No One Can Serve Two Masters: The Religious Conundrum of Conservative Party Leaders in Canada

Honors Thesis

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Introduction

One of the highlights of the 2019 federal election was the unlikely victory of the Liberals. The Liberal Party had been tarnished by numerous scandals during its four years in power. Since January of the election year, the Liberals' popularity had been steadily slipping caused by the SNC Lavalin scandal and the controversy surrounding the trial of Admiral Mark Norman. Additionally, progressive voters that backed Trudeau in 2015 had been tremendously disillusioned by his failure to deliver on key promises which consist of electoral reform, balancing the budget, and generally doing better than Harper did. Closer to the election date, the federal conflict of interest and ethics commissioner ruled that Trudeau violated the law when he tried to meddle with an ongoing court case by coercing his justice minister to help SNC-Lavalin from being indicted—bringing Trudeau's confirmed ethical breaches to two. Additionally, during the campaign period photos of Justin Trudeau donning a black face and wearing a turban surfaced—undermining his reputation as a champion of multiculturalism and racial equality.

Despite all these gaffes and controversies, the Liberals managed to eke out a solid minority government. One question might be what made the Liberals quite successful at weathering the storm of their leader's scandals and failures at election period. More specifically, how did the Liberals prevent a Conservative advance in key districts? Some could point to the Conservatives' lack of focus on climate change, their leader's unpopularity, and lack of aggressiveness, among other things. However, it seems clear that their leader's traditionalist Christian background and the party's social conservative profile were fundamental factors for the Conservatives' defeat. Repeatedly in the campaign trail, Justin Trudeau focused on convincing median voters that Scheer's religious conservative beliefs on same-sex marriage and abortion are grounds for them not to support the Conservatives.

On the defensive, Scheer often retorted that such attacks were shallow attempts to dampen the widespread disappointment of voters toward the Liberals. At times. he gave vague and flippant responses like the following: "I have personal beliefs and my own faith-background….we should just take all the things we agree on and put it on one white board and put everything we disagree on another. Which whiteboard should we focus on?" (qtd in. LifeSiteNews 2016). However, closer to the election date, he took a more resolute stance that he was personally opposed to abortion and same-sex marriage, but he had no plans on imposing them on Canadians as prime minister. More specifically, he promised that such views would not

prompt the re-examination of laws and would not affect his determination to govern for all Canadians. The underlying question here is why Scheer, whose religious background was visible to the public, had trouble with owning up to his Christian/socially conservative views. Why did he have to sidestep the Liberal accusations of a hidden moral agenda? Why did it seem so difficult for Andrew Scheer to clearly come out on one side or the other of same-sex marriage and the abortion debates?

Interestingly, Scheer was not alone in this experience of having immense difficulty with resolutely siding with social conservatives: his three immediate predecessors—Preston Manning, Stockwell Day, and Stephen Harper—were all associated with and backed by socially conservative Christian groups. And they all went through the trouble of reconciling their personal religious views and the party's strong morally traditionalist base with the need to attract the support of enough median voters come election time to form government. In each case, there appears a pattern or a cycle of dilemma that starts with social conservatives helping each individual to win the party's leadership and consolidate power internally through various means of support as they initially believed that these individuals would advance Christian social conservative views in the public sphere. To the dismay of this voting bloc, each of these leaders tempered the party's morally conservative profile during a federal election as it would harm their chances of attracting other bases of support to form government. Often, this was followed with the defeat of the conservative party during the federal election which signifies the leader's failure to strike the right balance between those two competing interests. Finally, before the cycle restarts, it appears that the same social conservative base that once helped each leader were the first ones to instigate their removal from the party's leadership based on their failing to adequately defend Christian moral traditionalism. This dilemma, which I will call the conservative religious conundrum, plagued these conservative leaders for being simultaneously "far too religious for many moderate Canadians and not nearly doctrinaire enough for those who share their values" (Paikin 2019).

The research question that this thesis will address is the following: what do the cases of Manning, Day, Harper, and Scheer tell us about the relationship between the conservative party and religion in Canada? I will argue that their cases illustrate the struggle of conservative leaders to build a party that could simultaneously appeal to Christian social conservatives and to enough moderates and socially progressive median voters. Chapter One serves as a literature review that

provides a background about what we know so far about the relationship between the Christian religion and partisan politics in Canada. As that chapter will show, a defining feature of the relationship constitutes a sharp political division between Catholics and Protestants: the former had historically tended to vote Liberal while the latter had tended to vote Conservative. This link between religious affiliation and vote choice lasted in the twentieth century—effectively withstanding the test of time and drastic changes in Canada's social, political, and religious landscape. However, since the turn of the century a new division has emerged characterized by the cleavage between Christian social conservatives on the one hand and social progress on the other: the former have increasingly tended to vote for whichever was the major conservative party of the day while the latter have tended to vote for either the Liberals or the New Democrats. The conservative camp has since received a disproportionately large number of Christian social conservatives of varying denominational types.

Such development begs the next logical question: why did these Christian moral traditionalists shift to the conservative party and not to the other federal parties? This question will be addressed in Chapter Two which argues that the movement of the Liberals and the New Democrats toward a socially progressive agenda has effectively alienated its religious constituents. As the conservatives did the exact opposite of the Liberals and NDP, it was only logical that the religious base would disproportionately flock to the conservative camp. Such gravitation of faith-based traditionalists to the conservative party brought many benefits to the party. However, it also brought several consequences, particularly the struggle to widen the party's electoral appeal come federal election time. Thus, Chapter Two will zoom in on the conservative leaders' dilemma with regards to striking the right balance between two opposed audiences. In specific, the cases of Preston Manning, Stockwell Day, and Stephen Harper would be used to support the argument that conservative leaders had a hard time with retaining the loyalty of moral conservatives while also reaching out to the secular and socially progressive electorate in order to form government.

Chapter Three's focus will shift to the case of Andrew Scheer and to what extent he continued to face the religious conundrum of his predecessors. In that chapter, I will argue that Scheer's experience during his leadership bid in 2017, the 2019 federal election, and the aftermath of his party's defeat confirm that he was caught in the same problematic double bind as his predecessors. With a particular focus on how Scheer dealt with the contentious moral issue

of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights (LGBT) and women's reproductive rights, it will be demonstrated that appeasing the party's social conservative base without harming the party's electoral prospects has become a far more problematic and onerous task. In recent times, Christian social conservatives have become more forceful when it comes to demanding that the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) be more on their side. More specifically, this support base has increasingly become more assertive to push a Christian traditionalist viewpoint concerning LGBT rights and women's reproductive rights in the political and public sphere. At the same time, the electoral majority, especially in the vote-rich regions of Ontario and Quebec, has become either increasingly secular or socially progressive on these issues. As a result, Scheer's religiosity and Christian conservatism somehow became a significant hindrance to his attempt to garner enough votes from these other bases of support to form government. The case of Scheer with this religious conundrum of conservative leaders reflect the sheer trouble or difficulty of striking the right balance between two opposed interests.

Chapter One

Christianity and Canadian Party Politics

> "The relationship between faith and party politics in Canada was historically defined by the divide between Liberal-tending Roman Catholics and Progressive Conservative–leaning Protestants. However, after slowly declining in the postwar era, this dynamic shifted in the early 2000s, as religiosity and moral traditionalism—rather than denomination—became a more consistent predictor of voter preference."
>
> – Paul Thomas and Jerald Sabin, 2019

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background concerning the relationship between the Christian religion and federal political parties. The scholarship on the connection between religion and partisan affiliation consists of two aspects. The first is the link between one's religious affiliation and vote choice; and second is the relationship between social conservatives and the federal conservatives in juxtaposition with the relationship of social progressives with the Liberals and the NDP. I will argue that the relationship between religious affiliation and vote choice was a longstanding feature of Canada's electoral history which persisted well into the twentieth century. Conversely, as the traditional political division between the two Christian faiths[1] was gradually replaced by a new cleavage between social conservatives on the one hand and social progressives on the other, I will make the case that it was secularization and the advance of social progressivism that drove Catholics and Protestants into an alliance.

[1] To be sure, I recognize that neither Catholicism nor Protestantism are homogenous or uniform Christian religions. For instance, the Catholic religion is composed of several branches which include Roman Catholics, charismatic Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Catholics, among others. Generally, they share fundamental tenets and theology, but they somewhat differ in structure, organization, and origin. Similarly, Protestantism consists of numerous denominational categories which branches out to dissimilar religious groups. So far, the literature on religious studies indicate two main branches of Protestantism: (1) mainline Protestantism (i.e., United Church of Canada; Anglican Church; Lutheran Church; Presbyterians) and (2) evangelical Protestantism (i.e., Baptist; Pentecostals; Mennonites). Similar to Catholics, these Protestant groups, albeit they have distinct theological emphases and orientation, generally have common theological viewpoints. Moreover, there are Christian groups in Canada that are difficult to categorize as either Catholic or Protestant. For instance, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, and Anabaptists among others, have fundamental theological and organizational differences with Catholic and Protestant faith traditions. In any case, it is not the purpose of this Honors thesis to address the complicated nuances of these religious groups. For ease of discussion, I have collapsed all traditions that are of Catholic background under Catholicism, while all non-Catholic Christian groups were relegated under the broad umbrella of Protestantism.

The Persistent Connection between Religious Affiliation and Vote Choice

Canadian political researchers had long been aware of the political cleavage between Catholics and Protestants in Canada: Catholics tended to vote for the Liberals while Protestants tended to vote for the major conservative party of the day (Guth and Fraser 2001, 53; Stephenson 2010, 86) As Esmer and Pettersson (2007) described, partisan sorting based on religious cleavages was "as old as the ballot box itself" (481). For instance, we know that the political divisions based on the religious cleavage were already evident upon the 19th century formation of the Liberal Party and the conservative party (a.k.a. "the Tories") because prominent Catholic reformers were disproportionately involved in the creation of the Liberals. And by the same token, the major Protestant denominations at the time were disproportionately involved in the formation of the conservatives (Godbout and Hoyland 2013). Additionally, we know that at Confederation Canada remained a fragmented country in the sense that one region (Quebec) was heavily dominated by Roman Catholicism while the rest by Protestantism—a fragmentation that reflects the historicity of the religious cleavage between the two Christian traditions.

In the first decades after Confederation, it was the anti-Catholic tonality in Anglophone-dominated regions that fueled the division between Catholics and Protestants. To illustrate, Catholics were angered by the indifference of Macdonald's conservative government to the concerns of French-speaking Catholics toward the influx of Anglophone Protestant settlers as well as the defunding of Catholic schools in the west. As Lustiz and Wilson (2005) aptly noted, the conservatives have been "adept at alienating French-speaking Catholic Canadians…since the 19th century, and with remarkable consistency thereafter" (112). In turn, Catholics thought it was best to remain clustered together "to encircle the faithful and immunize them from other influences" (Rayside et al. 2017, 20). One way the Catholics did this was by realigning their votes "virtually *en bloc"* (Lusztig and Wilson 2005, 112) toward the Liberals while the Protestants remained firmly aligned with the conservatives. According to Goudbout and Hoyland (2013), such denominational distinction between Liberal and conservative voters remained "salient in the minds of the electorate" (7) well into the twentieth century. Clearly, the association between religious affiliation and vote choice in Canada was long-established.

