s, the EFC was “one of the most frequent evangelical filers at the Canadian Supreme Court” (2004, 26). In fact, the EFC’s involvement in the *Hutterian Brethren* case in April 2009 marked its 20<sup>th</sup> appearance before the Supreme Court.<sup>261</sup> However, there are a number of challenges associated with such involvement in the legal system.

The first challenge concerns the tension between positive and negative rights and how the advocacy for positive rights reflects a power position. In many of its interventions the EFC used the Charter to protect and advance its causes, including the cause of religious freedom. On the one hand, it adopted what Thomas Bateman identifies as a liberal constitutionalist view of the Charter when it insisted in *Trinity* and *Chamberlain* that the primary function of the Charter is to protect the freedom of individuals from illegal state intrusions in their private lives (1998, 7-8). On the other hand, in the *Hutterian Brethren* case the EFC asked the government to protect not only religious freedom but also the ability of religious groups to live differently from the broader society without undue economic hardship.<sup>262</sup> In addition, in *Vriend* the EFC requested the Supreme Court to exempt religious adherents and their associations from anti-discriminatory laws if such laws contradicted specific religious beliefs (EFC n.d.b).

Although the definition of religion given by Justice Dickson in 1985 allowed for both negative and positive religious freedoms, there is a tension between the two types of freedoms, particularly in the role that each of them ascribes to the state. The EFC’s participation in issues of religious freedom

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<sup>261</sup> Hutchinson noted this milestone at a Christian Leaders Connection conference hosted by the EFC in Edmonton on January 19, 2010 at The King’s University College. In Hutchinson’s estimation, no other religious group has this track record.

<sup>262</sup> The Charter does protect some group rights, including the freedom of association, the rights of minority language education (Section 23), Aboriginal rights (Section 25) and preservation of Canada’s multicultural heritage (Section 27).

reflected this tension. For example, in 2003 Clemenger acknowledged that the EFC's focus on issues of religious freedom was to protect religious life from incursions by the state (Clemenger 2003, 170). The statement reflected a classic liberal conception of jurisprudence that assumed a non-interventionist state except in the event that it needs to intervene in order to protect the freedom of particular individuals or a group. As Clemenger noted in *Faith Today*, the Charter is to check both majoritarianism (by protecting minorities) and "the interests of the powerful" (Clemenger 2005e, 14). In these instances the state intervenes in order to protect the rights of those not strong enough to defend themselves. However, when the EFC called on governments to create the political and legal space for the public expression and exercise of faith, fund religious schools that met certain legal requirements, exempt religious adherents from certain laws, and recognize the public benefits of religion, it was asking the state to actively support religion, or more specifically, religious pluralism. In the areas of religious broadcasting and religious education, it asked the government to protect, if not enable, religious pluralism in the name of choice. In these instances it appeared that the EFC preferred an activist government that directly or indirectly promoted religion rather than one that adopted a "hands off" approach.

In many of the cases discussed in this chapter, the Canadian courts were willing to protect both negative and positive rights arising from the Charter. This willingness was in contrast with the situation in the US where, according to Ted Jelen, judges are increasingly unwilling to exempt religious adherents from laws that infringe on their religious freedom unless the corresponding legislation specifically grants the exemption (Jelen 1999, 351). In addition, the American constitutional prohibition against the creation of an established church and the general acceptance of the separation between church and state limits the ability of the courts and governments to grant such positive rights as funding religious schools. In the Canadian context, with its different political and legal structures, judges may rule on both the negative and positive dimensions of religious freedom. As we have seen, the EFC contributed to the protection of both dimensions.

However, Nancy Rosenblum is troubled by religious adherents who ask the state to actively promote religion. In her study of how pluralist democracies accommodate religion, she makes two observations that are pertinent to this chapter. First, she notes that the designation of what constitutes religion is important because once activities or beliefs are deemed to be religious, it is easier to claim that they are "deserving of democratic deference to the laws of the 'religious polity'" (2000, 6). For Rosenblum, then, defining religion is a political act as it makes demands of the state and influences

public policy, such as funding religious schools. Indeed, the very act of a religious association appealing to the state to protect its religious freedom may indicate its desire to institutionalize its political involvement with the intention of gaining lasting influence (Jelen 1999, 350). Defining religion is also an act of power, as definitions typically create standards against which other religions are measured. For example, the EFC's definition of secular philosophies as religious perspectives enabled it to call for religious access to the benefits distributed by the various levels of government. In many of their documents EFC leaders defined religion as comprehensive and communal. Yet not all religious people define their religion in this manner. However, it must be remembered that with regard to education, the EFC did not ask the state to protect the Christian nature of public schools, but only to encourage the study of religion in public schools and the public funding of a variety of religious schools in the name of confessional and institutional pluralism.

Second, Rosenblum is concerned about what she terms the "integralist" approach of many religious associations who struggle for the right to participate in the public square as unified (religious) identities. In advancing their positive religious rights, these associations demand that the state ensures the necessary conditions for their flourishing, not only by granting them exemptions from some laws, but also recognizing the contributions of faith to the moral and civil life of the nation and actively promoting religious pluralism (2000, 16-17). One of the dangers of tying religious flourishing so closely with the state, Rosenblum warns, is that the religious associations eventually adopt the same techniques and methods of participation as secular groups, creating their own media or using public media to their advantage, supporting political parties and/or candidates, and forging ecumenical and inter-faith coalitions to intervene in political and legal processes (19). While Rosenblum is writing about the American context here, her larger point is that when religious associations depend on, and cooperate with, the state, they easily become "deformed" (182).

This potential to be "deformed" by political interventions is the second challenge facing the EFC. While the organization does not support specific political parties and candidates, it uses liberal and secular modes of reasoning when it enters the legal system. For instance, in many of the EFC arguments studied in this chapter that were used to advance positive religious freedoms appealed to the same liberal principle of equality used by other groups seeking protection of their rights, including homosexuals. Although Rosenblum's term of "deformity" may be too strong in the case of the EFC, the organization accommodated secular public discourse and at times subsumed particular theological belief to political engagement. In addition, the EFC's involvement in broad inter-faith coalitions



provided greater access in that such a group was more likely to gain access to governmental benefits and the media than single associations representing narrow interests. However, the strategy required that distinctive and particular theological arguments were minimized or ignored in favour of the promotion of broader interests. In broad coalitions less emphasis was placed on distinctive arguments in the name of relevance and raising legal arguments that would be appreciated by a secular audience. The distinctly evangelical element of the EFC's identity was then, at least at times, subsumed by political and social conservative values.

The third challenge involves the EFC's strategy of investing so many of its resources in the legal system. In his book *Two Faces of Liberalism* (2000), John Gray argues that liberal legal systems view disagreements as conflicts of fundamental rights that must be adjudicated by the courts. The problem, Gray contends, is that the adversarial nature of the legal system politicizes the law and reduces the possibility of compromise. Rather than focus on the legal system, Gray calls for a return to the arts of compromise and political negotiation. Unlike legal decisions, "political settlements are local, variable and renegotiable" (117). They may change over time and respond to specific circumstances, meaning that they cannot be universalized.

Gray's observation that adversarial liberal legal systems politicize the law and make compromises more difficult to achieve suggests that there are political implications to focusing so much energy on protecting religious freedom via the courts. EFC leaders are clear in their preference for the political rather than legal creation of social policy. However, Hugh Heclo views such popular arguments as deceptive. As he notes:

With natural-law jurisprudence a relic of the past, politically engaged Christians easily succumb to viewing the essence of law as the will of the political sovereign, namely the people. The problem is that if Christians really do believe what they say, it has to follow that immoral policies on abortion, eugenics, euthanasia, gay marriage, genetic engineering, and so on are just as wrong if passed by fifty state legislatures as they are if decided by a handful of Supreme Court justices. (2007, 137)

Heclo's concern here is that religious groups too easily substitute process for principle. In addition, there is no indication that Parliamentary decisions would provide different policies than those mandated by the courts. While blaming the courts for liberal social policy may be a popular theme

with the evangelical base,<sup>263</sup> it does not address the fact that Canadian society is largely driven by liberal values.

Given the propensity of Parliament to avoid deciding on contentious issues by referring them to the courts, EFC leaders may justly claim that they have few options but to engage in the legal system if they wish to defend religious freedom. However, to do so they must play by the rules created by the justice system. Moreover, the EFC's agenda comes to be determined by what is in front of the courts rather than developing a position on a particular issue and then negotiating with the various stakeholders for its adoption (as EFC leaders did in the abortion debate). The organization's legal interventions may then be perceived as reactive. For example, the EFC became involved in broadcasting and educational issues only after the government, and especially the courts, moved to de-Christianize some public policy and public institutions.

A final challenge concerns the extent to which the EFC is a "top-down" rather than a grassroots organization, meaning that it is not able to engage in acts of solidarity with religious minorities at the local level. For instance, at approximately the same time as the EFC was supporting the Jehovah's Witnesses in Quebec in their quest to construct a house of worship, Laotian Buddhists in Toronto attempted to build a temple in Caledon, just north of Toronto. Once the Buddhists obtained a development permit some local citizens began a series of legal challenges to hinder the construction of the temple. As a result, the Laotian community had to undertake an environmental assessment study and faced land use limitations not imposed on other religious buildings in the same area (McLellan and White 2005). Given the EFC's argument about the importance of houses of worship for religious communities, the issues facing the Laotian Buddhists provided its leaders with an opportunity to support a religious minority at the local level of politics. Publicly at least they did not comment on the case. A related issue is that some minority religions, especially those among the poorer immigrant and refugee groups, may require an extra measure of support for two reasons. First, they may conceptualize religion differently than Christianity, which some believe continues to undergird Western definitions of religion, and second, economic inequities impede the ability of minority religions to participate in the public sphere and influence public policy. The legal protection of religious freedom, therefore, is not sufficient to actually promote equal participation.

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<sup>263</sup> Some members of the American Religious Right decry activist judges. See Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1984) and Muncy, Mitchell S., Richard J. Neuhaus, William Bennett, and Robert Bork (eds.), *The End of Democracy?: The Judicial Usurpation of Politics* (Spence Publishing Co., 1997).

Veit Bader develops these points. Writing about the American context, he argues that constitutional guarantees of the free exercise of religion does not result in actual protection of all religious groups as it ignores cultural and political inequalities among religions. Furthermore, Bader claims, the liberal principle of a neutral state masks the influence of the dominant majorities and ignores the fact that states have a variety of means at their disposal to either hinder or support religions. Therefore legal recognition does not guarantee “actual” recognition (1999, 601-04, 2003a, 62-63).

The larger issue behind these challenges is that the legal system wields power. Organizations with the requisite resources are able to engage with the system and employ its power in order to protect and advance their causes. Indeed, legal interventions require that the participants know “the rules of the game,” have the resources to hire lawyers, and are able to speak before the courts. According to Asad, the law wields power in that it prescribes certain types of living and certain types of political subjects. As he reminds us, “the function of law is not merely to reflect social life but also to reconstruct it—if necessary by force and against all opposition” (2003, 215). Nation-states do not employ persuasion, he argues. Instead, they employ the law, which always operates through power (256). For Asad, the state creates a particular type of political subject by its laws, advancement of particular values, and the type of arguments permitted in the public sphere. For example, those who desire to participate in the public sphere must use rational argumentation, which is a particular “liberal moral and political discourse” (1999, 180). This requirement excludes those who cannot create such arguments and “become particular speaking and listening subjects” (181). When the EFC intervenes in the legal system, it is interacting with the power of the state to create political subjects, define citizens, and protect religious freedom.

The fact that power resides in the law does not suggest that legal interventions are somehow dishonourable or that the main objective of the EFC is to “gain power” in order to marginalize other groups. Instead, the point is that the EFC is comfortable acting within the structures of a secular liberal state and does not examine the means by which that state privileges some religions in the state’s “personality.” In its desire to participate, the organization adopts many of the same democratic liberal values that animate other actors in the public sphere, such as a high regard for the state and equal access to state resources. Rather than detail what a truly evangelical life might look like, the EFC typically seeks to reform the state so that it is more accommodating of religious belief and practice in order that religious adherents may have their place at the table and acquire influence. However, EFC literature does not address the power that resides with the guests at the table as they

define the nature and scope of religion and thereby constitute the “normal” against which others are measured.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

The EFC’s emphasis on religious freedom originated from its interpretation of secularism as a threat, its rejection of the privatization of religion, and its conception of religion as comprehensive in nature and scope. From these conceptions flowed the conviction that religion was practiced both privately and publicly. Increasingly the EFC focused on what it perceived to be the collective aspect of religion. This chapter examined its arguments for religious freedom in the contexts of religious broadcasting, religious education in public schools, sexual orientation and educational institutions, and the religious freedom of minority religious groups. The study revealed that the manner in which the EFC defined religion and secularism had political implications. For instance, its leaders spent significant resources intervening in legal cases defending religious freedom. As a result, its agenda came to be formed, at least in part, by what cases were before the courts. In addition, some of its arguments were based on the liberal argument of equal access rather than theological principles. It was comfortable acting within the parameters created by the state and did not actively contest the power of the state to create those parameters.

In the next chapter I study the EFC’s promotion of the traditional family and opposition to same-sex marriage. More specifically, I examine the nature of the religious-political subject developed by the EFC as it intervened in public policy debates about marriage and the family. Of particular interest is how the EFC crafted its arguments and whether it grounded these arguments in religious reasoning, liberal values, or both.