Although the religious dimension to voting behaviour persisted in the twentieth century, little to no serious studies were conducted until the 1950s. The 1953 federal election was a seminal case that clearly demonstrated the endurance of a sharp political division between

Catholics and Protestants. In John Meisel's (1956) pioneering case study of the relationship between religious affiliation and electoral behaviour, he found that Kingston, Ontario voters instantiated the denominational distinction between Liberal and PC voters. His multivariate analysis included variables that he thought were influential to Canadian voting behaviour: importance of issues, traditions, age, religion, and other socio-economic attributes (485). He found that 83% of the respondents who identified as Catholic voted Liberal while 86% of the affiliates of two largest Protestant organizations in the area, the United Church of Canada and the Church of England (Anglican Church), indicated that they voted for the Progressive conservatives. Drawing from this finding, Meisel (1956) held that "while several socio-economic characteristics were found to be important, religion was the most decisive….The influence of religion was so great in Kingston that it can be isolated temporarily and considered independently from the other factors affecting the vote" (485). The salient point in Meisel's case study was the idea that the sharp religious cleavage in Canadian partisan alignment remained alive and well in the twentieth century.

The federal elections of the 1960s and the 1970s equally witnessed the persistence of such political division between Catholics and Protestants. Anderson (1966) conducted a case study of voting behaviour in Hamilton, Ontario during the 1962 federal election and he found that 88% of Catholics still preferred the Liberal Party while the association to the major Protestant denominations in the city—such as Presbyterian, United Church, Methodist, Baptist, and Lutheran—still predicted the preponderance of the conservative vote. More importantly, Anderson was first to corroborate Meisel's study that religious affiliation was more effective in predicting voting behaviour than education, socioeconomic status, language, and class. J.A. Laponce's (1972) study of the four federal elections from 1962-1968 as well as Lipjhart's (1979) comparative research of religious cleavages in Western democracies substantiate the finding that religious affiliation continued to be a strong demographic effect in predicting an average individual's voting behaviour.

It is striking that the relationship between religion and vote choice persisted during the 1960s up to the 1970s given the changes in Canada's religious and social landscape. The Quiet Revolution in Catholic-dominated Quebec was "accompanied by a quieter religious revolution" (Bibby 2011) where the Church's influence was effectively decimated as the majority of Catholics "deserted the pews" (Uslaner 2002, 243). Similarly, Mainline Protestantism's

stronghold in Western Canada, Ontario and the Atlantic provinces were equally devastated. As Bibby (2011) described, the rapid secularization in the 60s and 70s was like a fire that swept through "what was once a flourishing religious forest" (5). Additionally, the influx of non-Christian sects was on the rise and so were the numbers of those who identify with "religious nones" (Laflamme 2016, 500). Further, the sixties and the seventies were known for the advance of social progressivist movements that challenged well-established social values which were mutually held by traditionalist Catholics and Protestants. In the face of all these drastic changes in the socio-religious landscape, the association of Catholics with the Liberals and of the Protestants with the conservatives endured and was even regarded to be "nearly as great as in the watershed elections of 1917 and 1921" (Johnston 1985, 99).

The continuity of distinction in voting behaviour that was found between Catholics and Protestants endured in the 1980s and the 1990s—a time period known to some political scientists as the "fourth-party system" (Walchuk 2012; Carty 1988; Patten 2011). A key characteristic of this time period was the transformation of the federal political party landscape. As explained by Carty and collaborators (2001), the advent of the Reform Party and the Bloc Quebecois "presented a serious threat" to the "historic domination" (33) of well-established federal parties. This threat of a massive shift in Canada's political landscape was realized in the 1993 federal election which saw the meteoric rise of Reform and the Bloc that pushed the NDP and the PCs to the "edge of political oblivion" (Bickerton 2014, 257). For Guth and Fraser (2001) as well as Lusztig and Wilson (2005), as the "virtual duopoly" of our party system was effectively undermined by the rise of Reform and the Bloc, changes in partisan alignment of the two Christian groups should have naturally followed. To the contrary, notwithstanding these dramatic upheavals, the link between religious belonging and vote choice was barely disrupted. As a 1996 survey analysis found, 64% of Catholics still voted for the Liberals (Belanger and Eagles 2006; Malloy 2011, 327). On the other hand, the Protestant vote was somehow complicated by the rise of Reform as another right-wing party in the sense that the PCs lost the bulk of the Protestant vote to Reform. Nonetheless, the proclivity of Protestants to vote for the conservatives effectively continued because the Reform Party just basically supplanted the PCs as the major conservative party of the day (Stephenson 2010, 89; Walchuk 2012 422; Lusztig and Wilson 2005, 110; Kay and Perrella, 2012; Rayside et al. 2017, 43; Pammett 1991; Guth and Fraser 2001; Johnston 2012; Gidengil et al. 2012). In sum, the denominational distinction in Catholic

and Protestant voting behaviour was so persistent that it withstood not only the test of time but also some of the fundamental changes in Canada's religious and socio-political landscape.

The endurance of a sharp political division between Catholics and Protestants for decades begs the question: what explains this religious cleavage in partisan alignment? According to Elisabeth Gidengil and her colleagues (2012), who are all experts in Canadian voting behaviour, the religious cleavage in partisan sorting had puzzled political scientists and sociologists since it was first observed empirically. In agreement with this perspective, Canadian political science professor James Bickerton (2014) called the enduring religion-party link a "much-queried but never adequately explained anomaly of Canadian politics" (256). Even Andre Blais, a leading scholar of Canadian election studies, once remarked that the researcher who could adequately explain the decades-old trend ought to get a "special prize" (qtd. in Belanger and Eagles 2006, 592).

Perhaps the reason why researchers have yet to fully discover an adequate explanation for this was because they cannot point to a single causal factor. In the following section, I will put forward two complementary reasons for the traditional and longstanding alignment of Catholics and Protestants with the Liberals and the conservatives, respectively. First, the historical conflicts between the two faith traditions—founded on tensions caused by differing colonial, linguistic, and cultural roots—manifested in a sharp polarization in voting behaviour. Second, the distinct theological emphasis of Catholicism resonates more with the ideological tilt of the Liberals just as the distinct Protestant theological emphasis is more in line with the party ideology of the conservatives.

Historical Conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Canada

The historical tension between Francophone and Anglophone Canadians could have caused the political division between Catholics and Protestants. Even before Confederation, significant tension between French-Catholics and English-Protestants—animated by a struggle for cultural, colonial, and linguistic dominance—was already existent. In the late 18th century, when New France fell under Anglican-Protestant control, tensions were intense: "anti-Catholicism was a frame of mind" among the English settlers (Clarke 1996, 297) while pockets of French-Catholic resistance movements and revolt were persistent (Fay 2012, 46). After the amalgamation of the colonies of British North America into a single federation, the religious cleavage between these two groups endured with Quebec becoming the stronghold of Roman Catholicism, French

culture and civil law while the other regions remained Protestant-dominated that adopted English culture and the common law system (Buckingham 2014).

The issue of separate denominational schools was particularly illustrative of the historical tension between Catholics and Protestants—and was probably the key starting point for their political division (Godbout and Hoyland 2013). According to Canadian religious historian Janet Epp Buckingham (2014), Canada's "religious education controversy" (13) between these two Christian traditions was "deeply rooted beliefs and prejudices, as well as conflict over national identity" (29). After the Protestant-dominated New Brunswick and Manitoba abolished Catholic schools and French's official language status in 1871 and 1890, respectively, Canadian Catholics saw their French culture and religious identity under serious threat. With Macdonald's conservative government showing indifference to Catholic concerns over the diminishment of their denominational schools, Catholic voters across Canada started to disproportionately "realign their votes toward the Liberals" (Godbout and Hoyland 2013, 7) in hopes that they could voice Catholic sentiments. This controversy clearly suggests that the denominational divide on partisan alignment that endured for decades could be attributed to the historical conflict between Catholics and Protestants.

Several researchers substantiate the idea that the historical tensions between Catholics and Protestants caused their political division. For Gidengil (1992) and Irvine (1974), the reason why the religious cleavage in partisan alignment lasted for decades was due to family socialization. The family socialization theory essentially posits that memories of socio-cultural, linguistic, and religious conflicts, even an individual's partisan leanings, could be inherited and passed on to future generations which in turn "perpetuate old cleavages" (Gidengil 1992, 229). Rayside and colleagues (2017) echo this view that "classifying yourself as Catholic [or Protestant] may be rooted in a transgenerational attachment to historic memories" (29) which effectively sustained "the most prominent division between Catholics and Protestants, often enduring through periods when there were no obviously relevant policy issues at stake" (20). Also, in agreement with the family socialization theory, Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme (2016), a Canadian religious sociologist, advances the view that:

> The link between religious belonging and vote choice is often understood as a group identity effect. Historical and geographical ties between specific religious groups and specific political parties are passed on across generations by means of both family political socialization." (28)

The views of these scholars all converge at the idea that the historic memories of conflicts that resulted in the political cleavage between Catholic and Protestant voters were effectively passed on from generation to generation—a trend that resulted in the perpetuation of the denominational divide in partisan alignment for more than a century.

Resonance between Theological Emphasis and Party Ideology

The historical tensions between the two different cultures and religion gradually waxed and waned over the course of the twentieth century. It appears that over time the two religious faiths found a way to peacefully co-exist and dispense with the historical controversies that characterized their relationship for decades. For instance, after Vatican II the Catholic Church has increasingly committed to engage in dialogue with Protestants (Bibby 1990, Fay 2012) with the goal of "overcoming divisions" between religious faiths. Additionally, since the 1970s the tensions over cultures and religious traditions were increasingly ameliorated by multicultural policies supported by both the Liberals and the conservatives. Even on the issue of denominational schools, the once-Catholic-stronghold Quebec abolished its separate Catholic school system and opted for a more secular system in the 1980s. (Rayside et al. 2017, 21).

Put simply, as the historical conflict that once drove a political wedge between French Catholics and Anglo-Protestants became less pronounced over time, it could not have been the only driver of the religious distinction in voting behaviour because we know that such cleavage endured well until the last federal election of the twentieth century. In the following section, I will argue that the Catholic and Protestant tradition represent a distinct theological emphasis and ethos that resonate with the ideological tilt of the party they have consistently supported—resulting in a sharp partisan sorting. Put simply, the strong relationship between religious affiliation and vote choice may also be due to a synergy between the Catholic theological emphasis and Liberal ideology just as Protestant theology resonates with the conservative party ideology.

Liberal Party Ideology and Catholic Theological Emphasis

In order to fully understand the link between theological emphasis and ideological orientation, it is useful to review the fundamentals of Liberal ideology. For most of its history, Liberal Party was more of a brokerage party that "avoided ideological appeals in favour of a flexible centrist style of politics" (Brooks 2015, 327) and explicitly "attempted to reconcile the wide variety of

regional interests" (Marland and Wesley 2016, 344). As such, it can be argued that the Liberals lacked a clear and coherent ideology that they have consistently upheld over time. Nonetheless, it was evident that the Liberals tilted more to the left of the ideological spectrum than the conservatives for its increasing support for social welfare spending and state intervention in the economy particularly after World War II.

According to Marland and Wesley (2016), parties that are oriented to the left of the ideological spectrum generally advocate for increasing taxes on the incomes of the wealthy and big businesses to generate revenues for social programs. This fits with the left's generally collectivist and "progressive view of society" which believes that the state needs to intervene to ensure the "disadvantaged are provided with support to achieve equality" (Marland and Wesley 2016, 350). A case in point that demonstrates the movement of the Liberals to the left was Louis St. Laurent, who served as the Liberal Prime Minister from 1949-1957. He oversaw the expansion of the welfare state through a variety of programs such as family allowances, old age pensions, government subsidy of post-secondary education and an early form of Canada's universal health care system that was called "Hospital Insurance" at the time (Bothwell 2015).

The movement of the Liberals toward a more left-wing direction became more noticeable under Prime Minister Lester Pearson who spearheaded the Canada Pension Plan and the universal Medicare system. Commenting on this single-payer healthcare system, Ernest Manning (1967) opined that the Liberal Party has increasingly "exhibited a pronounced predisposition toward collectivist approaches… [that are] directly contrary to the emphasis on individuality" (78). Under Pierre Trudeau, the Liberals continued to campaign on and delivered a more interventionist government that strived to ameliorate the socio-economic ills caused by the dispossessing-effects of free market liberalism. In what he dubbed as the "Just Society," Trudeau aspired for a Canada "in which those regions and groups which have not fully shared in the country's affluence will be given a better opportunity" (qtd in. Foster 2007, 329). through a more activist state intervention in the economy. One way the Trudeau Liberals did this was through their National Energy Program (NEP) that afforded the federal government sweeping control over Canada's petroleum industry. As Bregha (2016) noted, the fundamental objective of the NEP was to "redistribute oil wealth via taxes and resource royalties." Clearly then, although the Liberals did not project an easy-to-identify ideological agenda for most of its history, it has surely implemented and adopted policies that are ideologically collectivist and left leaning.

The collectivist ideological tilt of the Liberals is worth noting to better understand the persistent proclivity of Catholics for voting Liberal. Catholic theology has deep roots in collectivism and the primacy of the common good. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1995), Catholic Christians are exhorted to uphold a form of social justice that hinges on looking after the welfare of other individuals. Grounded in the New Testament teaching concerning charity, loving one's neighbour like oneself and "serving the disadvantaged" in society (522), the Catholic Church puts a premium on a system of welfare-based collectivism that calls for upholding the common good (521). In line with this theological emphasis, the Church also supports the possibility of "the exercise of authority" (521) if necessary to enforce "the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due" (522)—a supposition that is consistent with the collectivist idea of state intervention in the economy to redistribute wealth through social welfare.

With the Church's distinct theological support for the collectivist precepts in a welfare state, it makes sense that the Catholic Church became associated with the delivery of various social welfare programs—not only in Canada but in most countries where Catholicism has taken root. In the Canadian context specifically, as explained by Buckingham (2014), the Catholic Church had controlled "labour unions, education, health, and social services" (8) for decades particularly in Quebec. In the same vein, Catholics were known to have long been dependent on "state support of the many social agencies spawned by their church over the previous centuries" (Rayside et al. 2017, 46). Essentially, it is somewhat unsurprising that Catholics found its home in the Liberal camp given that its distinct theological emphasis resonates more with the increasingly leftist/collectivist tilt of that political party. In agreement with this explanation, Canadian political science professor Laura Stephenson (2006) eloquently advances the following view:

> It has been noted that the Liberal Party and the Catholic Church disagree on some fundamental issues, like abortion and same-sex marriage. However, the general ideology of the Liberal Party corresponds well with the general values that shape Catholic social teachings. I propose that the current connection between the Liberal Party and Catholics represents the rational choice of voters to vote for a party that best embodies their values, specifically regarding the role of government in shaping Canadian society. In this sense, even though religion is not an explicit feature of party platforms in Canada, religious world views have shaped value systems and ideological leanings and, in turn, have created natural partisan constituencies. (1)

Stephenson's assessment of the persistent association between Catholics and the Liberals reinforces the supposition that such was due to a synchronization of values between Catholics and the Liberal Party.

Conservative Party Ideology and Protestant Theological Emphasis

Like the Liberals, Canada's conservatives had historically "hewed to no consistent ideological agenda" (Rayside et al 2017, 39) and were more focused on reconciling Canada's "diverse regional, ethnic, religious and class interests" (Rayside 2019). Nevertheless, compared to their Liberal counterparts, the conservatives were arguably more oriented towards a centre-right individualistic ideology that advocates for reducing the size of government, keeping taxes low, less government spending on welfare programs and less government intervention in the economy (Marland and Wesley 2016). This conservative ideological orientation hinges on the idea that individuals are of "supreme value" (Manning 1967, 65) and therefore should be more self-reliant for welfare (Wiseman 2017). Indeed, some of the policies to cut government spending and to limit state intervention in the economy happened under the Conservatives. For instance, it was Joe Clark who called for the privatization of Petro-Canada and advocated for the "market liberal desire to limit government" (Patten 2001, 138). Also, it was a conservative government that cancelled Trudeau's NEP and reduced government spending on social welfare to pay for the massive deficit that accrued under the previous Liberal governments of Pearson and Pierre Trudeau. The salient point here is that the Conservative party ideology was generally more oriented towards the notion of individualism than their Liberal counterpart.

The conservatives' tilt towards a more centre-right individualistic ideology is important to note in order to shed light on the enduring relationship between Protestants and the conservatives. Protestant theology puts great emphasis on individualism and the individual primacy over the collective. As early as the 14th century, a number of Protestantism's forerunners, such as John Wycliffe and John Huss, were already criticizing the Catholic Church's excessive premium on the common good over the primacy of the individual—particularly the belief that human sanctification and godliness could only be achieved through the mediation of the collective or the Church. Instead, these Protestant Reformers argued that an individual's contemplation of biblical teachings is sufficient to ascertain genuine Christian holiness.

A good illustration of the Protestant emphasis on individualism can be found in its distinct belief that the Scripture is the supreme religious authority for Christians. Indeed, Protestants vehemently reject the Catholic belief that the Church and its clergy are exclusively bestowed with the authority to interpret the Christian faith (Althaus 1966, 77; Pelikan 1955, 72; Lohse 1999, 188). Instead, Protestants generally hold the view that heavenly truths and the grace of God could be achieved through an individual's examination and interpretation of God's Word. Canadian religious studies professors, Thomas Robinson and Prof. Hillary Rodrigues (2014), echo this view that a *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) theology is what generally differentiates Protestants from Catholics in the sense that the former puts greater weight on the ethic of individualism while the latter on collectivism. Hence, as Protestants stressed the notion of individualism it would be logical that they were drawn more to the conservatives for that party's tilt towards individualistic values.

As a counterpoint, one might argue that the conservative emphasis on individualism through its adoption of neoliberal principles and free-market economics only became most evident in the 1980s—concurrent with the emergence of the New Right in America and in the United Kingdom. Further, in the past the conservatives even formulated policies that were arguably collectivist and interventionist. For instance, it was the conservatives that spearheaded the nationalization of hydro-electric utilities, the CBC, among other "public economic intervention for national purposes" (Patten 2001, 137). Even the New Deal that aimed to ameliorate the wide-scale unemployment brought about by the Great Depression using social welfare was formulated by a conservative government (Patten 2001). In the same vein, the Liberals have also adopted policies in the past that are arguably individualistic such as reducing taxes and lessening state intervention in the economy when the circumstances demanded it. In other words, the persistent inclination of Protestants to vote conservative and of the Catholics to vote Liberal could not have been due solely to a synergy between theology and party ideology. This is why at the outset I prefaced with the idea that my two explanations for the endurance of the link between religious denomination and vote choice are complementary which means that each compensates for the argumentative inadequacies of one another.

To illustrate, it is surely the case that the Progressive Conservatives, like the Liberals, lacked a coherent ideological orientation and were at times just as interventionist and welfare advocative as their Liberal counterparts. In this case, my explanation that the historical conflict

due to different languages and culture between Canada's Catholics and Protestants caused the religious cleavage in partisan sorting would be more sensible. However, we also know that the government's adoption of multicultural and bilingual policies in the 1980s have effectively diminished the historical antagonism between Catholics and Protestants. But why did the partisan sorting along the denominational divide persist from the 1980s up to the 1990s? My answer would be the synergy of Catholic and Protestant theology with the Liberal and conservative ideology, respectively.

The Emergence of a New Electoral Cleavage: Christian Traditionalists vs Secular Social Progressives

The traditional denominational division in partisan sorting that characterized the federal party system for decades gradually disappeared in the twenty-first century. Increasingly, a new political cleavage characterized by a division between those who are religious and those who are not has supplanted it. As aptly described by Laflamme (2016), "distinctions in attitudes and behaviour that could once be found between religious traditions and denominations appear now to be blurring, and the gap between those who are religious in general and those who are not is becoming more important" (504). In line with this view, Putnam and colleagues (2010), who observed a shift in traditional partisan alignments in both Canada and the United States, noted that "by the 2000s, how religious a person is had become more important as a political dividing line than which denomination he or she belonged to" (2). More specifically, the more religious a person is—which was operationalized by Langstaff (2011), Laflamme (2016) and Nicolet and Tresch (2009) as the frequency of participation in church-related activities and the regular practice of one's faith tradition—the more likely that he or she would vote conservative. By the same token, individuals who are less religious were found to be more likely to vote for the Liberals while those who were least religious or most skeptical of religion have gravitated toward the New Democrats (Guth and Fraser 2001).

In a survey between 2006 and 2011 generated by the Canadian Election Studies, it was found that religious Canadians have increasingly voted for the conservatives—with 51% of conservative voters who reported that religion is very important in their lives in 2006, 52% in 2008 and peaked at 55% in 2011 (Rayside et al. 2017, 46). Conversely, those who scored lower on the religiosity scale have been consistently found in either the Liberal camp or the New

Democrats. Clearly, individuals who scored high on the scale of religiosity, regardless of their Christian tradition, have gravitated toward the conservatives while those who scored lower on this scale have tended to vote for either the Liberals or the NDP.