## Chapter 6

### Advocating for the traditional family and heterosexual marriage

In 2008 the EFC published an interview with Douglas Todd, the religion reporter at the *Vancouver Sun*. Todd identified three recurring news stories about evangelicals: 1) their political involvement; 2) their engagement in issues concerning homosexuality; and 3) their claim of persecution at the hands of the broader culture.<sup>264</sup> When asked what advice he would offer evangelicals, Todd suggested that they de-emphasize the sex-related issues and work more closely with other faith and non-faith groups on issues such as the environment. In Todd's view, the emphasis on sex-related issues drove a wedge between conservative Christians and almost everyone else (*Church and Faith Trends* 2008).<sup>265</sup> While Todd's advice may appear reasonable from a media perspective or from the point of view of a public relations consultant, it fails to recognize how important the issue of sexual morality is to the identity of evangelical individuals and groups.

One need only examine the involvement of evangelicals in the same-sex marriage debate to get a sense of how significant the issues of sexual morality are to their identity. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's announcement in 2003 that his government would introduce legislation to permit same-sex couples to marry prompted evangelicals to mobilize in numbers and with a passion not seen since the abortion debate in the early 1990s. Approximately 15,000 supporters of traditional marriage gathered on Parliament Hill in April 2005 and evangelicals created a myriad of new organizations to protect heterosexual marriage. The *Western Standard* magazine identified the emergence of a number of evangelical leaders in this movement, including the EFC's Bruce Clemenger (Johnson 2005). Despite this activism, the Liberal dominated Parliament expanded the definition of marriage to include same-sex unions in the summer of 2005. As the opposition, most Conservative MPs opposed the expansion. When the Conservatives came to power six months later, several commentators thought evangelicals and other members of the Canadian Religious Right would force Stephen Harper to re-open the debate (e.g., McDonald 2006).

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<sup>264</sup> For a description of how evangelicals feel persecuted by the dominant culture, see Jenny Jackson, "The fear of God: The religious right is afraid to speak and the left is afraid to listen" in *The Ottawa Citizen* (March 18, 2006), available online at <http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/story.html?id=7454b9e4-2bd5-4d46-bd30-26fa7be875a0> (accessed December 27, 2010).

This fear of a rising Canadian Religious Right was fuelled, at least in part, by events in the US, particularly the manner in which leading American social conservatives, including some evangelicals, opposed equality rights for gays and lesbians. For example, the Family Research Council (previously a division of Focus on the Family<sup>266</sup>) insisted that “sexual orientation” was not immutable or inborn and therefore gays and lesbians could not seek civil rights legislation to protect themselves against employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. In fact, argued the Council, homosexuals have not been denied civil rights as they enjoy the same freedoms of religion and speech and the same due process of law granted to every other American citizen (Sprigg 2007, 2-5). In addition, these opponents of same-sex equality rights typically portrayed homosexuals as potential criminals engaged in deviant and immoral behaviour (Miceli 2005, 601; Smith 2005, 226-27), linking homosexual behaviour with child sexual abuse, promiscuity, mental illness, domestic violence, and sexually transmitted diseases (Sprigg 2007, 12). Indeed, opposition to homosexual equality rights became an important symbol of what Wilcox, Chaves, and Franz call the “familistic ideology” of conservative Protestantism that advanced “traditional family values” in order to resist “modernity and the forces of secular liberalism it sees implicated in family change” (2004, 493). In this manner sexual orientation and same-sex marriage became highly polarized culture war issues, pitting gay rights lobby groups against, among others, the Religious Right. Member organizations of the latter claimed that practising homosexuals posed a threat to children and therefore should not be allowed to teach in public schools (Wilcox 2000, 122).

Religious Right activists in the US advanced two additional arguments against gay rights: first, that gays and lesbians were wealthy members of society; and second, that they held significant political power. As a result, went the argument, any civil rights legislation protecting gays and lesbians against discrimination would further entrench their privileges (Herman 1996, 349). “No special rights” for homosexuals became the rallying cry as these activists insisted that gays and lesbians were not “truly disadvantaged” because their lifestyle was a choice (352, 356). In addition, they claimed that anti-discrimination legislation would force them to employ homosexuals and thereby violate their religious beliefs (Wilcox 2000, 121). As a result, they mobilized to support state constitutional amendments, known as propositions, banning same-sex marriage. For example, prior to the 2008

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<sup>265</sup> Todd lists the most influential Canadian evangelicals as: Preston Manning, David Mainse, Brian Stiller, and John Stackhouse (whom Todd describes as an atypical evangelical because of his intellectualism) (*Church and Faith Trends* 2008, 4).

American election Focus on the Family donated \$727,250 in support of Proposition 8 in California that recognized only heterosexual marriage (Luning 2009).

As we will see in this chapter, the EFC did not employ the same antagonistic and inflammatory rhetoric as the American Religious Right, despite the fact that Canadian evangelicals generally held the same attitudes about same-sex marriage as the American Religious Right (Bean, Gonzalez, and Kaufman 2008, 902). Yet there were some similarities in strategy. While EFC leaders did not explicitly engage in the argument about whether or not homosexuality is a choice, its opposition reflected elements of the “familistic ideology” described by Wilcox, Chaves, and Franz. In addition, EFC leaders argued that legislation protecting gays and lesbians against discrimination could negatively impact religious freedom in that evangelicals and their institutions could be forced to hire or rent facilities to homosexuals and gay rights groups. Like the American Religious Right, the EFC decried activist judges, insisting that Parliament, not the courts, should make social policy. Despite these similarities, however, there were differences in the manner that the EFC and the Religious Right engaged with the issues surrounding sexual orientation. First, the EFC refused to align itself with a political party, unlike the move of the Religious Right into the Republican Party. Second, over time the EFC accepted public opinion on a number of issues, agreeing that gays and lesbians were indeed discriminated against in society and that the state should recognize same-sex unions in some manner.<sup>267</sup>

This chapter traces the EFC’s involvement in two equality rights debates: the expansion of spousal benefits to same-sex couples and the redefinition of marriage to include homosexual unions. For EFC leaders, these issues challenged the evangelical view of “spouse” and “family” as heterosexual in nature. As columnist Bob Harvey wrote in *Faith Today*,<sup>268</sup> evangelicals view (heterosexual) marriage as “a higher calling, one that benefits not only the spouses but also their children and society itself. It has an other-directed dimension that is not necessarily present in common-law relationships ... It is

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<sup>266</sup> Examples of how the Council interpreted and engaged with sexuality issues can be found at <http://www.frc.org/issues> (accessed December 30, 2010).

<sup>267</sup> The EFC was also more moderate than some other Canadian evangelical leaders such as Reverend Tristan Emmanuel, who believes homosexuality is a bad choice. For more on Emmanuel, see Keith Boag’s story on evangelicalism for the CBC, entitled “Canada’s evangelical movement: Political awakening,” and aired on June 13, 2005. Available online at <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/evangelical/> (accessed July 15, 2010). For examples of how these Canadian evangelicals employed some the same types of political strategies as the American Religious Right, see Christopher Dreher’s story in the *Globe and Mail* on September 23, 2006 entitled “In Ottawa, faith makes a leap to the Right.” Available online at [http://www.citizenimpact.ca/leap\\_to\\_the\\_right.html](http://www.citizenimpact.ca/leap_to_the_right.html) (accessed June 23, 2010).

for the common good of everyone that we preserve our traditional understanding of spouse and family” (2000, 29). Harvey’s reference to the common good revealed the continuing presence of the EFC’s political model as outlined in chapter 4. In that chapter we saw that during the abortion, euthanasia, and reproductive technology debates, the EFC advanced a model of political engagement that stressed the *imago Dei*, the common good, ecumenism, pluralism, persuasion, and a pragmatic approach to politics that recognized the incremental nature of political and social change. Throughout the public debates about the expansion of spousal benefits and marriage to include same-sex couples, the same model was often evident in the EFC’s arguments.

In their efforts to support heterosexual marriage, EFC leaders typically advanced four arguments against same-sex marriage. First, they insisted that they did not support discrimination against any group, including gays and lesbians. However, they argued that social policies enabling governments to treat various groups in different ways were not necessarily discriminatory. Second, they claimed that heterosexual marriage contributed to social stability and was the best social structure in which to raise children. Third, they maintained that Parliament as an elected body has the task of creating social policy, not the courts. Finally, they framed the issue as one of religious freedom by arguing that religious adherents and their organizations had the freedom to state publicly their disagreement with homosexual marriage without being marginalized for their views or denied public benefits. In these instances, EFC leaders asked the courts to balance competing equality rights with religious freedom and defer to the right of legislatures to create social policy. After tracing how the EFC employed these arguments in their opposition to the expansion of spousal benefits and marriage, I conclude the chapter by examining the degree to which the EFC adopted secular and liberal reasoning in its engagement with these issues in the public sphere.

## **6.1 Opposing the expansion of gay and lesbian equality rights**

From the mid 1980s through the 1990s, Parliament and the Canadian legal system conferred an increasing number of social benefits on homosexual relationships. Much of the impetus for change came from legal rulings. The EFC viewed the extension of spousal benefits to gays and lesbians as a threat to heterosexual marriage and the family. The traditional family deserved protection, Stiller argued, because it was the institution in which members “learn about self, responsibility and others”

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<sup>268</sup> Harvey was the religion reporter at the *Ottawa Citizen* until 2005.



(Stiller 1994b, 14). In these types of arguments the EFC emphasized the socialization aspects of family.

Despite their strong support for families, EFC leaders typically did not romanticize the traditional conception of the institution. For instance, Stiller advised men to break the stereotypes of what it meant to be a father and not be threatened by their wives' ambitions and economic independence (1988c, 24). For Stiller, "whenever a father succumbs to the macho model imposed on males he cuts himself off from the joy and fulfillment in caring for the emotional needs of the child" (23). In addition, the EFC recognized that abuse occurs in some families. As the EFC's Social Action Commission acknowledged in a paper entitled "Abuse in homes and church communities," too often the church denied abuse, whether in families or among church workers. The Commission identified the sins of abuse as violating the integrity of relationships, misusing power, disregarding personal dignity, and betraying trust (EFC 1996b, 3-4).<sup>269</sup>

Documents produced by the EFC during the debates surrounding homosexual rights and benefits defined marriage as religious in its origin and nature and social in its purpose. In terms of its religious elements, the EFC conceptualized marriage as part of the created order as recorded in the biblical account of Genesis 1 and 2 in which Adam and Eve were created in God's image to provide companionship to, and assume responsibility for, each other. As an EFC position paper claimed, marriage "is symbolic of God's relationship to his people and Jesus Christ's relationship to his church" (1996c, 2). Elsewhere the EFC described marriage as covenantal in that it binds a man and a woman together to become "one flesh" (2003b, 2-3).<sup>270</sup> Since God is the author of marriage, the EFC understood its heterosexual nature as normative and universal. The role of the state was to recognize and support it. As for the social role of marriage, the EFC viewed it as "the relationship upon which human society is founded" (1996c, 2), meaning that its leaders viewed marriage as the foundation of the social order.

Marriage is unique among all relationships, the EFC claimed, because it alone has the task of procreation and the socialization of children. Its leaders often reminded the courts that gay and lesbian relationships are incapable of having children without involving a third party. It was the biological role of procreation, with its concomitant responsibilities and obligations, which made

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<sup>269</sup> In 1986 Stiller called pastors to be vigilant against incest, which he identified as a greater evil than the sin of homosexuality. He asked pastors to "take a look at what we're saying to our men" (1986b, 51).

heterosexual marriage a distinct relationship that required specific social policies not available to other types of relationships. In addition, EFC leaders petitioned the government to create tax policies that supported families by recognizing the cost of raising children (EFC 1999d).

The EFC summarized the benefits of a traditionally structured family in the following manner:

A family ... is a community uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values essential for the development and well-being of its own members and society as a whole. The family is also a binding permanent commitment to past, present and future generations and as such is the cement that holds society together. In addition, the family is the source for the relationships that provide health, education and welfare benefits that meet the needs of individuals without cost to the taxpayer. The family has been the foundation social structure from time immemorial in all societies. Although not perfect, no better system has ever been devised in which to raise children and to care for the disabled and the aged. (1999e, 1)<sup>271</sup>

In short, the EFC conceptualized the family as an institution serving the needs of children and supporting the aged, disabled, and ill. Due to these multiple functions, the EFC refused to reduce the family to a legal agreement.

While evangelicals have a long history of promoting and protecting the traditional family, much of their political involvement began in 1969 when Trudeau liberalized social policy. At the time, easier access to divorce attracted far greater attention than the de-criminalization of homosexuality (Smith 2005, 226). However, as more evangelicals engaged in the practice of divorce, fewer evangelical leaders spoke against it. This phenomenon also occurred in the US. As Nathaniel Klemp and Stephen Macedo note in their study of the American Christian Right, same-sex marriage became a pivotal issue among evangelicals because “the gay and lesbian lifestyle is alien to many Americans” and therefore a more powerful “tool of mobilization” than divorce (2009, 237).

In Canada the issue of gay equality rights first drew the attention of social conservatives shortly after Trudeau repatriated the Constitution with its new *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982. Three years later the Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights, commissioned with the task of ensuring that all legislation conformed to the equality rights stipulated in section 15 of the Charter,

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<sup>270</sup> This statement does not reflect the fact that the structure of marriage and families has changed significantly over time.