The concentration of religious voters in the conservative camp goes hand in hand with the notion that social conservatives have increasingly and disproportionately gravitated toward the conservatives. Existing research on the association between religiosity and social conservatism has shown that religiosity and social conservatism correlate positively and are synonymous. Indeed, the more religious a person or the more active they are in the practice of their faith tradition, both on the individual level and within their respective church (Bibby 2011; Reimer 2003), the more socially conservative they are over questions related to gender, sexuality, and human life (O'Neill, 2001; Ang and Petrocik, 2012; Laflamme 2016; Reimer, 2003; Putnam and Campbell, 2010). And as explained by Rayside and colleagues (2017), the unification of the right under the CPC banner was concurrent with "a new religious gap" (45) forming between the conservatives on the one hand which became the "preferred choice among the most religious respondents" (45) or the only "natural home for social conservatives" (39).

Meanwhile, the social progressive voters were shared roughly equally by the Liberals and the NDP though the evidence suggests that the more skeptical a voter is towards religion and faith-based traditionalism the more likely it is that he or she would vote for the NDP (Guth and Fraser 2001; Laflamme 2016). Put simply, the emergence of religiosity as the new polarizing factor when it comes to partisan choice is tantamount to the formation of a partisan realignment on the grounds of social conservatism: the new electoral cleavage that has since formed could be best characterized as the polarization between Christian social conservatives on the one hand—regardless of their particular religious affiliation—and secular or social progressives on the other.

A case in point that demonstrates partisan division on social conservatism grounds is the percentage of each party's supporters favouring same-sex marriage. Christian social conservatives are known to be strongly opposed to extending marriage rights to homosexuals which fundamentally stems from their interpretation of passages like Matthew 19:4 and Romans 1:26-27 that they believe have provided the biblical definition of marriage and the moral admonition against homosexuality, respectively. A Canadian Election Study (CES) data during the 2000 federal election showed that conservative voters (Alliance/PCs) were 93% more likely

to opposed the legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada while Liberal and New Democrat voters were 58% and 78%, respectively, were approving of same-sex marriage (Rayside et al. 2017, 48). Similar numbers could be seen over the issue of abortion, euthanasia, and the expansion of LGBT rights between 2004 and 2015 which significantly speak to the gravitation of religious Christian social conservatives toward the conservatives while social progressives were pulled toward either the Liberals or the New Democrats.

As Hoover and Dulk (2004) observed, the twenty-first century in Canada has witnessed a new partisan division where religious and moral conservatives are pitted against secular social progressives "in ways that cut across traditional denominational divisions" (10). In other words, it has become increasingly insignificant which Christian group one adheres to or is a member of in predicting vote choice: it now appears that partisan differences are forming along the degree to which one is religious or adheres to social conservatism. The salient point here is that the traditional religious cleavage between Catholics and Protestants is no longer the defining factor when it comes to differentiating Liberal and conservative electoral preferences. Indeed, a new political division has since emerged where a coalition of social conservatives from varying Christian traditions formed a united opposition to social progressives.

The scholarly literature clearly indicates that religious social conservatives, regardless of their Christian denomination, have increasingly clustered together since the early 2000s. The next question that needs to be addressed is what caused the breakdown of the traditional religious cleavage in partisan alignment between Catholics and Protestants and the formation of an alliance between Christian social conservatives of varying religious stripes. In the following section, I will argue that the unexpected partnership of traditionalist Catholics and socially conservative Protestants prompted by a mutual goal to resist secularization and the ascendance of social progressivist movements.

Secularization

The rampant secularization in Canada which started in the 1960s posed a threat to religious social conservatives irrespective of their differing Christian affiliation. Reginald Bibby (2011), a leading researcher in the sociology of religion in Canada, described Canadian religiosity prior to the 1960s as being akin to a "badge of personal identity" (7). In other words, Canada was known to be a "highly religious country" (7) as Christians of all faith traditions were frequent attendees in various church-related activities. The post-World War II years until the late 1950s were

particularly illustrative of such high religiosity found among Canadians and was even regarded as the "golden age for church attendance and influence in Canada" (10). In a 1945 Gallup survey, it was found that 65% of Canadians who were over the age of twenty had reported to be weekly church goers (Bibby 2011, 10). In this regard, Canada was even regarded by historians and scholars as "more observant in religious practice and more orthodox in religious opinion than the United States" (Noll 2007, 15-16) and a country where one can find "the world's most church-going peoples" (Johnston 2011, 3). In the 1950s, the high levels of Canadian religiosity or religious participation continued with Catholic mass attendance peaking at 85% all over the country in 1957 while Protestant church attendance was at 78% in 1959 (Bibby 2011; Bibby 1997; Bibby 1990). Clearly, as Bibby (2011) observed, Canada was a "flourishing religious forest" (5).

However, the 1960s ushered in an era when secularization became increasingly rampant. Secularization theory posits that the advent of societal modernization would render religion as either unnecessary or a vestige of the past that is bound to disappear. A number of founding scholars of sociology, such as Max Weber, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, August Comte, and Emile Durkheim, share the expectation that "religion would fade in importance and cease to be significant with the advent of industrial society" (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 3). On this point, it is worth examining the three significant characteristics of secularization in the Canadian context: the decline of church attendance, the weakening of church authority and influence, and the rise of religious pluralism. By 1965, church attendance in major Protestant sects all over the country, particularly in their Ontario-stronghold had dropped to 25% (Bibby 1990). Similarly, as the Quiet Revolution in Quebec raged on, the Catholic church attendance declined to 47% by 1965 which essentially means its numbers back in 1957 plummeted by more than half. Such dramatic decline in church attendance which was experienced by both Christian traditions was consistent with the analogy made by Bibby (1997) that the Christian faith faced a "mass exodus" (3).

In the same vein, religion's influence in government and public life has increasingly weakened. For instance, Quebec's Quiet Revolution instigated the radical decline in the Catholic Church's status and influence as a social and political force (Uslaner 2002, 243; Bramadat 2012). It is useful to remember that, prior to the 1960s, the Catholic Church wielded significant influence over the administration of various governmental services such as education, health, labour unions and was even exceedingly influential in provincial politics itself. However, the

state eventually took over these areas of public administration which minimized the Church's influence over public life (Rayside et al. 2017, 7). Similarly, major Protestant groups such as the Anglicans and the United Church saw their ability to influence policy-making both at the provincial and federal level dwindle not only in their Ontario strongholds but also in the Atlantic provinces and in Western Canada (Bibby 1997, 60; Bibby 2011, 6). Speaking of such dramatic decline of societal clout that was considerably present in both Christian traditions, Ferrara (2009) contends that the defining mark of Canadian secularization was the cessation of these Christian bodies' ability to "influence the law, politics, education, and public life in general" and turned them to mere "specialized sub-groups and communities of like-minded believers" (78). Significantly then, the emergence of secularization in Canada was also a movement that delineated a clear separation between church and state—a relationship that was rather blurred prior to the 1960s.

Additionally, the rise of secularization was concurrent with the growth of non-Christian religious denominations as well as non-religious individuals. For instance, the decades following the 1960s saw the growing visibility of Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and so on in Canada. According to Laflamme (2016), diversified immigration propelled the growth of non-Christian religions which only comprised 2 percent of the overall population in 1961 to about 4% by 1991. Similarly, the number of "religious-nones" (Laflamme 2016, 504) or those who think they are neither religious nor compelled to keep even nominal ties to their family's religious group has increased and was reported to be as high as 14% in 1993 (Lipka 2019). These religious-nones generally believe that religion has no place in the public sphere (Esmer and Pettersson 2007). Clearly, the overall goal of secularization in Canada was to erode the power of organized Christian religion, to weaken its influence in public life, and to undermine its theological orthodoxy.

As a result, Catholics and Protestants—specifically the evangelicals and traditionalist Catholics who place emphasis on active religious participation and cherish their ability to influence public life—could no longer afford to remain politically divided. It appears that their initial reaction was to work together in order to push back against the threat that secularization has mutually posed to both faiths. Clearly, although the time period between the 1960s up until the end of the twentieth century still witnessed an overall persistence of the religious cleavage between Catholics and Protestants in their vote choice, evangelical Protestants and traditionalist

Catholics have since contemplated about the possibility of working alongside each other as they share the same concerns toward the weakening of their respective religious institutions. Indeed, the social conservative wings of these two Christian traditions have chosen to transcend the political cleavage that characterized their relationship for decades in order to form a united front that would resist rampant secularization—a unification that would be later known as the Christian Right (Hoover and Dulk 2004; Wagner 2012, 1). To be sure, the Christian Right remained a nominal force from the 1960s up until the 1990s (Malloy 2011, 328) and it was composed predominantly of evangelical Protestants. However, as their respective religious institutions continued to be undermined by the persistence of secularization, more traditionalist Catholics have since joined forces with their Protestant counterparts and together, as the Christian Right, have started to gain greater visibility in the twenty-first century political sphere. As accurately observed by Putnam and Campell (2010):

> In 1960, religion's role in politics remained mostly a matter of something akin to tribal loyalty—Catholics and Protestants each supported their own…by the 2000s, how religious a person is had become more important as a political dividing line than which denomination he or she belonged to. Church-attending evangelicals and conservative Catholics have found common political cause." (2)

Hence, the formation of a new political cleavage characterized by a united front of Christian social conservatives against secular social progressives was a product of secularization in Canada which posed a threat to both socially conservative Catholics and Protestants. In this sense, Wagner (2012) argues that the emergence of the Christian Right was a defensive movement that did not happen in a vacuum: it was only when traditionalist Catholics and socially conservative Protestants saw the advance of secularism that they "felt obliged to push back" (xi) and the way they did this was by putting aside their theological differences in order to form a united front.

Social Change

The advance of social progressivist values and policies was another significant impetus that drove socially conservative Catholics and Protestants into an alliance. Beginning in the 1960s, the rise of second-wave feminism and the gay rights movements have become increasingly clear. For instance, during the 1960s social progressives had increasingly achieved some key social, political and legal goals such as the partial relaxation of laws against abortion and the full decriminalization of homosexuality. Further, the 1970s witnessed the progress of social progressivism, particularly the expansion of LGBT rights, when sexual orientation was added

into the Quebec Human Rights Code and then into the Canadian Human Rights Act. Moreover, in the legal sphere social progressives were also gaining noticeable traction. For instance, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *Vriend v Alberta (1998)* that the exclusion of homosexuals from Alberta's *Individual Rights Protection Act is* a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—a landmark decision that became the impelling force for the further expansion of LGBT rights. Similarly, the Court also struck down Canada's abortion law as unconstitutional in the case of *R v Morgenteler* (1988) on the grounds that it infringes upon a woman's section 7 rights to life, liberty and security of person.

The ascendancy of the social progressivist challenges to the well-established moral structures have mobilized socially conservative Catholics and Protestants to recognize each other as allies (Hoover and Dulk 2004, 10). This is why in the cases of *Vriend, Morgenteler* as well as in numerous public commission hearings in the House of Commons, traditionalist Catholics and Protestants have intervened together in opposition to the achievements of social progressivism which these religious social conservatives saw was indicative of a "moral decay in Canadian society" (Eagles 2013, 73). For instance, prominent Catholic interest groups such as the Catholic Civil Rights League and various long-standing bishop conferences have worked alongside major evangelical pressure groups such as the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and Focus on the Family Canada since the 1960s (Wagner 2012, Rayside et al. 2017; Warner 2010).

Also, traditionalist Catholics and Protestants even formed joint interest and pressure groups such as Cardus and the Campaign Life Coalition which has since become the "major flashpoints of social conservative activism" (Rayside et al. 2017, 17). Under a united cause, these Christian social conservatives formed a coalition to "wage with vigour and resolve their godly campaign to restore Canada as a resolutely Christian nation" (Warner 2010, 24). Hence, just like the threat of secularization, the threat of social progressivism compelled Christian social conservatives to transcend their mutual distrust and differing theological orthodoxies as they fight for a shared socially conservative agenda.

Chapter Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to outline the fundamental facts and issues that surround the relationship between Christian religion and Canadian party politics. As I have demonstrated, the religious affiliation dimension to vote choice—specifically the consistent tendency of Catholics and Protestants to vote Liberal and conservative, respectively—had been characteristic of federal party politics for decades. Such religious divide in partisan choice was so enduring that it withstood the test of time and the changes in Canada's religious and political landscape. Political scientists and researchers have long been perplexed by this religious divide for years and in this chapter I have offered two potential drivers for the existence and persistence of this trend: the historical conflict between the two denominations and a distinct resonance of theological belief with the ideological orientation of the party they supported. Also, I acknowledged that these two explanations, if isolated from the other, would be inadequate and unpersuasive, as one explanation is more glaring and significant during a certain period of time than the other and vice-versa.

At the turn of the century, the traditional denominational division in partisan sorting was gradually eroded and replaced by a new cleavage where religious or socially conservative individuals, notwithstanding their particular denominational affiliation, veered disproportionately to the conservatives while social progressives gravitated toward the Liberals and the New Democrats. Regarding this, I made the case that the alliance of Catholic and Protestant social conservatives could be attributed to the threat of rampant secularization and the advances of the social progressivist agenda in Canadian society. However, why the united front of Christian social conservatives found its home in the conservative bloc and not in the other federal parties is a question left unanswered. Most importantly, I am yet to address the pros and cons to the conservatives of having a disproportionately large number of Christian social conservative supporters.

Chapter Two

The Conservative Camp as the Only Plausible Ally of Social Conservatives

> "Christianity in now under serious attack…. The final struggle we are now undergoing is between the believers and the non-believers…. In the end, it will either be a Christian or an anti-Christian victory."
>
> – REAL Women of Canada, 2006

Chapter Introduction

The twentieth century marked the advent of a new religious cleavage between Christian moral traditionalists on the one hand—who have disproportionately allied with the Conservatives—and social progressives on the other. Such realignment of partisan sorting was a departure from the longstanding trend where the Catholic-Protestant divide was the key differentiator for Liberal and conservative voters. In the previous chapter, I argued that the coalition of socially conservative Protestants and traditionalist Catholics was a reaction to secularization and the achievements of social progressives in the social, political, and legal arena. This chapter's focus will be on the next two logical questions: (1) what prompted faith-based traditionalists to be allied disproportionately with the conservatives and not with the other major parties? (2) what was the cost and benefit to the conservatives of having a strong religious identity brought about by a disproportionate base of Christian social conservatives? First, I will argue that the movement of the New Democrats and Liberals toward a socially progressive agenda alienated their socially conservative support base—effectively leaving religious moral traditionalists no choice but to side with the conservatives; second, I will make the case that it was exceedingly difficult for conservative leaders to signal its allegiance with its socially conservative base in ways that did not endanger the party's electoral prospects.

The Alienation of Christian Social Conservatives from the NDP and the Liberals

Christian moral conservatives used to be distributed equally across the political spectrum. This is a logical assumption to make given that Canadians in general were very active in the practice of their faith and indeed were "the world's most church-going peoples" (Johnston 2011, 3) at least until the mid-twentieth century. This is in line with Malloy's (2013) observation that religious social conservatives had "no obvious single home in a major national party" (188) until the Reform Party emerged in the late 1980s. However, when the NDP and the Liberals became more

socially progressive, it resulted in the defection of Christian social conservatives to the major conservative party of the day.

The New Democrats

The New Democratic Party (NDP) used to have a distinct socially conservative profile because of the prominence of evangelical Christians and minister-like politicians in the party. Before the NDP was formed in 1961 it was called the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF): a democratic socialist party founded in Western Canada. This precursor party to the NDP was "founded on an explicit social gospel" (Malloy 2013) while being led by evangelical Baptist ministers such as Tommy Douglas, J.S. Woodsworth and Stanley Knowles. These Protestant leaders of the CCF drew support primarily through its advocacy of religiosity that aimed to foster "responsibility of each person for his neighbours and the development of just social and political institutions" (Crysdale and Wheatcroft 1976, 426). Richard Allen (2006), a writer for the *Canadian Encyclopedia* details the ways in which these evangelical politicians founded the party on New Testament teachings:

> It developed, however, a distinctive spirituality elevating social involvement to a religious significance expressed in prayers, hymns, poems and novels of "social awakening." Its central belief was that God was at work in social change, creating moral order and social justice…. Leaders reworked such traditional Christian doctrines as sin, atonement, salvation and the Kingdom of God to emphasize a social content relevant to an increasingly collective society.

The salient point here is that the founders of the New Democrats were influenced and guided by biblical teachings. More importantly, as the party's founding fathers were prominent evangelicals Protestants founded in the most Protestant-dominated and social conservative province in Canada (Banack 2016), it would be fair to surmise that the party also carried a socially conservative flavour as these Christian denominations tend to do so. To be sure, these NDP forerunners were scanty to express concerning their position on sexual morality and abortion. This is probably because social conservatism was the norm in Canada around the time period when CCF existed (Lusztig and Wilson 2005): therefore, there was not a serious need for these minister-politicians to voice either an allegiance to socially conservative values or their disdain towards socially progressive ones. In any case, the fact that the founders of the NDP was led by prominent leaders of Christian denominations that are known for hard core social conservatism is sufficient to assume that the NDP has roots in social conservatism.

Starting in the 1960s when the CCF was officially rebranded as the NDP, the party had steadily distanced itself away from any inkling of social conservatism left by its religious founders. As Malloy (2013) explained, the NDP ``gradually moved away from its religious roots…[suggesting] a growing irrelevance for religion within the party" (186). For instance, the NDP has explicitly become "resolutely on the pro-choice side of the debate" and a solid defender of LGBT rights (Rayside et al. 2017, 63). For example, when the Liberals first introduced motions that pointed to the decriminalization of abortion and homosexuality in the 1960s, "New Democrats seem to have had no reservations in supporting the bill" (Farney 2012, 86). Additionally, Laflamme (2016) contends that the NDP became a non-religious party with its fundamental support base being largely unaffiliated with any religion (502). In line with this view, Guth and Fraser (2001) observed that the NDP had increasingly developed a "non-religious profile" (54) and that "the clearest indicator of the NDP's nature is the fairly strong correlation of non-religious voters with party attachment" (54). Those minister-politicians that once dominated and led the party had either deceased or their religious legacy failed to continue on—effectively breaking the trend of politicians within that party who would be socially conservative. In effect, though the party previously espoused a strong religious and maybe even a socially conservative current, its visibility was eventually diminished when the NDP increasingly embraced social progressivism.

The Liberal Party

The Liberal caucus also had a distinctly social conservative profile. For instance, as Rayside and colleagues (2017) observed, "significantly fewer Liberals than New Democrats" backed the advancement of LGBT and abortion rights when it was being hotly debated in the 1970s and the 1990s. Instead of being resolutely on the social progressive side from the start, some Liberals even worked across party lines to strengthen pro-life groups and to collectively "coordinate legislative strategy" (Rayside et. al 2017, 77) that defends a socially conservative agenda. In fact, morally traditionalist Catholics in the party played a significant role in re-establishing the Parliamentary Pro-Life Caucus in the 1990s whose membership was one-third Liberal (Mackey 2004). Clearly, Christian social conservatives had a considerable proportion of allies in the Liberal camp—particularly morally traditionalist Catholics—who resisted the advancement of a socially progressive agenda.

In the twenty-first century, remnants of socially conservative Christians were still a considerable force in the party. For instance, when the *Civil Marriage Act* was put to a free vote, 25 percent of the Liberal caucus voted against it. Similarly, in 2006 it was found that 30% of the Liberal caucus was still pro-life (Rayside et al. 2017, 64). In fact, it was socially conservative Liberals themselves, such as Paul Szabo, that first belied the assertion that their caucus had "a pro-choice consensus for a couple of generations" (qtd. in Rayside et al. 2017, 64). Szabo's claim that a considerable proportion of the Liberal caucus was still socially conservative was reinforced by the defeat of a 2010 Liberal motion to include a broader range of family planning programs including greater accessibility to abortion. It was defeated because pro-life MPs refused to support it:

> The motion was supported by all three opposition parties but fell when a number of pro-life Liberal MPs failed to show up and three voted against it: John McKay, Paul Szabo and Dan McTeague. MP Gurbax Malhi abstained, while Albina Guarnieri, who opposes abortion, was absent from the House during the vote. (CBC News 2010)

Hence, although the preponderance of Christian social conservatives became increasingly concentrated in the Conservative party, some members of the Liberal caucus clearly remained staunch advocates of moral traditionalism.

Although defenders of social conservatism had long been an appreciable proportion in the Liberal Party, the vast majority of Liberal MPs especially the party's elites have been moving away from social conservatism and towards a socially progressive agenda. A case in point was Prime Minister Lester Pearson's bill to decriminalize homosexual activity in 1967 (Langstaff 2011, 49): as the now-famed remark of Pierre Trudeau, who was justice minister at the time, "there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation." Additionally, when Pierre Trudeau became prime minister in 1969 it was his government that legalized the use of contraception and partially decriminalized abortion. More recently, it was also the Liberal Party under Chretien and Martin that introduced and passed the *Civil Marriage Act*, respectively, that legalized same-sex marriage (McClelland 2003). In line with this movement away from social conservatism, Michael Ignatieff, the Liberal leader from 2008-2011, was the first to condemn the CPC when it refused to allocate funding for safe abortion in G8 countries through the Maternal Health Initiative (Rayside et al. 2017, 64; Malloy 2017).