<sup>271</sup> This statement ignores how family structures are constituted differently in various cultures around the world.

recommended that the *Human Rights Act* be amended to include “sexual orientation” as one of the grounds on which it would be illegal to discriminate. When the federal government said it intended to introduce legislation to amend the *Act*, the EFC’s Social Action Commission submitted a brief to the government in which it agreed that “homosexuals should have the same rights as everyone else in Canada” (EFC 1986, 1) but objected to the amendment for three reasons.<sup>272</sup> First, the Commission argued that the amendment was not needed because homosexual relationships were legal as long as they were between consenting adults and because homosexuals already enjoyed protection against discrimination and inequality in that they had the same rights and protections as other Canadians.<sup>273</sup> Moreover, it claimed that Parliament intentionally excluded sexual orientation in the list of characteristics for which it was illegal to discriminate when it created the Charter. Second, the Commission worried that the lack of definition of the term “sexual orientation” could unintentionally create protection for various “sexual aberrations” (3). Third, it insisted that the proposed legislation made “government more intrusive than is justifiable in a free and democratic society” (1). More specifically, the Commission feared that the amendment would limit the ability of religious volunteer agencies to “set their own standards” regarding volunteers, of landlords to refuse to rent space to homosexuals, and of religious schools to teach “biblical doctrines of sexuality.”<sup>274</sup> It wondered what type of pressure would be placed on public schools to present homosexuality as normative and morally equivalent to heterosexuality, and about the eventual possibility of same-sex marriage (2-3).<sup>275</sup> When Stiller summarized the EFC’s position on the amendment in *Faith Today*, he titled his article “Rights or special protection?” and claimed that the amendment not only protected a certain lifestyle but required the public to support that lifestyle, thereby making the legislation quite intrusive. He differentiated between the responsibility of human rights codes to “protect people from discrimination based on unchangeable, morally neutral characteristics such as race, color, nationality or sex” and the desire of some to protect particular life-styles (Stiller 1987d, 55, 70). While the EFC did not overtly say that homosexuality was a choice rather than an aspect of some people’s identity or a genetic disposition, Stiller’s differentiation between unchangeable characteristics and lifestyles

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<sup>272</sup> The EFC presented this brief directly to Prime Minister Mulroney (*Faith Today* 1986a, 71).

<sup>273</sup> No subsequent EFC document argued that homosexuals did not suffer discrimination in Canadian society.

<sup>274</sup> As one EFC online document stated, “Discussing and developing norms for sexual behaviour is one of the central social roles of religion. All religions do this, whatever their particular views on homosexual behaviour” (n.d. “Hate propaganda: Talking points on Bill C-250.” Available online at <http://files.efc-canada.net/si/Religious%20Freedom%20in%20Canada/EFC/Bill%20C-250%20Talking%20Points.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2011).

suggests that the latter is a choice and that choices are not protected by the Charter. However, this was a specious argument as the Charter does indeed protect choices, including the choices individuals make about what religious beliefs they will follow.

When Parliament did not pass the amendment, equality rights activists changed their strategy and employed the Charter in their quest to change social policy, meaning that they sought change through the courts. The first case began in 1985 when Brian Mossop, an employee of the federal government, applied for bereavement leave in order to attend the funeral of the father of his gay partner. When the government refused, Mossop sued, arguing that the federal government's heterosexual definition of "family" was discriminatory. In his comments on the case in *Faith Today*, Paul Marshall sympathized with Mossop's situation and agreed that Mossop should have been given time off to attend the funeral. But Marshall disagreed with Mossop's attempt to redefine the family and thereby eliminate privileges granted to heterosexual married couples. He believed that the policy changes sought by Mossop would grant couples the benefits of marriage without any of its liabilities and duties, resulting in the further erosion of the institution of marriage. Marshall insisted that although the government may not enforce a Christian view of marriage, it does have the responsibility to "protect the institutions of marriage and family" by ensuring that federal policies do not undercut marriage (1990, 12). In 1993 the Supreme Court narrowly ruled against Mossop.<sup>276</sup>

In the early 1990s a second case in Ontario challenged heterosexual marriage. In *Layland v. Ontario* (1993), two gay men sued the province of Ontario after a city clerk in Ottawa refused their application for a marriage license. The majority of the Ontario Divisional Court did not find the common law definition of marriage discriminatory.<sup>277</sup> When the appellants appealed the decision, the EFC sought and received intervener status, although the appeal was abandoned before it reached the Court.<sup>278</sup> However, the EFC had already prepared its factum, which argued on the basis of common law that marriage was heterosexual and had as one of its principle functions the creation and maintenance of families. In its factum the EFC denied that the common law definition of marriage as heterosexual was discriminatory against homosexual couples because the exclusion of homosexual

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<sup>275</sup> The Commission noted with concern the implicit assumption in the government's amendment that religious objections to homosexuality were "arbitrary or irrelevant" (EFC 1986, 4).

<sup>276</sup> *Canada (Attorney General) v. Mossop* [1993] 1 S.C.R. 554. Available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/1993/1993scr1-554/1993scr1-554.html> (accessed March 9, 2011).

<sup>277</sup> *Layland v. Ontario* (1993), 104 DLR (4th) 214.

<sup>278</sup> The two original applicants ended their relationship before the Divisional Court released its ruling. Two other men became the applicants for the purpose of appeal but later abandoned it.

relationships was based on the common law interpretation of marriage, not on the personal characteristics of the applicants (n.d.c ¶41). In what became a common EFC argument, the organization insisted that distinctions between individuals and groups were not inherently discriminatory (¶45). A second argument was that common law should be reformed only by Parliament, as “the court may not be in a position to appreciate fully the economic and policy issues underlying the choice it is asked to make” (¶27). An ancillary argument noted that all of the world’s major religions view marriage as heterosexual (¶67).

The first indication of change occurred two years later in 1995. In *Egan v. Canada* the Supreme Court ruled against the claim that same-sex couples should receive the spousal pension distributed by the *Old Age Security Act*. Although the Court upheld the heterosexual definition of marriage it nevertheless recognized for the first time that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation violated the equality rights of gays and lesbians.<sup>279</sup> After a number of other legal cases expanded homosexual equality rights (including an Ontario case where the judge ruled that gay couples have the right to adopt children), the federal government introduced legislation (Bill C-33) to amend the *Human Rights Act* and protect gays and lesbians from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation with regard to employment and access to goods and services. In its 1996 submission to the Parliamentary committee studying the amendment, the EFC summarized its opposition in the following manner:

The EFC believes that it is not the role of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, nor human rights legislation in general, to determine what is or is not a family, who is or is not a spouse and to sanction particular lifestyle choices or relationships within society where those choices are not morally neutral and where the labels placed on such relationships would not accord with a broad consensus. A formal amendment to the CHRA would do more than simply confirm that which has already been judicially determined. A formal amendment would serve as public sanction of homosexual relationships and would significantly challenge long held institutions of marriage and family. (1996d, 7)

The last sentence reveals the crux of the matter for EFC leaders, who did not want homosexual relationships to have the same public and moral standing as heterosexual marriages. They worried

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<sup>279</sup> *Egan v. Canada* [1995] 2 S.C.R. 513. Available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/1995/1995scr2-513/1995scr2-513.html> (accessed March 9, 2011). As the nine judges released four separate reasons, the issue remained open to debate.

that the amendment could lead to the expansion of spousal benefits to same-sex couples (as had already occurred in Ontario) and eventually the redefinition of the terms “spouse” and “marriage” (3, 5). Equally concerning for EFC leaders was the lack of definition for the term “sexual orientation” which for them revealed a lack of clarity about the protections guaranteed in the amendment. They asked whether the protection of sexual orientation would extend to “all forms of expression,” including behaviour and lifestyle (7). The Charter and original human rights legislation, they argued, protect citizens against unequal treatment based on who they are, not what they do (8).<sup>280</sup> Despite these arguments, Parliament passed the legislation.

In the same year as the government debated Bill C-33, the EFC released its position paper on marriage entitled “Marriage and family status in Canada.” In it the EFC insisted that spousal benefits should be limited to heterosexual marriage given that women who leave the workforce to have and raise children are economically dependent on their husbands. In the case of marriage breakdown, spousal benefits ensure that women and their children do not live in poverty. For the EFC, then, spousal benefits applied only to heterosexual marriage (with some also applicable to opposite sex common-law partners). However, this position ignored the fact that a homosexual parent may also be dependent on their partner. While EFC leaders recognized that there may be inequities in other relationships of dependency, they insisted that the inequities be addressed in a manner that protected heterosexual marriage, perhaps by creating a new category of relationships such as “households,” in which partners would receive benefits on the basis of dependency, not conjugality (EFC 1996c, 4, 7).

EFC leaders employed many of the same arguments developed in the position paper two years later when they intervened in *M v. H* (1998), a case involving a lesbian couple in Ontario that split up. After the separation M. sued H. for spousal support payments. At the time the province’s *Family Law Act* disallowed same-sex couples from applying for spousal benefits upon the dissolution of a relationship because it defined “spouse” in heterosexual terms. The EFC intervened as a member of The Interfaith Coalition (the other Coalition members included the Ontario Council of Sikhs, Focus on the Family, and the Islamic Society of North America). The Coalition’s factum advanced four

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<sup>280</sup> CPJ, virtually alone among evangelical groups to support the Bill, urged the government to establish a category called “registered domestic partnerships,” which would include all types of committed relationships such as siblings, friends sharing accommodations, and homosexual couples. CPJ suggested two benefits to using this approach. First, the government would not legislate on the basis of sexual activity but commitment; and second, it did not threaten the definition and understanding of marriage. Clemenger, at that time the EFC’s director of national affairs in the EFC’s Ottawa office, expressed some reservations about CPJ’s proposal, suggesting that the registered domestic partnerships sounded too much like marriage (Harvey 1996, 14).

basic arguments. First, it argued for continued legislative support for heterosexual spouses given their unique role in bearing and raising children (*Interfaith Coalition* n.d. [1998?], ¶2). Second, it insisted that the intent of spousal benefits was to protect dependent women and children and thus was not applicable to same-sex couples (¶3-4). Third, it interpreted the complainant’s intent as desiring to change the definition of “spouse,” which should be the prerogative of Parliament, not the courts (¶5-7). Finally, it pointed out that the courts rejected “formal equality,” thereby recognizing that the different treatment of individuals or groups did not in and of itself result in inequality, especially when the intent of the distinction was to protect vulnerable groups. In the case of spousal benefits, the Coalition observed, the distinction centred on the basis of “spousal status” and not sexual orientation. As other relationships of economic dependency and emotional support were also treated distinctly from heterosexual couples, the distinction in and of itself was not discriminatory (¶20-26). Even if spousal benefits were to include same-sex couples, the Coalition argued, they would still be under-inclusive as a variety of other types of “economically inter-dependent domestic partnerships” would then be discriminated against. Therefore it urged the Court to consider the implications of such an expansion of the benefits. Not only would there be less money for heterosexual spouses, but the expansion would re-write legislation and dramatically alter the family and social structures (¶46, 48, 51).

The Supreme Court rejected these arguments and ruled that the law must treat same-sex couples in the same manner as heterosexual common-law partners. However, the Court limited its ruling on the use of the term “spouse” to the section of the *Act* that addressed spousal support, a section in which the *Act* defined “spouse” more broadly than in the other sections in order to include heterosexual common-law couples.<sup>281</sup> In response, the Ontario government created a new category of “same-sex partner” to address the necessary legislative changes and the Liberal government under Prime Minister Chrétien introduced Bill C-23 to amend the federal law regarding the disbursement of spousal benefits. Like the Supreme Court ruling, the federal government reserved the term “marriage” for heterosexual couples but expanded the definition of common-law relationships to include same-sex relationships.<sup>282</sup>

The *Eagan* and *M v. H* cases represented significant turning points for those seeking equality rights for homosexuals. They also reflected a change in strategy for the EFC as they marked the first time

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<sup>281</sup> *M. v. H.* [1999] 2 S.C.R. 3. Available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/1999/1999scr2-3/1999scr2-3.html> (accessed March 9, 2011).

that the organization argued for the expansion of spousal benefits to include other types of economically dependent relationships. Many subsequent EFC legal and political interventions repeated the argument (e.g., 1999e, 1), especially during the same-sex marriage debate. EFC leaders objected to the use of conjugality to define common-law relationships, including same-sex relationships, for two reasons: 1) it required the government to inquire into one's sexual activity and thus made the government too intrusive; and 2) it discriminated against those who live together but are not sexually intimate, such as two sisters, a parent and unmarried adult child, or two friends (EFC 2000d).

Three trends are evident from this overview of the EFC's interventions against the expansion of social programs to include same-sex relationships. First, EFC leaders consistently argued that a traditional family provided the best structure in which to raise children and therefore they continued to identify procreation as a fundamental aspect of marriage and family. In this matter they reflected a muted form of the "familistic ideology" developed by American Religious Right activists. Second, they were increasingly willing to differentiate the term "spouse" from "marriage" and accept the state's authority to define "spouse." In addition, EFC leaders acknowledged that same-sex relationships must be recognized in some manner in the law and accorded some social benefits. These changes of position suggest that the broader social culture influenced the organization. Its leaders accepted the decisions of legislatures and the courts, even when the decisions differed from accepted evangelical principles. This occurrence reflected the process Casanova described in his study of public religions. Building on the analysis of feminists, he noted that deprivatization "introduces publicity, that is, intersubjective norms into the private sphere" as well as morality into the public spheres of the state and the economy (1994, 217). In comparison, many organizations within the American Religious Right continued to "oppose any public legitimation of gays and lesbians" and "condemn any national, state, or local laws that prohibit discrimination against gays and lesbians in housing and employment" (Wilcox 2000, 121). Third, in their arguments to protect traditional conceptions of marriage and family, EFC leaders rarely used specifically religious language in their interventions, with at least two exceptions: they based their conception of marriage on Genesis 1 and 2 (EFC 1996c); and they insisted that marriage mirrors "the intimate relationship which God desires to have with His people" (2000d, 3). Some activists in the American Religious Right adopted a similar strategy when they employed the secularized discourse of rights in their portrayal of gays and

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<sup>282</sup> On June 9, 1999, Parliament passed a motion defining marriage in heterosexual terms for the first time.



lesbians as undeserving of minority rights (Herman 1996). These three trends continued in EFC arguments against same-sex marriage, which, from the evangelical point of view, fulfilled the “slippery slope” argument that the expansion of spousal benefits to include same-sex couples would be the first step towards the redefinition of marriage.

## 6.2 The same-sex marriage debate

Shortly after the *M v. H* ruling and the resulting federal legislation expanding spousal benefits, those involved in the struggle to gain equality rights for non-heterosexual couples perceived a “lack of political will to enact legislation reform” and decided to launch a series of Charter challenges against the heterosexual definition of marriage (MacEachern and Knapp 2004, 3-4). Beginning in 2000, three gay couples applied for marriage licenses in BC (*Egale Canada Inc. v. Canada [AG]*), Quebec (*Hendricks c. Québec*), and Ontario (*Halpern v. Canada [AG]*). The first court to rule in their favour and find the heterosexual definition of marriage unconstitutional was the Ontario Divisional Court.<sup>283</sup> The EFC participated in all three of these cases: as a member of the Interfaith Coalition for Marriage (IFCM), alternatively known as the Interfaith Coalition for Marriage and Family (ICMF), in the *Egale* and *Halpern* cases<sup>284</sup> and with The Catholic Civil Rights League in the appeal of *Hendricks* to Québec’s Court of Appeal. As one factum explained, same-sex marriage was not a peripheral issue for the Coalition members because it violated the “foundational anthropology of the person” as posited by some faith traditions (IFCM 2002, ¶10). Furthermore, the Coalition insisted that cultural changes permeate religious as well as secular communities, impacting “the identity and practices of religious communities” (ICMF 2003, 11).<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> *Halpern v. Canada (Attorney General)* (2002), 95 C.R.R. (2d) 1. See “Synopsis of *Halpern et al v. Attorney General of Canada et al.*,” online at <http://www.ontariocourts.on.ca/decisions/2003/june/halpernsynopsis.htm>. The BC case is referenced as *EGALE Canada Inc. v. Canada (Attorney General)* (2001), 88 C.R.R. (2d) 322, 2001 BCSC 1365; and *EGALE Canada Inc. v. Canada (Attorney General)* (2003), 38 R.F.L. (5th) 32, 2003 BCCA 251, while the Quebec case is referenced as 36 R.F.L. (5th) 127; and *Hendricks v. Québec (Procureur général)*, [2002] R.J.Q. 2506.

<sup>284</sup> The Coalition partners varied with each case. Coalition members in the BC case at the Supreme Court included the Archdiocese of Vancouver, BC Council of Sikhs, BC Muslim Association, the EFC, Islamic Society of North America, Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ontario Council of Sikhs, and The Catholic Civil Rights League. According to Pamela Dickey Young, the EFC was one of the key members in the various Interfaith Coalitions (2006, 21n3). The willingness of EFC leaders to work with a variety of faith groups to achieve a common goal reflected Stiller’s distrust of sectarianism.

<sup>285</sup> Intervening in the legal cases about the redefinition of marriage cost the EFC over \$250,000. Affiliate fees covered less than 10 percent of this cost (*Faith Today* 2005a, 15). The Australian Evangelical Alliance used

The three Coalition factums were similar to each other. For instance, in each case the Coalition argued that the world's major religions interpret marriage as between one woman and one man.<sup>286</sup> They specifically focused on the Roman Catholic, Protestant evangelical, Islamic, and Jewish conceptions of marriage. Three other common arguments included the belief that the same-sex marriage issue was one of social policy rather than human rights, that pluralism provided political and civil space for dissent, and that the expansion of marriage to include same-sex couples threatened religious freedom. We look at each of these arguments in turn.

### **6.2.1 Marriage as a social policy issue**

In all of their arguments against same-sex marriage, EFC leaders argued that heterosexual marriage focused on children while same-sex marriage focused on the adults in the relationship. The implication was that homosexual relationships provided a less desirable environment for children. As the EFC noted on its website:

The interest of the state is for children and should not have as its primary interest, the romantic relationships of adults. Same-sex marriage really means accepting that marriage is intended primarily for the benefit of adults, and children are given only a second consideration. This viewpoint undermines the preservation of the state, because our society's survival is dependent on our children who will form the next generation. We already know that the institutional, historical and universal view of marriage provides the best environment in which to raise our children. (n.d.e)

This statement reflected the EFC's interpretation of the same-sex marriage issue as a social rather than a rights issue. It was indicative of the fear of EFC leaders that the expansion of the terms "spouse," "marriage," and "family" would result in less legislation that supported "stable families and acknowledge their important contribution to the common good" (Harvey 2000, 29). In other words, they thought that same-sex marriage would jeopardize the special status that heterosexual marriage had in the law. Social policy that treated heterosexual marriage differently than other types of relationships was not discriminatory, they argued, because the distinction was based on the unique

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materials produced by the EFC in its support of heterosexual marriage. Australian political leaders chose to continue defining marriage as a heterosexual union (15).

<sup>286</sup> However, the factums did not fully acknowledge the internal divisions that existed among adherents of the world's largest faith traditions with regard to same-sex unions. For example, the factums described "The Roman Catholic Conception of Marriage" without recognizing the internal diversity among Catholics. In the Coalition's defence, opposition to same-sex marriage was and remains the position of the Vatican.

procreational aspect of marriage and family. Even though same-sex couples were able to use a variety of reproductive technologies to have children, the begetting of children still required a male and a female.<sup>287</sup> Of particular importance to EFC leaders was the fact that no jurisprudence outside Canada had found the heterosexual nature of marriage to be in violation of a group's human rights. Where same-sex marriage was recognized – at the time in Belgium and the Netherlands – the decision was made on the basis of politics, not rights. They pointed out that in countries that recognized domestic partnerships, heterosexual marriage continued to be treated distinctively as domestic partnerships did not receive all of the benefits given to married heterosexual couples (EFC 2003b, 10).

The EFC's link between marriage and procreation comes from Roman Catholic thought and is not without its difficulties for Protestants. The Catholic Church hierarchy conflates sexual intercourse, marriage, and reproduction, viewing all three as complementary and part of the natural law. In contrast, while Protestants also view sexual intercourse as limited to marriage, they do not require that it be for the purpose of reproduction. Hence they permit the use of artificial birth control and even *in vitro* reproduction. However, these differences were subsumed to allow Catholics and Protestants to join forces to protect the traditional family.

Given that EFC leaders deemed same-sex marriage to be an issue of social policy and not human rights, they urged the courts to defer to Parliament to create social policy. As Doug Cryer, the EFC's former social policy director, explained, courts examine particular cases "rather than considering the broader social ramifications, which is something governments have the ability to do" (*Faith Today* 2007, 15). Similarly the Interfaith Coalition insisted that changing the definition of marriage as found in the common law was "a matter of judgment informed by moral and political philosophy, religious insight, anthropology, sociology, and many other disciplines." Since judges had "no special insight into these matters" they should not change the common law (ICMF 2003, 14). The coalition sought legislative deference in *Egale* because the case involved colliding rights (IFCM 2002, ¶45) and because the coalition believed that significant social change requires "incremental legislative

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<sup>287</sup> The courts rejected these arguments because opposite-sex partners were able to marry but same-sex ones were not. In response to the emphasis of procreation in heterosexual marriage, the courts stated that same-sex couples also have children and that marriage has more purposes than that of procreation (MacEachern and Knapp 2004, 5).

initiatives” (¶48), not judicial fiat.<sup>288</sup> Yet at the same time the Coalition argued in *Halpern* that since marriage predated the state, the state had little jurisdiction to change it (¶2-4).

In their various publications the EFC and its Coalition partners separated the extension of spousal benefits from homosexual marriage. They did not contest the expansion of benefits but stated that such expansion did not require the redefinition of marriage (ICMF 2003, 1-2; EFC 2003b, 13). However, they did not identify how the social impacts of homosexual marriage differed from those derived from the expansion of benefits.

### 6.2.2 The pluralism argument

In *Halpern* the Coalition argued that if the Court changed the definition of marriage, it “would, in effect, be stating what beliefs should operate in the public sphere on a matter of fundamental importance where the claims of one group involve widespread philosophical rejection of the very social foundations upheld by other groups” (IFCM 2002, ¶55). Essentially, what was at stake, the Coalition claimed, was whether tolerance and pluralism actually existed in Canada, as “freedom requires a respect for diverse beliefs” (¶60). Instead of judicial fiat, the coalition advocated for the allowance of disagreement over the issue and the recognition that such disagreement was an expression of pluralism protected by the Charter. If the Court ruled against the freedom of disagreement, then the coalition asked for guaranteed exemptions for religion and conscience (ICMF 2003, 26; 2002, ¶59).

Despite the Coalition’s dedication to heterosexual marriage, it acknowledged that same-sex couples’ rights were violated when their unions were not institutionally recognized in some manner (ICMF 2003, 16). Elsewhere the EFC argued that if inequality existed between same-sex unions and heterosexual marriage, the government must address the existent inequality, not eliminate difference. For example, it argued that “inequality on the basis of sex or race is not addressed by redefining sex or race to eliminate difference, but by treating different sexes and different races equally” (2003b, 13). The EFC further argued that definitions by their nature make distinctions in order to preserve the essence of the thing being defined. According to its leaders, tolerance and pluralism are eroded when differences and distinctions are legislated away (2003b, 13-14).

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<sup>288</sup> The EFC and its Coalition partners note that the Supreme Court has ruled that changes to the common law are to be incremental and that changes with significant legal implications are to be made by Parliament (ICMF 2003, 13).

### 6.2.3 Same-sex marriage as a threat to religious freedom

The Coalitions linked the argument that pluralism created considerable space for dissent and opposing viewpoints with the belief that religious freedom was threatened by same-sex marriage. In *Egale*, the Coalition argued that the use of such terms as “heterosexism” or “homophobia” was an attempt “to turn the respectful disagreement with homosexual conduct into an ‘ism’ akin to racism.” For the Coalition members, such stereotyping “stigmatizes religious traditions, threatens those who oppose [gay marriage] and fractures civil discourse” (IFCM 2002, ¶10).

At the same time, the Coalition argued that the religious freedom of the liberal Jewish Rabbis who supported the appellants was not limited by the heterosexual definition of marriage, as the Rabbis were free to solemnize same-sex relationships as marriages. As its factum stated, “there is no coercion to follow the religious beliefs of the majority” (IFCM 2002, ¶37). Drawing from the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Adler* (1996), the Coalition argued “that the failure of the state to legislate support for particular religious practices did not violate those beliefs” (¶40). Its *Halpern* factum reminded the Court that at issue was “the demand for social recognition ... a demand from those who do not accept same-sex relationships as marriages” (ICMF 2003, 18). For Coalition members, then, the case was not about making unconstitutional legislation more constitutional or aligning common law with Charter rights. Instead, it was about social recognition and “complete legislative prescription.” It was about social policy and determining what beliefs may operate in the public sphere (ICMF 2002, ¶55). Consequently, the Coalition factums urged the Court to interpret any calls for changes to social policy within the context of other Charter rights and freedoms, such as multiculturalism and religious freedom (¶46 and ICMF 2003, 19). As there were competing rights, any changes were the responsibility of the legislatures, not the courts. Furthermore, it was not discriminatory for a legislature to distinguish between different types of relationships in order to support social stability.

As these cases appeared before the courts, the Liberal government created a committee to hold hearings across the country and consider the different options available to address the rulings of the lower courts with regard to same-sex marriage. Given this legislative process, the Coalition in *Halpern* argued that a redefinition of marriage was not necessary. When the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled in 2003 to redefine marriage to include homosexual couples effective immediately, the legislative committee advised the federal government to abandon its appeals of all three cases. According to Clemenger, the committee was divided on the recommendation with the Chair breaking the tie vote “prior to the arrival of a Committee member known to oppose the redefinition of

marriage. The Committee remained deeply divided and no official report was forthcoming” (2006i). It was at this time that Clemenger assumed the EFC presidency. He spent much of his time during his first year addressing the federal government’s draft legislation that redefined marriage as “the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others” (Department of Justice 2004).

The federal government sent its draft legislation and three reference questions to the Supreme Court to ensure the constitutionality of the proposed legislation.<sup>289</sup> Yet the Interfaith Coalition continued its interventions in the courts, attempting to appeal the *Halpern* decision to the Supreme Court and the *Hendricks* case to the Quebec Court of Appeal. The federal government, the *Halpern* appellants, and the Metropolitan Community Church moved to quash the first appeal, which the Supreme Court did, citing that concerned parties could present their arguments during the hearing on the reference questions. In a letter to the Justice Minister, Epp Buckingham stated that the Coalition wanted to appeal the decision because the reference questions did not ask whether heterosexual marriage violated the equality section of the Charter, or whether there were options other than redefining marriage that would satisfy Charter equality rights (2003). Subsequently the Justice Minister added a fourth reference question that asked the Supreme Court whether heterosexual marriage violated Charter principles. The Quebec Court of Appeal refused to hear the *Hendricks* case for similar reasons as those cited by the Supreme Court in its refusal to hear the *Halpern* appeal; namely, that the federal government had already submitted reference questions to the Supreme Court.<sup>290</sup>

The Interfaith Coalition intervened in the Supreme Court’s deliberations about the reference questions.<sup>291</sup> Its factum focused on the lack of protection the proposed legislation offered religious institutions and clergy (question 3) and insisted that the Charter did not require a redefinition of marriage (question 4). The issues raised with regard to question 4 were similar to those raised by the Coalition in the *Egale* and *Halpern* cases: that equality must be considered in light of their contexts, including the religious context, and that marriage predates the law. Unlike the term “spouse,” legislation does not create or define “marriage.” The Coalition argued that the government’s

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<sup>289</sup> The three questions asked whether Parliament had the authority to define marriage, whether the expansion of marriage to include same-sex relationships was consistent with Charter principles, and whether the protection of religious freedom guaranteed in the Charter protected religious officials from being forced to perform same-sex marriages if they consider such marriage to be contrary to their religious beliefs (Department of Justice 2004).