Carrying on the party's direction away from social conservatism, Justin Trudeau announced in 2014 that all candidates vying for a seat in the Liberal caucus will be carefully

screened to ensure that they are "resolutely pro-choice" (Delacourt 2014; Dettloff 2018). This move resulted in an intense backlash from the Catholic hierarchy in Canada such as Thomas Collins and Terrence Prendergast, who are the archbishop of Toronto and the archbishop of Ottawa, respectively, criticizing Trudeau for dispensing with freedom of conscience and religious faith (Detloff 2018). For Dettfloff (2018), Trudeau's intolerance towards pro-lifers in his party is a form of "celebrity secularism" (4) that signals his greater sympathy for progressive sentiments. Such an opposition from the Catholic Church's ranks bears on the idea that the Liberals' "embrace of more progressive positions…contributed to the elimination of the overall Catholic preference for the Liberals" (Rayside et al. 2017, 337). Significantly, this is a far cry from their long standing relationship with Catholics which scholars believed was instrumental to making the Liberals as the "natural governing party" (Gidengil 2012; Marland and Wesley 2016; Stephenson 2006; Blais 2005; Bickerton 2014).

In addition, Trudeau further made it clear that the party is now an ally of social progressives through LGBT-friendly measures that were unprecedented. For example, Trudeau takes pride in the fact that he was the first prime minister to have ever walked in a pride parade and that it was under his leadership when the LGBT flag was raised on Parliament Hill for the first time. Clearly, these Liberal decisions spearheaded by the party's leadership all converge at a single idea: the party was moving toward a more socially progressive agenda albeit at a gradual pace. In any case, Malloy (2013) contends that the Liberal support for these socially progressive measures was tantamount to actively driving away the party's socially conservative base (189). Hutchinson and Hiemstra (2009) share this viewpoint and argue that the Liberal elites' adoption of more assertive positions that are antithetical to the Christian traditionalist agenda stifled the social conservative voice—resulting in that base's disaffection towards the party.

The Conservatives

In sharp contrast to the NDP and the Liberals that had clearly distanced themselves away from Christian social conservative values on human sexuality and women's reproductive rights, the faith-based traditionalist flavour within the conservative party increased. Starting with the Reform Party, an outspoken evangelical Christian from Western Canada took the helm of leadership that attracted a united front of social conservatives that oppose social change (Farney 2009; Erwin 1993; Foster 2000). Indeed, Preston Manning even used to be a host of a popular evangelical Christian radio program called *Canada's National Back to the Bible Hour* which

broadcasted matters concerning religion and its influence in politics. In one of his radio addresses, Manning touched upon the value for a Christian politician to weave his Christian beliefs into his or her politics:

> It is not necessary, therefore, for Christians to abstain from political activity nor is it good. The Christian who isolates himself from the political processes of his country may be resisting God's will and God's plan…By attempting to practice an absolute separation of religion and politics, the Christian may be making artificial and injurious distinctions between interrelated spheres of human activity which cannot or should not be totally separated. (Manning 1971, 3)

Clearly, it makes sense that Reform had attracted many Christian social conservatives because they were drawn by Preston Manning's strong evangelical background.

As Flanagan contends, this resulted in "[the Reform Party] becoming the religious party…. Manning deliberately tried to create a secular party, but he couldn't change the kind of people he attracted due to his background and network" (qtd in. Rayside et al. 2017, 55). For instance, Reform's key support base infamous for being "upset by the visibility of gays and lesbians… [and also] by abortion" (Rayside 1998, 128). In line with the socially conservative sentiment of his base, Manning remarked that "homosexuality is destructive to the individual, and in the long run, society" (qtd. in Rayside 1998, 128). Significantly then, Manning's religious and socially conservative underpinning enticed many "Christian Right Sympathizers" (Malloy 2012, 188) to ally themselves disproportionately with the party (Malloy 2013, 188; Rayside et al. 2017, 45; Farney 2012, 97; Langstaff 2011, 61). The conservatives gave legitimacy to the sentiments of Christian social conservatives as the Liberals and the NDP were doing the exact opposite: the direct result was the disproportionate influx of Christian moral traditionalists in the conservative party.

When Stockwell Day became the leader of the Canadian Alliance—a rebranded version of the Reform Party—the conservatives became even more associated with Christian social conservatism. Unlike his Reform predecessor, Day was a more outspoken voice of the Christian Right. According to Malloy (2013), he largely benefited from membership recruitment through churches and social conservative organizations which resulted in Day becoming the "partisan standard-bearer of the Christian fundamentalist campaign against modern secular society than Manning had allowed Reform to become" (191). Day was an outspoken critic of same-sex marriage and greater access to abortion. His hardline evangelical orientation came to its peak in the 2000 federal election campaign when he refused to campaign on Sundays in observance of

the Christian Sabbath (Blais et al. 2002, 42; Malloy 2010). More daringly, in an interview with CBC News, the Alliance leader expressed his belief in Creationism: "a conviction that the Biblical account of how life originated on this planet is a scientifically supported theory capable of being taught alongside evolution" (CBC News 2000). Put simply, the conservatives headed in the opposite direction taken by the New Democrats and the Liberal Party on contentious social issues. It follows that evangelical Protestants and traditionalist Catholics, which together would be known as the Christian Right, were drawn disproportionately to the conservative bloc.

When the PCs and the Alliance were unified into a single conservative party under the single banner of the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), its strong affinity to the Christian Right was further reaffirmed. For instance, its leader, Stephen Harper, was an evangelical protestant affiliated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance—a religious group that condemns homosexuality and abortion (Todd 2008). During the 2006 federal election, Harper campaigned on reopening the same-sex marriage and abortion file which he fulfilled when he allowed his backbenchers to put forward motions that attempted to restrict some aspects of same-sex marriage rights and abortion (Malloy 2013, 193; Young 2012, 9). And as observed by Malloy (2013), the salience of socially conservative MPs within the CPC's echelons did not show any signs of decline:

> Harper's government includes some senior evangelical staffers, including until recently a senior policy advisor who was the former director of the evangelical Laurentian Leadership Centre, party of Trinity Western University—both were also former Manning staffers. (192)

The increasing number of Christian Right allies within the CPC was recently buttressed by a study conducted by Marci McDonald (2017) that found 60 percent of CPC MPs in 2014 were evangelical Christians. Indeed, Harper selected "prominent representatives of religious conservatism" for top cabinet posts such as Stockwell Day, Vic Toews, Julian Fantino and Jason Kenney (Rayside 2011, 290). These cabinet ministers were infamous for opposing the institutionalization of same-sex marriage, the normalization of abortion, and the advancement of LGBTQ interests (Rayside et al. 2017, 59). In Rayside's view (2011), Harper appointed these people to top positions in his government because they would be "a source of satisfaction to religious conservatives" (401). In sum, the strongly faith-based traditionalist direction taken by the conservative party on touchstone social issues explains why religious voters have disproportionately flocked to the party: socially conservative Canadians have "nowhere else to

park their vote" (Todd 2008) but in the conservative camp as their former home parties—the NDP and the LPC—became inhospitable to them by taking the socially progressive route.

The Benefit and Cost of a Strong Christian Social Conservative Base

To better understand and contextualize the pros and cons of a distinctly powerful religious right base in Canada's conservative party, it is useful to look at the relationship between America's Christian Right and their Republican Party. Similar to Canada, the United States saw the emergence of a cleavage between Christian social conservatives on the one hand and social progressives on the other since the 1960s: Republicans have established themselves as the home and pole of attraction for Christian moral conservatives—regardless of their particular denomination while the Democrats for secular and socially progressive voters (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2006; Raymond 2011; Rayside and Wilcox 2011; Layman 2001; Layman 1997). Republicans, especially since Ronald Reagan, were far more comfortable with openly siding and supporting the Christian Right's stance on contentious social issues such as abortion and LGBT rights because that base is powerful enough to carry his party during a national election. As Rayside and Wilcox (2011) observed, the Republican Party is less concerned about the electoral hazards of openly avowing faith-based traditionalism's sentiments due to the notable "strength of religious conservatism and its organizational presence" (5) in America. As confirmed by one Gallup poll, about 37% of Americans identify as a social conservative which peaked at 42% in 2009 and comfortably stayed at 34% in 2017 (Saad 2017).

In stark contrast, a conservative politician in Canada cannot simply make targeted appeals to social conservatives because it would be politically suicidal during a national election. According to Coren (2017), the religious composition of Canada is dominated by Catholics whose membership are either non-practicing or only nominally traditionalist. Additionally, only 10% of the Canadian population are evangelicals and are not even as socially conservative as their American counterparts. To this end, Christian social conservatives, notwithstanding their solidity and strength to mobilize and provide funding for the conservative camp, simply cannot carry the party in a general election. As such, conservative leaders need to use covert tactics that would galvanize the support of this loyal base "while continuing their outreach" (Thomas et al. 2017, 2) to other constituencies. However, as the cases of Preston Manning, Stockwell Day, and Stephen Harper demonstrate, this had never been an easy task.

Preston Manning

Before turning to consider how conservative leaders struggled to strike the right balance between a strong Christian base and the need to broaden its appeal in order to form government, it is helpful to review how and when the conservatives started to become a polarizing force for Christian social conservatives. Preston Manning was successful at luring social conservatives, particularly the evangelical Protestants, from the PCs because no political party was willing to politicize socially conservative issues (Nevitte et al. 1998). It is worth remembering that prior to the rise of the Reform Party, it was the Liberals who disproportionately garnered the Catholic vote while the PCs were the ones that predominantly enjoyed the support of Protestant voters. However, none of the major parties prior to Reform gave space to the social conservative wings of these two faith traditions to express and politicize their views—in keeping with the Liberals' and the PC's brokerage-style of politics.

Put simply, the PCs deliberately avoided political contention over divisive social issues such as sexual morality in favour of compromise and consensus (Farney 2012; Farney 2009; Malloy 2013). One way their brokerage-style of politics played out was by putting contentious social issues such as abortion and LGBT rights to a free vote rather than imposing party discipline on its caucus members. For instance, when Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau's attempt to decriminalize abortion and homosexuality were put to a vote, the PCs were the first to encourage other parties to treat the issue as a matter that would be best left to each members' moral conscience (Farney 2012). This goes to show that the party was more in favour of minimizing the potential divisiveness of abortion and LGBT rights instead of capitalizing on them for political mobilization.

In contrast to the PCs, the Reform Party had a distinct socially conservative profile due to the visibility of Preston Manning's evangelical background. The party first signalled its sympathy to the social conservative agenda by stating in the *Blue Book,* which contained the party's stance on all major policy issues, that "they would affirm and value the dignity of the individual person" as well as "protecting the family unit" (Reform Party 1990, 26). For Christian social conservatives, especially the evangelicals who were disaffected by the PCs' nominal treatment of social conservatism, these Reform commitments signalled a more "moral decision-making" (Farney 2012, 100) at the political level. And as Farney (2012) observed, this resulted in "the mobilization of evangelical Protestants into sizable numbers" within the party (104).