<sup>290</sup> To view the EFC’s press release on the matter, see <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/Page.aspx?pid=1018> (accessed February 21, 2011).

recognition of the institution of marriage as heterosexual was not discriminatory as the government had a mandate to “promote social stability” and that heterosexual marriage contributes to social stability. The discriminatory element, the Coalition conceded, was the omission of recognizing non-heterosexual relationships. It urged the courts to employ another remedy rather than redefining marriage (ICMF 2004). In addition, the Coalition pointed out to the Court that support for same-sex marriage was being used as a litmus test for participation in public life (§33).

In an effort to protect religious freedom, the legislation included a clause stating: “Nothing in this Act affects the freedom of officials of religious groups to refuse to perform marriages that are not in accordance with their religious beliefs.” However, the Coalition found such protection hollow because the solemnization of marriage is within provincial jurisdiction and therefore only provinces are able to provide real protection. Moreover, it argued, the legislation did not protect lay persons, provincial marriage commissioners, and the charitable status of organizations committed to heterosexual marriage (ICMF 2004, ¶27-31).

Two months after hearing the arguments about the reference questions the Supreme Court released its decision in December 2004,<sup>292</sup> ruling that the federal government had the exclusive jurisdiction to define marriage, that the proposed legislation concurred with the Charter, and that religious officials cannot be forced to perform same-sex marriages if doing so violates their beliefs (see also Clemenger 2005i). However, the Court did not rule on the fourth question about whether the Charter required a change as the federal government had already abandoned its legal appeals to keep the heterosexual definition and drafted new legislation.

The Supreme Court ruling paved the way for the government to table Bill C-38, *The Civil Marriage Act*, which defined marriage as the exclusive union of two people. In the subsequent debate, EFC leaders called on the provinces to safeguard religious freedom (Epp Buckingham 2005b, 3). Given that the Court did not rule on the question of whether the government had to redefine marriage, the EFC stated that the federal government’s argument “that the *Charter* requires the redefinition of marriage uses the *Charter* as a sword to refashion society rather than as the shield it was intended to be to protect society from unwarranted government intrusion” (2005, 5, italics in original). In the EFC’s submission to the legislative committee studying the Bill, Epp Buckingham argued that

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<sup>291</sup> In this case the Coalition consisted of the Islamic Society of North America, the Catholic Civil Rights League, and the EFC.

“equality allows separate treatment. What it prohibits is treatment that is unequal. If gays and lesbians have equal benefit of the law, it meets the requirements of the *Charter*. The *Charter* was enacted to support human rights in Canada, not social engineering” (EFC 2005, 5, italics in original). In addition, she called on the federal government to study the social implications of redefining marriage before changing legislation (6).

Despite its opposition to Bill C-38, the EFC worked with a number of MPs from the different political parties to support a number of amendments that would protect religious freedom, three of which the House of Commons adopted in its final version of the Bill. As a result, the preamble to the final version of the Bill included a clause stating that those who maintain the heterosexual definition of religion do not operate against the “public interest.” The second amendment promised that no one can be denied benefits or suffer burdens because they oppose same-sex marriage<sup>293</sup> while the third amendment protected charitable organizations from having their charitable status challenged if they oppose same-sex marriage (Epp Buckingham 2005c, 3). Bill C-38 passed the House on June 28, 2005 and the Senate shortly thereafter. At that time Canada joined the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain as the only four countries recognizing same-sex marriage.

In their response to the legalization of homosexual marriage, EFC leaders promised to continue seeking the protection of religious freedom and to work to reinstate a heterosexual definition of marriage (*Canada Watch* 2005, 2). They worried that those who serve the marriage industry, such as photographers, florists, and facility owners, and oppose same-sex marriage may face legal challenges (*Faith Today* 2005b, 15). Consequently, they worked with the Ontario provincial government to amend that province’s legislation in order to protect the religious freedom of clergy and they anticipated developing a strategy to help evangelicals discuss with their local school board how same-sex relationships would be taught in public schools. Clemenger assessed the passage of Bill C-38 as “symbolic of an ongoing shift in Canadian’s understanding of the place and role of the church and, more generally, of religion in Canada” (2005i). While he did not clarify the statement, the marginalization evangelicals felt during the same-sex marriage debate suggested that Clemenger believed the Bill was another indication that the church and religion were increasingly being prevented from participating in public life and public discourse. He then discussed how the Bill

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<sup>292</sup> *Reference re Same-Sex Marriage*, 2004 SCC 79, December 9, 2004. Available online at <http://scc.lexum.org/en/2004/2004scc79/2004scc79.html> (accessed March 9, 2011).

<sup>293</sup> This amendment originated with David Brown, a lawyer who had previously argued a number of court cases for the EFC (Clemenger 2005i).



provided “an opportunity to consider yet again how it is we wish to be present and engage in a society that is increasingly constructivist in its understanding of the meaning and value of life, and in the nature of institutions” (2005i).

Those opposed to same-sex marriage made one more attempt to influence the law. After the 2006 election of the Conservative Party as a minority government, Prime Minister Harper asked Parliament whether it should re-open the issue. In preparation for the December 7, 2006 vote, the EFC brought together various religious leaders who issued a “Declaration on marriage” that reaffirmed the heterosexual nature of marriage and its connection to procreation. The Declaration linked heterosexual marriage with the common good rather than individual rights and pressed the need for religious communities to have the public space needed to present and live by their beliefs. Over 50 leaders signed the Declaration, ranging from the EFC and various evangelical denominations to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, a variety of Orthodox denominations and Islamic Councils.<sup>294</sup> However, Parliament rejected the motion to re-open the debate by a vote of 175 to 123, with 12 Conservative MPs voting against the motion and 13 Liberals supporting it (CBC News 2006).

Such collaboration with a variety of socially conservative religious groups occurred throughout the EFC’s political and legal interventions to oppose same-sex marriage. As with the EFC, many of these religious organizations worried about the impact of same-sex marriage on their religious freedom and the family. Some of these religious leaders viewed a court case that saw the courts grant a child three parents to be an indication of how the new definition of marriage would influence the nature and structure of families.

#### **6.2.4 Social issues arising from the redefinition of marriage**

Throughout the marriage debate EFC leaders argued that changing the definition of marriage and separating it from procreation would make it difficult for Parliament and the courts to prohibit other forms of domestic relationships, such as polygamy (EFC 2003b, 14). Although a judge in British Columbia dismissed the case against a polygamous sect in that province on a technicality before it reached the courts, EFC leaders intervened in another case that troubled them as much as polygamy. The co-called *Three Parents* case (2007)<sup>295</sup> asked how many parents a child may have. In the case

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<sup>294</sup> The Declaration is available on the EFC’s website at [http://files.efc-canada.net/si/Marriage%20and%20Family/DoM\\_English\\_Legal\\_Dec11.pdf](http://files.efc-canada.net/si/Marriage%20and%20Family/DoM_English_Legal_Dec11.pdf) (accessed July 16, 2010).

<sup>295</sup> *A.A. v. B.B.*, 2007 ONCA 2 (CanLII). Available online at <http://www.canlii.org/en/on/onca/doc/2007/>

two lesbians decided to have a child, and with the aid of a male friend one of them became pregnant via artificial insemination. Upon the birth of the child, the lesbian partner of the biological mother applied to have her name on the child's birth certificate as a third parent. By not adopting the child, the lesbian partner ensured that the child's father would remain on the birth certificate. When the case reached the Court of Appeal in Ontario, the EFC intervened via the Alliance for Marriage and Family (AMF) and supported the *Children's Law Reform Act's* understanding of a child as having only two parents – one father and one mother – based on biological origins. The Alliance factum raised the spectre of a person seeking to be declared a child's parent against the wishes of the biological parents (AMF 2006, ¶102-3). It rejected the claim that the law was discriminatory because it reserved the term of “mother” for a child's biological mother. Instead, the Alliance pointed out that the law did not prevent any woman from having or adopting a child (¶125-132, 149). In 2007 the Court of Appeal granted the lesbian partner the right to be the child's second mother although it did not allow the case to be a Charter challenge. The EFC's Doug Cryer criticized the government for developing social policy in a piecemeal fashion and leaving the difficult decisions for the courts to decide (*Faith Today* 2007, 15). The Alliance attempted to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court but the Court refused to grant an appeal because the Alliance was an intervener rather than a party in the case at the Court of Appeal.

The decision in the *Three Parents* case, coupled with the expansion of marriage to include same-sex couples indicated that the EFC's interventions to protect the traditional structures of marriage and the family were by and large unsuccessful, despite having secured the three amendments to Bill C-38. Throughout their interventions EFC leaders attempted to distinguish themselves from religious participants who were more confrontational and used religious rhetoric to create divisions among the populace. They did not, for example, follow James Dobson of Focus on the Family who compared the battle against same-sex marriage to D-Day (Crowley 2004). Instead, they recognized that same-sex unions required some type of recognition and protection but argued that if Parliament wished to recognize other partnerships when distributing benefits, it should do so on the basis of dependency, not sexual intimacy (EFC 2003b, 16).

Yet a type of culture war nevertheless existed as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered individuals and communities often experienced religion and religious scriptures as harmful. As EGALE argued in a legal factum, Christian doctrine undergirds numerous aspects of Canadian

society and such doctrine is often used to legitimize homophobia. It described the Bible verses often quoted by supporters of heterosexual marriage as heterosexist and intolerant and found the description of homosexuality as a sin to be dehumanizing (EGALE 2005 ¶19, 43-44). During the marriage debate, then, there was a fundamental difference between how proponents of homosexual equality rights and the EFC viewed the family, sexuality, and society. As a result, religion became a contentious issue.

The issue facing EFC leaders after the legalization of same-sex marriage was how to sustain the momentum of evangelical political engagement and avoid the scenario that occurred in the aftermath of the abortion debate when evangelical political engagement dissipated and many evangelicals once again abandoned the public sphere. As Jonathan Malloy told a reporter of the *New York Times* after the marriage debate, evangelicals developed “a base here but they need something to organize and keep the funds going.” The reporter noted that while evangelical leaders recognized that the single issue of same-sex marriage was insufficient to sustain the movement, they disagreed on how to build on the momentum in order to address other socially conservative issues such as polygamy and euthanasia (Mason 2006). One factor sustaining the momentum was the evangelical concern about religious freedom with respect to marriage commissioners and those involved in the marriage industry.

To assist the continued political engagement of evangelicals, Clemenger defined “success” in a manner that did not require positive legal and political results. After the legalization of same-sex marriage, he noted that “success” meant being faithful rather than winning (2005e, 14). “Our task,” he wrote, “is to bear witness to the truth and, in this instance, about the nature and purpose of marriage” (2005f, 14). However, there is a significant tension in Clemenger’s statements. Given the liberal nature of Canadian society, participation in the public sphere often requires a certain type of political subject that communicates in an “a-religious” manner. Explicitly Christian arguments must be made palatable to the liberal public, meaning that they are to some degree rinsed of their religious language. This process of rinsing can be the opposite of being faithful and bearing witness. The following section examines the degree to which the EFC was able to retain its evangelical identity during its engagement with the issues surrounding sexual orientation.

### 6.3 The impact of liberalism on the EFC's religious-political subject

The same-sex marriage issue brought together various evangelical factions, from those who organized noisy public rallies to those who presented moderate arguments in the courts. Evangelicals could cooperate on the issue on a scale rarely seen before because the vast majority of them opposed same-sex marriage. During the debate they ignored other Protestant (or those few evangelical) voices in favour of homosexual equality rights and same-sex marriage.<sup>296</sup> Beyond the issue of marriage, however, evangelical opinion remained fractured on other subjects such as poverty, the environment, anti-discrimination laws, and multiculturalism (Malloy 2009b, 11). Nevertheless, for a moment in time Canadian evangelicals banded together with Roman Catholics and some other religious groups to defend heterosexual marriage. It was a moment when Canadians became more aware of the extent to which sexual morality informs evangelical identity.

Writing in 2000, John Simpson observed that Canadian Protestant sectarian leaders were more reserved than their American counterparts in their disapproval of the somatic culture that emphasizes the body and body politics. He contended that Canadian Protestant sectarian leaders viewed “individual responsibility and personal purity” as private affairs (275). However, the muted Canadian sectarian response to the somatic culture that Simpson observed changed with the same-sex marriage debate. Although issues of marriage and family have always been politicized, the issue of same-sex marriage sparked an especially contentious debate because heterosexuality was socially hegemonic, which meant that the political and legal validation of homosexuality unsettled existing social structures.<sup>297</sup>

In accordance with Simpson's observation, the EFC generally conceptualized the family as private and therefore sought to have less rather than more state interference in family-related issues.<sup>298</sup> It was the perceived intrusion of the state into the family that prompted evangelicals, in many cases via the EFC, to participate in the public sphere in order to protect their traditional life-world. According to Casanova, this type of deprivatization may be justified in modern societies because it does not dispute

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<sup>296</sup> The Prairie Centre for Ecumenism made this observation. Its critique is available online at <http://ecumenism.net/news/marriage.htm> (accessed June 10, 2009).

<sup>297</sup> And hegemonic understandings of social relations are generally sites of struggle (Brodie, Gavigan, Jenson 1992, 7).

<sup>298</sup> However, evangelicals have often moved the family into the public arena, as evidenced in the temperance and anti-smoking movements. For more on the role of religious women and the anti-tobacco campaign, see Sharon Cook's “Evangelical moral reform: Women and the war against tobacco, 1874-1900” in *Religion and Public Life in Canada*, ed. Marguerite Van Die (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) 177-95.

the modern principles of privacy and the freedom of conscience (1994, 57) while questioning the “‘limits’ of the liberal political and social order” (58). The EFC indeed questioned the limits of liberalism when it contested state incursions in the family. At the height of the gay marriage debate, Epp Buckingham expressed frustration over the scope of the Supreme Court’s reach into daily life. She wrote that “nothing is beyond the purview of the courts. They can decide how you parent and the meaning of your marriage. And they have agendas. And they impose them” (2004b). Her apprehensions about the Court were similar to Asad’s concern over the power of the state to intervene in every aspect of life.

Yet for Asad, families have power and therefore they draw the attention of the state. As he observes, “the *experience* of religion in the ‘private’ spaces of home and school is crucial to the formation of subjects who will eventually endorse a particular public culture” (1999, 181, italics in original). Families are political, Asad contends, because experiences in the home contribute to the type of citizen one becomes and how one responds to religion in general and to those who hold different religious convictions than one’s own.<sup>299</sup>

Despite the general desire of EFC leaders to keep the state out of the private lives of families, their interactions in the various debates about same-sex relationships contributed to the politicization of the family. To engage the public debates over the nature and scope of family, they had to move the family into the public arena. They did so by focusing on the social policy aspects of same-sex relationships, particularly as they impacted children. This move was similar to the one taken by the American Religious Right when it developed its “family values” campaign. According to Jelen, the focus of the Religious Right on family values was “an attempt to provide a rationale for restricting the self-regarding behavior of autonomous adults, by pointing out the consequences of such behaviour for people (children) who are presumed incapable of engaging in moral reasoning” (Jelen 1999, 349). Although the term “family values” has not been politicized to the same extent in Canada, Jelen’s point is relevant to the Canadian context as the EFC’s emphasis on the consequences of behaviour on children assisted the process of moving the family into the public sphere.

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<sup>299</sup> Craig Martin offers a similar argument, claiming that families, religious communities, and other so-called private institutions in liberal democracies are part of a “circulation of power” because they socialize their members into particular conceptions of the world and produce both “conditions of persuasions” and types of discourse (2010, 8). For Martin, then, the privatization of religion and the liberal principle of the freedom of religion mask the power of private institutions to impact public policy (30-31).

The EFC then had to develop a strategy of participation. It is important to remember the context in which the EFC viewed the legal system. As Hoover and Den Dulk discovered in their research of conservative Christian litigation, evangelical groups understood the judiciary as liberal and generally supportive of progressive social policy. From their informants Hoover and Den Dulk learned that “a group’s perception of judicial ideology influenced *how* they wrote their briefs, not *whether* their groups got involved” (2004, 18, italics in original). In order to participate in the public arena, then, EFC leaders needed to craft arguments that would resonate with liberal judges and other liberal associations involved in the debate. In this manner they created a religious-political subject who was constrained by the assumptions and language used in the public sphere. Given that the language of the public sphere is generally liberal and secular, the religious element of the political subject had to be dampened. This dampening was reinforced by the political strategies adopted by the EFC during the debate. Participating in ecumenical or inter-faith coalitions allowed EFC leaders to de-emphasize differences while enabling cooperation and a certain amount of influence. Focusing on the impact of social policy on children meant that they could avoid identifying specific sexual behaviours as immoral or contra religious norms.

As a result of de-emphasizing specific religious beliefs, many of the EFC’s arguments were not distinctly religious or evangelical. When the EFC did address religion, it was often in terms of grounding marriage and the family on the creation account in Genesis and outlining the heterosexual nature of marriage as found in the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths. As a result, many religious briefs were not readily discernible from the arguments of other secular participants in the debate, most notably, the federal government.

For instance, one of the earliest legal cases involving same-sex rights in which the EFC participated was *Mossop* (1993), the case that originated with an employee of the federal government was not permitted time off to attend the funeral of the father of his gay partner. The EFC was part of a coalition that included Focus on the Family (Canada), the Salvation Army, REAL Women, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.<sup>300</sup> In her analysis of the coalition’s factum, Didi Herman expressed surprise at the “paucity of argument and contribution to debate” by the coalition despite its members’ expertise and knowledge on the subject (1994, 114). She concluded that,

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<sup>300</sup> Herman acknowledged that the Salvation Army, Focus, and REAL Women were the leaders of the coalition.

legal precedent has replaced God's word as Truth, the dictionary supplanting the authority of the Scriptures. What the coalition had to offer was their Christianity, their world-view as to the imminent and serious threat posed by the conspiracy to further the 'homosexual agenda.' Instead, the legal process appears to have subverted these beliefs, rendering them invisible. (114)

Herman was interested in "the specific ways in which legal discourse compels the adoption of a particular pragmatic politics (liberal legalism)" (115). When asked about this "process of legalization," leaders of Focus on the Family (Canada), the Salvation Army, and REAL Women all replied that in an "anti-Christian" society such as Canada, religious groups cannot use religious sources and remain publicly credible (115).<sup>301</sup> Herman concluded that although these Christians employed publicly credible language and were forced to accept the public support for homosexual rights, they continued to believe that homosexuality was sinful but chose not to include such beliefs in their public literature (118). Instead, they focused on child welfare and family principles (126). Herman's observations raise the question of whether the EFC and its fellow Coalition members contributed a uniquely religious position to the debate. As Herman noted, the coalition's factum in *Mossop* was similar to the one filed by the Attorney General (115).

The *Mossop* case was one of the earlier post-Charter cases in which the EFC intervened and therefore it was a learning experience. However, over twenty years later, Pamela Dickey Young observed the same lack of theological statements in the arguments of conservative Christian churches and associations opposed to same-sex marriage. Young's study included the EFC. She concluded that although churches and religious organizations had theological views about homosexuality (that it is a sin), they recognized that theological arguments were not persuasive in the public square (2006, 19-20). In this manner politically engaged religious subjects dampened the expression of their beliefs in order to produce rational arguments accessible to all within the public square.

The lack of theological statements in its public arguments is consistent with the EFC's desire to be politically engaged and "at the table." Yet when EFC leaders are at the table they must engage with the liberal arguments posed by other groups involved in the debate. While EFC leaders argued against the existence of a so-called secular, or non-sectarian, public discourse free from comprehensive

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<sup>301</sup> John Biles and Humera Ibrahim tell the story of a researcher attending a conference on religion who identified "Canada as a 'post-Christian country.'" The audience expressed surprise at the statement and one attendee noted that "only a Christian" was able to make such a comment (2005a, 167).

beliefs, they nevertheless participated in such discourse, thereby accommodating “the world” in its arguments.

The degree to which the EFC accommodated “the world” can be seen in its acceptance of some homosexual equality rights. It dropped the argument that homosexuals were not discriminated against in Canadian society and increasingly differentiated between the conceptions of spouse and marriage, defaulting to the government’s authority to define the former. By the time the Liberals introduced legislation to redefine marriage EFC leaders acknowledged that same sex relationships required some type of legal recognition. Such changes shifts suggest that over time EFC leaders moved towards the societal consensus and identified the omission of legal recognition of same-sex relationships as discriminatory.

Engaging with and using liberal arguments is consistent with what McClay calls negative secularism. For adherents of this type of secularism, the state is not anti-religious and “the secular idiom is merely a provisional lingua franca that serves to facilitate commerce among different kinds of belief” (2000, 63). The state protects religion and recognizes, if not enables, religious pluralism. In its arguments the EFC reflected this type of secularism, which accords well with the liberal state and liberal democratic values such as the freedoms of association, expression, and conscience as well as political equality. Therefore the media portrayal of the EFC’s political and legal interventions in favour of heterosexual marriage as un-Canadian was incorrect. Instead, the organization was eminently Canadian in its adoption of liberal conceptions of the state and many individual freedoms. The area in which it did not conform to Canadian liberal values was the manner in which its leaders rejected individual autonomy in favour of some limits on human behaviour when they deemed the behaviour negatively impacted children.

It is important to keep in mind that the EFC’s use of liberal arguments in a liberally-minded society does not suggest increasing secularization. As Veit Bader notes, when religious associations prioritize liberal democracy “over denominational truths when it comes to political decision-making” (2003b, 10), they are not secularizing religion. Instead, they are liberalizing religion and playing by “the rules of the game.” Viewing the acceptance of the rules as evidence of internal secularization, Bader argues, allows religion only two options: to secularize or become sectarian. He rejects the creation of such a binary of choices as an element of secular logic (10-11). Bader also rejects the notion that public reasoning needs to result in agreement. There is significant moral diversity in a society, he maintains, and therefore he focuses on the need for the development of civil and democratic practices



such as explaining positions in a manner that is understandable by a wide range of people, listening to others, being fair-minded, and willing to accommodate others' views while avoiding the elevation of rational arguments as the only acceptable public reasoning (1999, 614, 617). Generally the EFC participated in the manner outlined by Bader. It provided arguments that did not rely on a particular religious tradition and served what it believed to be the common good rather than the narrow interests of a particular group. Furthermore, it did not belittle those who supported homosexual marriage.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I outlined the major arguments EFC leaders employed in their efforts to protect traditional marriage and family. A key element in their definition of marriage revolved around procreation. Heterosexual marriages are unique in their ability to have children, they argued, and thus require public support not given to other types of relationships. In addition, EFC leaders insisted that the freedom of religion should include the right of those opposed to same-sex marriage for religious reasons to publicly state their disagreement without losing public benefits. Most of the arguments were not specifically religious, suggesting that the type of religious-political subject created by the EFC subsumed religious identity to liberal reasoning and public engagement.

At the same time, however, Asad's concern that politically engaged, or deprivatized, religion has few alternatives but to emulate the same strategies, methods, and reasoning as secular associations is troubling for religious organizations as these strategies and methods subsume religious identity to political engagement. To combat this power of modern secular liberalism, Asad suggests that religion "may *have* to disrupt" pre-existing assumptions that structure public debates (2003, 185, italics in original) by creating new discursive spaces that allow for different types of knowledge, desire, and action. To date there is little evidence of such creations within the work of the EFC.

## Conclusion

The EFC is asking some difficult questions, such as how Canadians might live together across their religious differences, the nature of shared societal norms, the limitations of both liberalism and the modern state, and how religions may participate in the public sphere. These questions are relevant in modern societies grappling with increasing religious diversity. For their part, EFC leaders reject the secular liberal desire to privatize and depoliticize religion and contest liberal theories of public dialogue that require people to abstract themselves from their religious particularities when entering the public sphere and engaging in public debates. They interpret secularism as a religious perspective in that it is a comprehensive doctrine that helps people interpret the world around them. This conception enables them to argue that secular broadcasting and education can never be religiously neutral and to argue for institutional pluralism which, in the case of education, means that the state funds a variety of confessional schools that meet certain standards. However, EFC leaders do not typically critique the economy, the most secular sphere.

EFC leaders are not alone in asking questions about the relationship between religion and the state, as Casanova, Asad, and Bader also raise them. A significant difference between the EFC and these theorists is that the latter note the on-going privileges that Christianity enjoys in the legal and political spheres. The lack of such an acknowledgment means that EFC leaders do not consistently educate the evangelical base about the types of political, legal, political, and economic support some religious minorities might require if they are to truly enjoy religious freedom and fully participate in public life as religious adherents.

When the EFC engages in the public sphere it attempts to be politically moderate and to avoid using religion in a divisive manner. Its leaders recognize that there are significant differences among the population and argue that differences, including religious differences, must be brought into the public sphere and debated. To be sure, those seeking equality rights for gays and lesbians oppose EFC positions about sexuality, feeling that they reflect the ongoing cultural hegemony of Christianity. Yet EFC leaders desire ongoing public dialogues about relevant and important issues. They consistently separate the organization from the more reactionary elements of the evangelical community, such as evangelist Charles McVety. When McVety claimed some responsibility for the Conservatives' attempt to limit public funding for the production of movies that violate conservative sexual mores, the EFC's Don Hutchinson told the *Ottawa Citizen* that neither McVety nor the Canada Christian

College that he leads were members of the EFC (*Ottawa Citizen* 2008). As the previous chapters attempt to demonstrate, the EFC makes contributions to the public sphere. At times they endeavour to move public debates beyond the conservative/liberal dichotomy and introduce new categories into the discussion. For example, during the debate about doctor-assisted suicide, they expanded the discussion to include the importance of hospice and how society values the elderly, ill, and disabled.

## **Revisiting the chapters**

Chapter 1 traced the history of Canadian evangelical political engagement and argued that evangelicals tended to avoid political extremes. In the nineteenth century most English-speaking Protestants shared a common vision of “Christianizing” the country. This Protestant consensus continued after the disestablishment of the Church of England in 1841, as nineteenth century evangelicals converged towards the political centre, with almost all Protestants involved in the Anglican, Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian churches. Gauvreau joins others in suggesting that Canadian evangelical antipathy for polarization and its political moderation contributed to the political ethos of accommodation needed to achieve Confederation (1990, 65, 90-91).