Manning and abortion rights

The problem with reconciling the burgeoning socially conservative Christian base of Reform with the need to form government was illustrated in how Manning dealt with the issue of abortion and same-sex marriage. At the party's founding, Manning had moved the idea of capitalizing on the abortion issue to mobilize his social conservative base off from Reform's main agenda. As stated in the *Blue Book*, the party's official stance on abortion was allowing its caucus members to freely express their personal and moral beliefs and to "faithfully vote the consensus" in their constituencies (Reform Party 1990, 26). When his political opponents inquired about his personal view on abortion, his response would often sidestep the question by drawing a boundary between his personal beliefs and his political agenda:

> I have a personal agenda as a believer, but it's not a political agenda. It has to do with my own spiritual development and that of my family…On my agenda I have a prayer for a spiritual awakening in Canada…But these are not political items on my personal agenda. (Manning 1988, 13; Manning 1992)

Noticeably, Manning neither wanted to be openly against abortion nor be unequivocally in favour of it. Such hesitance to pick a side in the debate could be attributed to the shifting public attitude in favour of abortion rights at the time. According to Farney (2012), 50-60 % of the population have tilted in favour of abortion rights at least in some circumstances while about 25-35% of the population were absolutely approving of a pro-choice position (105). Adding to this, by 1993 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *Morganteler* that criminalizing abortion contravenes the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms.* Put simply, positioning the party on the socially conservative end of the abortion debate was a losing game: it was no longer politically prudent to openly side with the Christian social conservatives as it would definitely imperil the party's prospect of reaching out to moderate voters in a bid to supplant the Liberals. As Ellis (2005) noted, Manning had to "position the party within what he perceived to be the contemporary currents of public opinion" (129). However, by the same token it would be equally unwise to alienate his party's newfound base of Christian social conservatives that have disproportionately gravitated towards Reform due to the other parties' "failure to occupy the socially conservative issue space" (Lusztig and Wilson 2005)—particularly social conservatism's "marginal ideological influence" (Patten 2013, 66) in the PC party. Hence, Manning's reluctance to situate the party on either the pro-life or the pro-choice side of the

debate speaks to how problematic it was to cater to a strong Christian conservative base while appearing "moderate to enough Canadians" (Farney 2013, 45) in order to form government.

Manning and LGBT Rights

In contrast with its stance on abortion, the party became resolutely social conservative on the issue of same-sex marriage. During Reform's 1994 Ottawa Assembly, Manning presented a resolution that would limit "the definition of a legal marriage as a union of a woman and a man" (Reform party 1994). This position was reiterated by Manning in the party's 1996 Vancouver Assembly (Reform Party 1996)—clearly placing Reform on the socially conservative end of the gay rights debate. The party's differential stance on same-sex marriage was probably due to a more divided public attitude about it at the time: 61% of the population was opposed to extending marriage rights to same-sex couples in the 1990s (Farney 2012, 105). It seems that as the general electorate was divided on the issue of same-sex marriage, Manning thought it was his opportunity to "tip his hat" (Farney 2013, 45) to his Christian conservative supporters as it would not necessarily endanger the party's electoral prospects.

For Farney (2012), such was an example of the Conservative leader "seeking to form government while keeping [the party's] principles intact" (111). Most importantly, such a socially conservative position was a watershed moment in earning Reform the reputation as "the religious party" (qtd. in Rayside et al. 2017) "with the most room for social conservative activism" (Farney 2012, 110). Manning's contrasting approach in same-sex marriage and abortion reinforces the idea that it was difficult for him to attract the vote of secular Canadians while keeping his "ideologically driven activist base" of social conservatives (Rayside 2011, 281): a conservative leader needs to be "judicious in picking its new political battlefronts" (McDonald 2010, 35) to avoid looking too extreme for moderate Canadians to support.

Manning Tempered Reform's Social Conservatism

Although he had put Reform on the socially conservative front on gay rights, Manning realized the negative electoral implications of being limited to this constituency alone. Because of this, he attempted to mask its social conservative profile through the language of direct democracy and populism. For instance, in 1996 the governing Liberals introduced a bill to add sexual orientation as a protected category under the *Canadian Human Rights Code*. Instead of imposing strict party discipline to compel his members to vote against it, Manning had put it up for a free vote—giving

the impression that following either his or the official party stance was not obligatory (Farney 2012). As Harrison (1995) also observed, Manning deliberately attempted to mask the strength and extent of Reform's social conservatism through "a vagueness obfuscated by populist calls to let the people decide" (136). According to Flanagan (2009), the leader did this to prevent Reform from "being identified as a socially conservative party" (214). Clearly, although Manning identified and surrounded himself with Christian social conservatives, he understood that being too fixated on this base is ultimately bad politics in light of electoral calculation. Hence, Manning knew that he had to be cautious in balancing his party's appeal to social conservatives and the party's need to attract moderates and social progressives.

Such a task, however, proved to be exceedingly difficult for the conservative leader. For example, Manning had to remove a number of hardline religious conservatives from the caucus for drawing unwarranted controversy and negative press to the party: he did not tolerate Bob Ringma's and Dave Chatters's public statement that employers should be able to fire gay employees if they wanted to (Farney 2012, 109). This course of action is worth noting because Manning disregarded the certainty of opposition and uproar among his party members for "heading in opposite direction" (Ellis 2005, 152) by not fully opposing gay rights. His decision to punish such members that aided the attempt of the Liberals to paint the Reform Party as radical and extreme demonstrates the delicate task of reaching out to moderates and social progressives without estranging a motivated and highly organized base of Christian social conservatives.

Additionally, he had to soften Reform's social conservative image by subsuming its agenda under policy appeals that attract other types of conservatives. For example, although Reform MPs were unanimously against the 1996 Liberal motion to add sexual orientation to the *Canadian Human Rights Code*, Manning contended that his objection hinged on the inconsiderate swiftness of the Liberals in pushing the bill through Parliament (Wagner 2012, 196). He also argued that incorporating sexual orientation would generate a differentiated rights regime where one group is given special treatment (Farney 2012, 109). At times when the judiciary in some provinces would rule in favour of broadening and advancing gay rights, Manning encouraged his caucus to frame and redirect their opposition to judicial activism. In addition to this, Manning's greater emphasis on populist principles that promoted balanced budgets, lower taxes, and smaller role for the government was simultaneously appealing to social conservatives, libertarians and fiscal conservatives for whom individualism and self-reliance are

mutually held as fundamental (Rayside and colleagues 2017, 337). In line with this perspective, Patten (2013) argues that that the neoliberal ideals of "individualistic and market-oriented values" (60) that "privilege individualism, freedom of choice and self-reliance" (61), gained social conservatives the "partisan space" to express their ideological and religious proclivities (66).

Manning's Dilemma Remained Unresolved

Despite Manning's serious efforts to strike the right balance between appealing to his social conservative base whilst solidifying his party's prospects for garnering enough moderate votes to form government, he failed. This was evidenced by the Progressive Conservatives' refusal, under Joe Clark, to merge with the Reform Party in 1998 despite the difficulty for either party to defeat the governing Liberals independently. As Patten observed (2013), Clark thought that Reform's "socially conservative views were too extreme" (69) and that it would be antithetical to the PC's long standing marginal position on contentious socio-religious issues (66) to be allied with Reform MPs who were clearly allied with the Christian Right. Moreover, Manning faced mounting pressure from many Reform MPs for not prioritizing opposition to abortion and gay rights in the party's official rhetoric and agenda (Malloy 2013, 186). For instance, Claire Hoy (2000) takes the view that Manning's decision to punish some of his MPs for controversial remarks against homosexuality and his reluctance about the party's social conservatism were interpreted as being tantamount to saying "we don't want Judeo-Christian conservatives in our party" (157-158). Such perception of betrayal felt by the Reform's social conservative base ultimately helped Stockwell Day's bid to topple Manning's leadership of the conservatives.

Significantly, the case of Preston Manning hints at a problematic double bind in which conservative leaders would be inevitably caught. As Sara Diamond (1998) accurately puts it, the Christian Right is "a double-edged sword" (3): they are a powerful and a loyal constituency within the party that could be mobilized to propel a religious politician to party leadership. However, due to the increasing secular progressivism of Canadian political culture, the Christian Right is also a "public relations liability" (3) as it endangers any serious prospect of forming government.

Stockwell Day

The case of Stockwell Day within the conservative bloc equally lends credence to the inherent difficulty of reconciling the need to satisfy the disproportionately high number of faith-based supporters within the party and an increasingly secular and socially liberal Canada. Unlike Manning, Day was a more outspoken Christian conservative who did not mince words when it came to his religious views and social conservatism. As Marci McDonald (2010), a political analyst who extensively documented the Christian Right's rise in Canada, describes, Day was a "renegade Pentecostal" (31) for his hardcore biblical literalism and affiliation with a congregation that speak in tongues. Also, Day was "more open about his religiosity" (Malloy 2011, 324) and was more willing to rally Christian interest groups and social conservatives for support by being outspokenly anti-gay rights and abortion.

Indeed, his successful bid to replace Manning as the leader of the Canadian Alliance was made possible by the efforts of highly organized Christian pressure-groups and networks (Patten 2013, 67; Malloy 2013, 191) like the Campaign Life Coalition as well as the endorsement of prominent Canadian evangelists and Christian activists like Roy Beyer and Charles McVety. Reportedly, Beyer's and McVety's backing of Day's campaign alone were so beneficial that it signed up at least 17,000 new party members—effectively propelling Day to win the Canadian Alliance leadership election in 2000 (Wagner 2012, 218). Indeed, as Dennis Hoover (2000), an American-based scholar who commented on the rise of social conservative activism in Canada, remarked, Day's success in supplanting Manning was indicative of the Christian Right's stronger and growing presence in the political arena.

Although Day was successful at replacing Manning, he inherited his predecessor's challenge with being closely associated with Christian social conservatives. To illustrate, the conservatives under Day also failed to defeat the Liberals in a federal election. This failure could be attributed to the Liberals' weaponization of Day's religious beliefs and association with social conservatives to portray his party as "at odds the Canadian mainstream" (Rayside et al. 2017, 54). For example, the visibility of Day's religious view about creationism spawned widespread public disaffection towards the Canadian Alliance. Warren Kinsella, a political strategist for the Liberals at the time, who displayed a purple Barney dinosaur doll during a federal election campaign interview to mock Day's belief in creationism and jested with the following: "I just

want to say to Mr. Day that *The Flintstones* were not a documentary—and that the only dinosaur that walked with human beings recently was this one right here" (qtd. in Wagner 2012, 220).

In the same vein, the Liberals also wanted to portray Day as a threat to women's rights and the gay rights movement. Rick Mercer, a political satirist, consistently "made fun of the Alliance" position on touchstone social issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage to "generate public disapproval" (Wagner 2012, 220). In the leadup to the 2000 federal election, perhaps Day realized that it was no longer in his best interest to deliberately side with social conservatives on the abortion and same-sex marriage debate. This is why when he was pressed by the media and the Liberals to fully reveal his view on abortion and same-sex marriage during the campaign, he toned down his social conservative rhetoric and remarked that though "he had personal beliefs…he would not impose them if he were elected" (Blais et al. 2002, 42).