The Protestant consensus came to an end with the emergence of the Social Gospel movement and the fracturing of Protestantism into the theologically and socially liberal mainline denominations and the conservative evangelicals, who came to be known for their moral conservatism. Yet according to Bruce Guenther, the latter group did not flock to the fundamentalism of Aberhart. At the same time, however, they did not develop specifically evangelical conceptions of the state, poverty, or the relationship between church and state. As the state gradually took over more of the social services historically administered by the churches, evangelicals did not protest, perhaps content with the fact that the political and economic institutions in Canada at the time generally advanced Christian values. While evangelicals were concerned about the 1969 legislation that liberalized divorce and access to abortion, they did not mobilize themselves politically, with a few exceptions, such as some Mennonite denominations. Instead, the majority of evangelicals focused on creating new institutions and building the necessary infrastructure to protect their orthodoxy, including such interdenominational organizations as IVCF and the EFC. In sociological terms, evangelicals were becoming denominations and increasingly institutionalized. Their new institutions pulled them to the theological centre as they focused on the commonalities among evangelical denominations rather than doctrinal differences. In addition, their need to raise money also moved them to the “broad middle”

(Stackhouse 1993a, 201-02). In contrast to the American Religious Right, Canadian evangelical leaders did not rally around the call to take back the nation for God nor fight for the continued use of Christian prayers in public schools. They did not reject feminism nor align the organization with a political party. Indeed, research clearly demonstrates that the majority of evangelicals did not support the Reform Party, despite the fears of some commentators that Reform contained a significant element of Christian fundamentalism. However, in 2006 many evangelicals broke with this tradition of political diversity when a significant number of them in English-speaking Canada supported Stephen Harper's Conservatives. The strength of this new alignment remains unclear, although it has survived Harper's refusal to re-visit the issue of abortion and his lack of commitment to re-open the same-sex marriage debate in Parliament.

EFC leaders continued to seek political moderation. As outlined in chapter 2, they helped evangelicals redefine their understanding of the role of Christianity in public life. For example, Stiller taught them that they needed to address contemporary issues and not romanticize the past. He sought to make evangelicalism intelligible to other Canadians by becoming a significant evangelical voice in the public sphere, speaking to the media, interacting with federal Cabinet ministers, and launching a television show that featured evangelicals engaging seriously with issues. He portrayed the EFC as "an *idea*, a *voice*, a *pen*, a *forum* for evangelicals to come together and, in a spirit of cooperation and fellowship ... develop strategies for a more effective national witness" (*Faith Alive* 1983b, 38, italics in original). The desire to be a national witness prompted EFC leaders, including those on the Social Action Commission, to develop reasoned arguments, craft politically astute strategies, and nurture denominational, and eventually inter-faith, cooperation.

The vision for political engagement required the support of the evangelical base. However, prior to the early 1980s, not all evangelicals understood the need for political engagement and there was no broadly affirmed model of engagement. To partially address this need, Stiller created a series of workshops entitled "Understanding our times," "designed to acquaint evangelicals with the trends of the times and to offer direction for Christian involvement in contemporary life" (*Faith Today* 1987c, 40). By interpreting the times and offering strategies of how to become involved, the EFC contributed to the development of a Canadian evangelical identity that assumed political engagement. Over time that identity included legal interventions as Stiller urged evangelicals to overcome their long-standing distrust of the court system. He argued that with advent of the Charter courts were addressing salient issues and becoming an important element in the creation of public policy. Stiller's successor, Gary

Walsh, focused on supporting unity among evangelicals and expanding evangelical partnerships. However the EFC's Ottawa office under the leadership of Bruce Clemenger and the Social Action Commission continued to publish parliamentary submissions, policy and discussion papers, and legal interventions in numerous cases. When Clemenger became the EFC's president in 2003, he continued the legal and political interventions. He called for more public dialogue about how to define such Charter values as tolerance, freedom, justice, and religion and for the expansion of civil society to include more religious groups.

Throughout these political and legal interventions EFC leaders reflected a fairly positive view of government. There are many reasons for this positive view, not least of which is Canadian political culture, which some theorists believe has a "Tory touch" that emphasizes the communal aspect of society and an economically nationalist state. A second explanation may be found in the Kuiperian neo-Calvinism that influenced both Stiller and Clemenger. Brought to Canada by Dutch immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s, Kuiperianism holds a high view of the state in that it has a significant role to play in promoting justice. This role periodically requires the state to intervene in society in order to provide services that other social spheres cannot offer, protect social spheres from incursions by other spheres, and coordinate national strategies.

An important element of the EFC's interpretation of the times was how it politicized secularism, the subject of chapter 3. EFC leaders defined secularism as an anti-religious worldview dedicated to restricting religious voices in the public sphere. This conception of secularism mobilized the evangelical base to engage in politics and support the EFC. Many evangelicals feared that "secular humanism" would devalue human life and a number of rulings by the Supreme Court after the creation of the Charter exacerbated those fears. Between 1985 and 1992 the Court struck down the *Lord's Day Act*, ruled that the restrictions on abortion and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in Ontario's public schools were unconstitutional, and "read in" the protection of sexual orientation into human rights codes. In light of these rulings and the increasing secularization of Canadian society, the EFC defined secularism as a worldview intent on privatizing religion in order to significantly reduce the public voice and influence of religion.

The organization's early descriptions of secularism tended towards dualism, portraying those who were religious and recognized the transcendent as "good" while labelling those who were self-referentially secularist as idolatrous and "bad." However, this dualism was less pronounced in the EFC than among various American Religious Right activists because it was tempered by pluralism.

While Stiller opposed a type of pluralism that sought to privatize religion, he argued for a robust type of pluralism that enabled all groups, including religious ones, to be “at the table” where social policy and other important decisions are made. Such pluralism, he maintained, could be used as a tool against the tyranny of ideological secularism that sought to banish religion to private life. Clemenger refined the distinction by distinguishing between a secular and a secularist state. The former accommodates religious diversity and permits religious groups to advance religious arguments when participating in the public sphere and civil society whereas the latter enforces the privatization of religion and requires all participants in civil society to use neutral arguments rinsed of any specific conception of the good. Yet according to Clemenger even secular states hold or advance their own worldview and therefore cannot be completely “a-religious.” Because religion impacts all of life, EFC leaders insisted that no person or institution can be free of religious commitments. In short, they argued against a type of secularism known as *laïcité*, which zealously seeks to privatize religion. However, it was not against secularism *per se*, as it accommodated “negative” secularism which assumes a secular state and the differentiation of the social spheres.

The struggle against secularism drew many evangelicals into the political sphere, and for some evangelical denominations the EFC was their vehicle of participation. When the EFC intervened in political and legal issues, its leaders generally began their briefs and presentations by identifying the biblical principles that they believed best supported human dignity and flourishing. They insisted that the law was important because it reflected the moral framework of a society and influenced how individuals view issues and problems (EFC 1995, 9). For EFC leaders, then, identifying principles was not an abstract and philosophical activity but an essential aspect of how citizens live and reason together. They proposed biblical principles for three broad areas of social policy.

The first such area was the “life” issues of abortion, euthanasia, and reproductive technologies as outlined in chapter 4. As EFC leaders addressed with these issues they developed a model of political engagement that focused on the *imago Dei* and the common good, was politically pragmatic and ecumenical, and emphasized persuasion rather than imposition. With regard to the latter, Stiller thought that those who resorted to using the law to force people to act in a certain way were co-opted by power and the desire to benefit from the gospel (1989d). In addition, he charged that their legalism lacked grace (1991c, 199). To address the “life” issues of abortion, euthanasia, and reproductive technologies, EFC leaders attempted to craft positions that they believed did not require others to believe in a specific theological doctrine in order to support them.

Chapter five documented the second area: religious freedom, the issue that first brought the organization into the courts. When contesting the privatization of religion, EFC leaders defined religion as comprehensive in scope and therefore applicable to all areas of life. All belief systems that address the meaning of life and the nature of society, they claimed, were religious perspectives or worldviews. As a result, they argued that secularism was not an “a-religious” worldview and educational policy and broadcasting content could never be religiously neutral. In terms of education in Ontario, the EFC did not argue for the continued hegemony of Christianity in public schools but for the inclusion of religion in the curriculum so that students could understand their religiously diverse neighbours and seriously examine their own beliefs and the beliefs of others. In addition, EFC leaders insisted that religion was practiced both individually and corporately as well as privately and publicly. Therefore they called on the state to protect the freedom of expression of religious adherents and their right to practice their faith publicly.

The third area of engagement involved the issues of sexual orientation and the definition of marriage and chapter 6 detailed the manner in which EFC leaders participated in these debates. When the introduction of the Charter led to increased protection against discrimination for gays and lesbians and the eventual expansion of marriage to include same-sex unions, the EFC intervened in a number of cases. Here the EFC posed marriage as religious in nature and social in function. Marriage was ordained by God, they insisted, for the purposes of intimacy, support, and procreation. According to the EFC, since same-sex unions cannot produce a child without the involvement of a third party, they cannot have the same purpose as heterosexual marriage. EFC leaders further insisted that heterosexual marriage serves the interests of children while same-sex marriage serves the interests of the adults involved. Over time they accommodated court rulings and public opinion by acknowledging that homosexuals were in need of protection against discrimination and that the state had an interest in defining the term “spouse.” They remained adamant, however, that since the state did not create marriage, it did not have the right to redefine the institution and further argued that if marriage was deemed to be under-inclusive, it should be expanded to include all economically dependent relationships rather than just those based on conjugality. Another concern was the repercussions of same-sex marriage on the religious freedom of marriage commissioners and others employed in the wedding industry who opposed same-sex marriage on religious grounds but would be forced by their provincial employers or by law to participate in same-sex marriage ceremonies.

Over the years the EFC influenced some pieces of legislation, contributing to various pieces of social policy and legal rulings, such as the Supreme Court's 1993 ruling barring doctor-assisted suicide on the basis that a majority of Canadians supported the sanctity of life. The federal government's legislation prohibiting a variety of reproductive technologies echoed many of the restrictions suggested by the EFC. Indeed, the EFC supported the right of the federal government to impose national restrictions on the use of reproductive technologies against the claim of the Quebec government that the restrictions invaded provincial jurisdiction over health care. When the case reached the Supreme Court of Canada in 2009, the EFC intervened, together with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. In an article written during the hearing, EFC lawyer Don Hutchinson noted that one of the judges asked the lawyers for the Quebec government a number of questions based on issues raised by the EFC in its arguments (2009a).

The various types of EFC interventions documented in chapters 4 through 6 may be evaluated by exploring the degree to which EFC leaders participated in Canadian public life in a manner that was consistent with the modern and liberal valuation of individual conscience and the separation of church and state. Casanova's work is instrumental in this regard as he developed some criteria that enable such evaluation. To investigate the political implications of such political engagement I turn to the work of Asad, who conceives of secularism in different terms than Casanova.

### **The EFC as a public religion and the challenges associated with political engagement**

Casanova argues that religions may participate in modern secular liberal states in a manner that is both viable and desirable as long as they accept the individual right to privacy and the freedom of conscience. These conditions can be met when religions protect the rights and freedoms of all people, insist that the secular spheres are subject to extraneous moral considerations, and defend a traditional life-world from state incursion (1994, 58). As religions enter the public sphere, they provide "counterfactual normative critiques of dominant historical trends" by contesting assumed boundaries between the public and the private and initiate discussion about the type of morality that should govern secular spheres (43). According to Casanova, their involvement in public debates about the common good contribute to the development of civil society (230-31) and their critical engagement with modernity may protect modernity from its own "inflexible, inhuman logic" (234).



In a manner similar to the religions described by Casanova, EFC leaders refused to accept the privatization of religion desired by some secular liberals. They insisted that religion is comprehensive and impacts all of life, including how religious adherents participate in the public sphere. They contested the established boundaries between the private and public spheres by arguing that religion is expressed and practiced publicly as well as privately. Therefore they called on the state to protect the right of religious adherents to use religious arguments in the public sphere (*Chamberlain*) and live according to their doctrines without undue hardship (*Amselem* and *Hutterian Brethren*). In essence, they challenged specialists who claim the right to operate according to the logic of their differentiated spheres.

As the EFC participated in the public sphere and asked the state to protect religious freedom, it revealed its acceptance of the modern commitment to the freedom of conscience. EFC leaders believed that given equal space in the public sphere and at the table, they could persuade others about the superiority of developing public policy according to their interpretations of the *imago Dei* and the common good. They accepted the fact of religious pluralism and argued that the public sphere must be open to participants of all religions and no religion. All of these accommodations and types of interventions suggest that the EFC participated in the public sphere in a manner that was conducive with what Casanova calls a modern public religion.

Yet some commentators are disturbed by the spectre of religious organizations cooperating too closely with the state. Casanova acknowledges that when public religions participate in the public sphere, they are often changed in the process. However, he sees the change as positive. As he observes, “in the very process of entering the modern public sphere, religions and normative traditions are also forced to confront and possibly come to terms with modern normative structures. Such a public encounter may permit the reflexive rationalization of the lifeworld and may open the way for the institutionalization of processes of practical rationalization” (1994, 228). Asad views the exchange in more negative terms as he conceptualizes the state in very different terms than Casanova.

Asad warns that modern secular states are not above using violence to coerce their own subjects and foreign countries to adopt specific values and views of religion, secularism, and the state. For Asad, these views are largely influenced by Christianity and are inhospitable to other religious traditions that do not separate the public and the private and church and state in the same manner. In short, he believes that western conceptions of secularism portray the state rather benignly and hide its power and willingness to use that power to enforce particular conceptions of the human person,

religion, the state, and secularism. In particular, it is the ability of states to use their power to define the personality of the nation that worries Asad, because those who do not fit the mould are marginalized. For an example he points to the British government's narrow conception of the term "British" in response to the rage of some Muslim leaders against Salmon Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1993, 239-306).

Asad's interpretation of secularism as a political project focuses on the state as the sole institution providing identity, enforcing a type of homogeneity that defines and regulates "normality." In this conception of the state, religious toleration is a political tool used to remove morality from the political realm and subordinate religion to the state. It is the state, and not progressive social groups and secularists, who Asad identifies as the biggest threat to religious freedom. In addition, he argues that the state creates a particular type of political subject by its laws, advancement of particular values, and the type of arguments it permits in the public sphere. For example, those who desire to participate in the public sphere must use rational argumentation, which is a particular "liberal moral and political discourse" (1999, 180). This requirement reflects the power of the public sphere and excludes those who cannot create such arguments and "become particular speaking and listening subjects" (181). When the EFC intervenes in the legal system in order to be at the table, it is interacting with the power of the state to create political subjects, define religion, and set the terms for political discourse. Its refusal to privatize religion goes some way to interrogating the state's power to define and marginalize religion. Yet it does not acknowledge how Christianity continues to have cultural influence.

EFC leaders encountered some of these tensions in liberal democratic discourse highlighted by Asad when they participated in the public sphere. For example, although Clemenger called for secular states to protect the right of religious groups to participate in the public sphere without having to ignore their faith or find secular rationale, EFC leaders did not, or could not, consistently participate in such a manner. They supported the right of religious parents to use religious arguments and make evaluative judgments on potential school books based on their religious beliefs but many of their arguments in the same-sex marriage debate were similar to those advanced by secular participants. Put another way, there was a tension between how the EFC wanted to participate and how it actually did, or could, participate.

In issues concerning religious freedom EFC leaders were able to articulate more clearly their views about religion. Yet even in those debates some of their key arguments were based on equal access,

pluralism, and freedom rather than religious norms. The appropriation of such liberal arguments appears to support Asad's contention that deprivatized religious actors who desire to engage in the public sphere must often "act as secular practitioners do in liberal democracies" (2003, 187). Rosenblum articulates the threat in terms of religious organizations becoming "deformed" when they participate too closely in the affairs of the state.

Despite these tensions and difficulties, however, the engagement of EFC leaders in public life contributed to the public sphere. Their accommodations of the "world" and secular liberal discourse indicated the degree to which they were committed to civil society. At times they spent scarce economic resources protecting those deemed to be the most vulnerable in society even though historically evangelicals viewed the courts as unfriendly. In the process they refrained from culture war language and tried to avoid using religion in a divisive manner, although this was more difficult to maintain in the debates about the expansion of spousal benefits and marriage to include same-sex couples. The appropriation of liberal discourse, then, was not necessarily a negative development. As Bader reminds us, given the moral diversity in many societies, there is a need for the development of civil and democratic practices such as explaining positions in a manner that is understandable by a wide range of people, listening to others, being fair-minded, and willing to accommodate others' views (1999, 614, 617). While EFC leaders have not overtly questioned publicly sanctioned types of knowledge, they have to some extent disrupted pre-existing assumptions structuring public debate that assumed the privatization of religion. Their call for the expansion of the public sphere to include a variety of religious voices is a democratic practice that contributes to a stronger public sphere. Their willingness to work with a variety of religious groups suggests that religion is not necessarily or always divisive. Indeed, the ability to find common cause despite doctrinal and religious differences contributes to public discourse and civil society.

Bader further argues that the ability of religious groups to accommodate the world and secular liberal discourse does not suggest increasing secularization. In his view, religious participants in the public sphere who employ arguments readily understood by all are liberalizing religion and playing by "the rules of the game." Commentators who view the acceptance of the rules as evidence of internal secularization, he contends, allow religion only two options: to secularize or become sectarian. Bader rejects the creation of such a binary of choices as an element of secular logic and reminds his readers that such Christian groups as the Baptists and Quakers contributed to the "'foundations' of liberal democracy" by emphasizing liberal democracy over denominational truths

(2003b, 10-12). Evaluated from within this conception of religious engagement in politics, it appears that EFC leaders are forging a path that is neither secular nor sectarian. They adopt the rules of engagement that are dominant in the public sphere and do not hearken back to a golden past when Christianity was the unofficial established religion. Despite their (selectively) socially conservative views, they reflect strong commitments to both modernism and liberalism.

## **Future Areas of Study**

While this study examined the EFC from within the discipline of religious studies, the work of scholars from other disciplines such as political science, legal studies, and critical theory will help create a “thicker” picture of the EFC specifically, and evangelical political engagement in general. For example, more research needs to be done on the implications of the recent alignment between evangelicals and the Conservative Party, especially on public policy. In light of the new Conservative majority government after the May, 2011 election, it will be important to note the type of direction and leadership that the EFC will provide evangelicals.

An element of this “thicker” picture is a comparison of the EFC’s interpretations of the *imago Dei* and the common good with other Protestant and Christian groups. These principles guide many of the EFC’s political and legal interventions. Yet they are particular interpretations that lead the EFC to choose specific issues and engage them in a particular manner. Other Christian groups employ the principles to advocate for the rights of women, children, prisoners, and homosexuals, among others. A comparative study of how various Christian groups and denominations define the *imago Dei* principle and then apply it to contemporary issues enables us to more fully engage with the work of the EFC.

The question of leadership is central as this thesis studied the attitudes and work of evangelical elites. The degree to which evangelicals in the pew are aware and supportive of EFC positions and approaches requires further study. As Rawlyk pointed out in 1996, few evangelicals were able to identify an evangelical leader or had contact with the EFC (135, 140). More research needs to be done to discern whether the situation has changed.

A central issue, then, is the degree to which the EFC represents its base, the same issue Stackhouse raised in 1995. The issue is complicated by the fact that the base is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic (Guenther 2008, 379-93). While many recent non-European Christian immigrants to Canada are socially conservative (Bramadat and Seljak 2008b, 423-26), meaning that recent evangelical

immigrants may share the same positions advanced by the EFC, there has been little EFC reflection in its literature about how new ethnic groups are impacting and influencing its positions and approaches. The role that new ethnic communities will play in the EFC requires further study.

One area in which the EFC is showing new leadership pertains to the issues of poverty and homelessness. Prior to 2003 the EFC did not engage in a campaign to address poverty at the policy level, although in 1999 its Social Action Commission published a background paper on poverty entitled “Good news to the poor” in which it defined poverty as the situation “when persons, associations or institutions lack the resources and space they need to fulfil their God-given responsibilities and callings” (EFC 1999a, 2). For the EFC, then, it is not only those with little access to money who are poor; rather, people can be friend-poor, land-poor, or even culture-poor.

In 2003 the EFC created the Roundtable on Poverty and Homelessness. A partnership of front line organizations involved with issues of homelessness,<sup>302</sup> the Roundtable organizes bi-annual “Street Level” conferences that bring together frontline workers and Christian groups dedicated to addressing the needs of the homeless. The first such conference occurred in 2006, after which the conference participants issued a manifesto that called on the Canadian government and churches to address the issues of homelessness. With regard to the role of government, the manifesto declared, “we expect good government to formulate policy that not only works toward a level playing field, but offers ‘second chances’ to people who have failed or done wrong. We believe that justice ought to be primarily restorative rather than punitive. We recognize that both social policies and budgets are declarations of a government’s moral intent” (Roundtable 2006). The manifesto suggested that the presence of homelessness was a moral issue for all Canadians. In 2009, the EFC and the Roundtable supported Bill C-304, proposed legislation created by NDP MP Libby Davis that called for a national housing strategy for Canada’s homeless. The issue appears to be a significant area of interest and advocacy for the EFC leadership. It remains to be seen whether the evangelical base will follow the leadership and assume that the state has a significant role to play in succouring the poor. If such mobilization were to occur, it would be another example of EFC leaders contributing to the creation of a Canadian evangelical identity.

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<sup>302</sup> In 2006 there were 13 organizations represented in the Roundtable. Combined, they had 437 full-time staff supplemented by 310 others who worked part time and 35,000 volunteers who provide 337,000 volunteer hours (Clemenger 2006h, 14).

Of course the EFC is only one entry point into the world of evangelical politics. Much more work needs to be done to determine the nature of evangelical engagement, its motivating factors, and long-term goals. As this study argues, such study must focus on Canadian evangelicals as they are and how they act without the assumption that they are simply northern versions of the American Religious Right. Indeed, they are unique enough to be studied in their own right.

## Appendix A

### A list of the EFC affiliates

**Affiliate Denominations:**

Anglican Network in Canada  
 Apostolic Church of Pentecost of Canada Inc.  
 Associated Gospel Churches of Canada  
 Baptist General Conference of Canada  
  
 Canadian Baptists of Ontario & Quebec  
 Canadian Baptists of Western Canada  
 Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches  
 Canadian Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church  
 Canadian Fellowship of Churches & Ministers  
  
 Canadian National Baptist Convention  
 Christian Reformed Church in North America  
 Church of the Nazarene Canada  
 Congregational Christian Churches in Canada  
 Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches  
 Evangelical Covenant Church of Canada  
 Evangelical Free Church of Canada  
 Evangelical Mennonite Conference  
 Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference  
 Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada  
 Fellowship of Christian Assemblies of Canada  
 Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada  
 Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches  
 Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada

Grace Communion International Church  
 Independent Assemblies of God Int. (Canada)  
 Mennonite Church Canada  
 North American Baptist Conference  
 Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland & Labrador  
 Regional Synod of Canada Inc.  
 The Christian & Missionary Alliance in Canada  
 The Evangelical Christian Church in Canada  
  
 The Free Methodist Church in Canada  
  
 The General Assembly of the Church of God in Western Canada  
 The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada  
 The Salvation Army Canada/Bermuda Territory  
 The Wesleyan Church of Canada  
 United Brethren Church in Canada  
 Vineyard Resources Canada  
 Vision Ministries Canada

**Observers:**

Canadian Baptist Ministries  
 Lutheran Church – Canada  
 The Anglican Church of Canada  
 The Canadian Council of Churches  
  
 The Presbyterian Church in Canada

**Ministry Organizations:**

A Rocha Canada – Christians in Conversation  
African Enterprise Canada  
Aglow International Canada  
Arab World Ministries Canada  
Arrow Leadership Ministries  
Association Chretienne Pour La Francophonie  
Back to the Bible Canada  
Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of Canada  
Bridgeway Foundation  
Bus Stop Bible Studies  
  
Canadian Association of Pregnancy Support Services  
Canadian Bible Society – National Office  
Canadian Council of Christian Charities  
Canadian National Christian Foundation  
Christar  
Christian Horizons  
Christian Info Society  
Christian Medical and Dental Society  
Christian Studies International  
Community Christian Fellowship Church of Canada  
Compassion Canada  
CrossWorld  
Every Home for Christ International  
Focus on the Family (Canada) Association  
Frontiers  
  
Greater Europe Mission  
Home School Legal Defence Association  
In Touch Ministries of Canada  
Intercede International

International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, Canada  
International Christian Response  
International Justice Mission Canada  
International Teams of Canada  
Interserve Canada  
Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship  
Jews for Jesus Canada  
Medicine Hat Evangelical Association  
Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada  
  
Missionfest Toronto  
National Alliance of Covenanting Congregations  
National Association of Marriage Enhancement Canada  
National House of Prayer  
New Directions Ministries of Canada  
OM Canada  
OMF International, Canada  
One Way Ministries  
Open Bible Faith Fellowship of Canada  
Open Doors with Brother Andrew Canada  
Ottawa Inncity Ministries  
Outreach Canada  
  
Partners International, Canada  
Pioneers Canada  
Power to Change  
Promise Keepers Canada  
Renewal Fellowship within the Presbyterian Church in Canada  
reSource Leadership International Inc.  
Samaritan's Purse, Canada  
Sanctuary Ministries of Toronto  
Scripture Union Canada



**Ministry Organizations continued:**

Siloam Mission Church of the Nazarene

SIM Canada

The Mustard Seed Society

The Navigators of Canada – National Office

The Salvation Army Ethics Centre

The Scott Mission

The Voice of the Martyrs Inc.

Threshold Ministries

Toronto Church Planting

Toronto City Mission

VisionLedd Ministries

WEC International

World Relief Canada

World Vision Canada

Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada, Inc.

Yonge Street Mission

Youth for Christ Canada

**Educational Institutions:**

ACTS Seminaries

Alberta Bible College

Ambrose University College

Bethany Bible College

Bethany College

Booth University College

Briercrest College and Seminary

Canadian Mennonite University

Canadian Southern Baptist University

Christ for the Nations Bible College

Columbia Bible College

Crandall University

Eston College

Heritage Baptist College and Heritage  
Theological Seminary

Horizon College & Seminary

Institute for Christian Studies

Living Faith Bible College

Master's College & Seminary

McMaster Divinity College

Nipawin Bible Institute

Pacific Life Bible College

Peace River Bible Institute

Prairie Bible Institute

Providence College & Seminary

Redeemer University College

Regent College

Rocky Mountain College

St. Stephen's University

Steinbach Bible College

Summit Pacific College

Taylor College and Seminary

The King's University College

Trinity Western University

Tyndale University College & Seminary

Vanguard College

Plus: almost 1,000 individual congregations in the provinces and territories. For a complete list of these congregations, see the EFC's website at <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/netcommunity/page.aspx?pid=384> (accessed March 15, 2011). All information for Appendix A is taken from this site.

## Appendix B

### Statement of Faith of the World Evangelical Alliance

**“We believe**

...in the **Holy Scriptures** as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct...

One **God**, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...

Our **Lord Jesus Christ**, God manifest in the flesh, His virgin birth, His sinless human life, His divine miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His mediatorial work, and His Personal return in power and glory...

The **Salvation** of lost and sinful man through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith apart from works, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit...

The **Holy Spirit**, by whose indwelling the believer is enabled to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ...

The **Unity** of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ...

The **Resurrection** of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.”

As found at <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/aboutwea/statementoffaith.htm> (accessed February 21, 2011). Bold in original.

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