Such change of tone could be attributed to the shifting public attitude in favour of same-sex marriage and abortion: at the time, about 55% of the population thought that same-sex marriage should be legalized (Rosentiel 2007) while roughly 78% were already approving of abortion. In addition, the legality of abortion was already settled in the *Morgenteler* ruling which renders the pro-life agenda effectively futile. This is important as it echoes Manning's reluctance to side with the social conservatives when the consequence would be the alienation of the progressive mainstream. More importantly, Day spoke the same language of separating his personal religious views and his political agenda in hopes that such an approach would neither turn-off the Canadian mainstream nor the Christian social conservatives that propelled him to the leadership.

Despite Day's efforts to assuage the concern of secular and socially progressive Canadians, the Liberals' succeeded at portraying him as someone extreme which not only undermined Day's electoral prospects but also made him "a national laughingstock" (McDonald 2010, 32) and a subject of "considerable public ridicule for his professed piety" (Malloy 2011, 325) during the federal election campaign—delivering an easy win for the Liberals. His inability to broaden his party's base beyond the social conservative bloc was in line with the difficulty that Manning had: Manning repeatedly remarked that his religious views had nothing to do with his political agenda in the face of political opponents who alleged that he was leading a religious party (Ellis 2005; Farney 2012; Flanagan 2009; Harrison 2007). As Malloy (2011) points out, Day's experience was consistent "with the documented Canadian political culture that limits the

overt mixing of religion and politics" (332). Clearly, Day was caught in the same double bind that his predecessor had to wrestle with: although it was in his interest to foster his relationship Christian social conservatives, he had to temper its visibility in the party in light of electoral calculation which ultimately disappointed them. Indeed, another point of similarity between Manning and Day was the latter's inability to fully satisfy his socially conservative base despite being "a standard bearer of their own" (McDonald 2010, 30).

Although the Alliance under Day increased their share of the popular vote and their number of seats, a leadership challenge was mounted led by fellow Christian social conservatives that became "among his strongest opponents" (Malloy 2011, 325). Wagner (2012) reported that Day's previous Christian conservative supporters "lost confidence" in him and were the first to foment the call to replace Day. The salient point here is it was exceedingly problematic to build "an electable socially conservative coalition" (Rayside et al. 2017, 55) as the Liberals tended to exploit it by making the conservatives unattractive to the secular and socially progressive mainstream.

Stephen Harper

Harper equally struggled with reconciling the need to retain the favor of social conservatives with the need to form government. Unlike his predecessors, "Harper didn't need any tutorials on the risks of mixing faith and politics" (McDonald 2010, 18) as he had witnessed how the socially conservative base that once helped Manning and Day turned to be an electoral liability. Like Manning and Day, Harper was caught in a double bind on same-sex marriage and abortion rights. When he first became the leader of the Alliance, Harper was especially uneasy with the party's strong religious profile as it may prevent him from merging with the PCs that remained adamant about "advocacy on issues it still regarded as matters of personal belief or conviction" (Rayside et al 2017, 52). Obviously, such a concern stems back from Manning's inability to strike a merger with the PCs because of Joe Clark's disapproval of the Christian Right's growing presence in the Reform Party. This shows that from the outset of Harper's leadership of the Conservatives, he was already careful "not to wear his religion on his sleeves" (Higgins 2008, 10).

Despite his knowledge of the highly "delicate dance" (Pennings 2019) with religious social conservatives, Harper was compelled to develop a strong relationship with them if he was to solidify his leadership. For instance, Harper knew that most Christian pressure groups that

once propelled Day into the leadership had shifted their backing towards him (McDonald 2010; Rayside et al. 2017) partly because of their disappointment with Day's failure to aggressively promote and defend social conservatism on abortion and gay rights in the 2000 federal election. On the flip side, Christian social conservatives also "realized they had gone too far with Stockwell Day…and that the Canadian political culture right is just too secularized for them to push very hard" (Rayside et al. 2017, 56). As a result, they had to opt for someone whom they knew was an evangelical conservative who could be more tactical and pragmatic on handling the socially conservative agenda. In any event, because Harper knew the mobilizing capability of that support base, he did not "try to drive social conservatives out of the party after his victory" (Farney 2012, 123). In fact, after uniting the right under the CPC he "demonstrated a new willingness" (Malloy 2011, 325) to accommodate social issues that were valued by Christian social conservatives. One example of this was when Harper openly took the socially conservative position on same-sex marriage during the 2004 federal election.

Harper's early lesson in 2004

In the lead-up to the 2004 Canadian federal election, the issue of same-sex marriage "bursted onto the centre stage" (Rayside et al. 2017, 56). The salience of this issue had been boiling since the 1990s when most of the rights and obligations that were associated with marriage were extended to same-sex couples. Adding on to the controversy, the SCC ruled in 2004 that same-sex marriage is constitutional and should therefore be legalized. In order to retain the loyalty of Christian social conservatives, Harper expressed an explicit opposition to same-sex marriage followed by other CPC candidates who "took advantage of the opening to express what were easily characterized as extreme positions" (Rayside 2011, 283). For example, CPC MPs like Randy White and Cheryl Gallant hinted at the possibility that the Conservatives would invoke the notwithstanding clause to override the SCC's ruling in *Reference Re Same-Sex Marriage.*

To Harper's dismay, the Liberals won the election and its victory was "widely attributed to public fears of the Conservatives' hidden moral agenda" (Rayside 2011, 283) of emulating George Bush's and the Republic Party's Christian agenda for America (Thomas et al. 2017; Farney 2012, 122; Warner 2010; Malloy 2011, 330; Malloy 2010). Shockingly, this Liberal fear-mongering campaign was potent enough to overpower the sponsorship scandal which was "so continuously in the air" (Rayside 2011, 283) that dramatically weakened the Liberals' electoral popularity (Stephenson 2010; Ellis and Woolstencroft 2006). As Malloy (2013) observed,

Harper's otherwise solid campaign was "damaged by the musings" (193) on same-sex marriage. It is worth noting that around this time, acceptance of same-sex marriage right has dramatically increased in Canada: 68% of the population were approving of lesbian and gays having the right to be legally married (Langstaff 2011). As a result, Harper's Conservatives were effectively put on a defensive by fending off the charge that they will impose their socially conservative views on Canadians once elected (Ellis and Woolstencroft 2004; Johnson 2005). Clearly, the old reality about the difficulty of being too associated with social conservatives resurfaced. As Douglas Todd (2008), a Canadian journalist, accurately puts it:

> Stephen Harper was damned if he does talk about his evangelical beliefs and damned if he didn't. If he continued to avoid answering questions about his religious convictions, political observers [would] say he [was] secretive, like he [was] hiding something. But, at the same time, most Canadians [did] not share the moral convictions of his evangelical denomination.

The defeat of Harper's CPC in the 2004 general election reflects the experience of Manning and Day whose failure to form government could be attributed to their close association with Christian social conservatives.

By the same token, that election was equally illustrative of the imperative to "motivate an ideologically driven activist base, particularly on moral issues" (Rayside 2011, 281) as Harper had taken over a party "with a newly expanded and energized base of social conservatives" (McDonald 2010, 36). As Darrel Reid, the president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada at the time, ominously said in the wake of the CPC's defeat in 2004 "you better get used to us, there are a lot more social conservatives around than you think" (qtd. in Mcdonald 2010, 36). Such a remark sends Harper a message that the social conservative camp within the CPC are either motivated and organized enough to take him out should another leadership election take place or was too reliable a base of supporters for Harper to waste.

Because of Harper's first-hand experience with the electoral harm brought by an "excessive focus on issues that would arouse accusations of a hidden moral agenda" (Rayside et al. 2017, 72), he had to be "keener than ever" (Rayside et al 2017, 79) to manage social conservatives better than his predecessors in the succeeding elections. As, unlike Manning and Day, the Conservatives under Harper formed government he was by far the most successful at striking the right balance between accommodating the sentiments of social conservatives and attracting a broader electoral support. While in government from 2006 – 2015, Harper's tactic to

keep the loyalty of social conservatives without jeopardizing their bid to broaden the party's electoral appeal was a form of "dog whistle politics" where appeals to Christian SoCons (social conservatives) were "largely unrecognized by secular" and progressive Canadians (Rayside et al. 2017, 58).

Such a strategy was characterized by a careful "walk [on] an uneasy tightrope [of] never taking too extreme a step" (McDonald 2010, 37), where Harper cultivated the support of a "burgeoning Christian Right" (37) in a way that is politically prudent. Harper succeeded at portraying the CPC "not [as] an evangelical government, but...clearly an evangelical-friendly government" (Malloy 2009, 2). However, as will be demonstrated further, the difficulty of balancing two competing interests—that is retaining the support of social conservatives without alienating social progressives that are needed to form government—continued to rear its ugly head during the Harper years particularly on the issue of LGBT rights and abortion.

Harper deals with LGBT rights issue

Despite being harmed by taking the social conservative side on same-sex marriage (SSM) in the 2004 federal election, Harper continued to preserve this constituency that had been at the core of the Conservatives' support base since Reform's insurgency. Evangelical Christians and traditionalist Catholics were important electoral constituencies for Harper largely because of these bases' strong track record of mobilizing political and financial resources. As such, he campaigned on revisiting the *Civil Marriage Act* by putting it up for a free vote once elected (Malloy 2011, 325; Langstaff 2011, 50). Although Harper delivered on his promise to reopen the issue after winning a minority government in 2006, the move to overturn the existing SSM legislation was defeated in a vote of 175 to 123. After this failed, Harper stated that the issue of same-sex marriage was effectively settled and any further effort to repeal the law would now be stifled (Lafrance 2019; Ellis and Woolstencroft 2006). The free vote on repealing the law on same-sex marriage and determining that the issue was closed "not to be revived" (Rayside et al. 2017, 340) is a case in point of how Harper skillfully retained the "activist energy" (Rayside et al. 2017) of Christian social conservatives without jeopardizing his bid to attract enough moderate voters to form government.

For McDonald (2010), the free vote was a form of "transparent cleverness" (43) because Harper knew the motion to repeal SSM would get defeated: he knew that even if his entire government which only held a minority at the time voted for the motion, the NDP, the BQ and

LPC can work together to defeat the motion. Worse, the motion received the bare minimum of debate time and Harper hardly "expended any political capital to ensure the motion's passage" (43). In other words, the motion to reverse the *Civil Marriage Act* was merely a strategic "token gesture" (Rayside et al. 2017, 340) to make Christian social conservatives feel that Harper did not want to sideline their sentiments completely. However, the move also defused accusations of other parties that the Conservatives were on a covert mission to impose a moral agenda.

The point to stress is that Harper was more adept than Manning and Day at structuring his appeals to religiously conservative supporters in a way that would either be unrecognizable to the public or equally appealing to the median and socially progressive voters (Thomas and Sabin 2019, Nadeau and Bastien 2017). Instead of commanding MPs to toe an official party line, he framed the issue as a matter of personal conscience (Malloy 2013) which simultaneously legitimized social conservatives who want a "partisan space" (Patten 2013, 61) and ate away the force of charges that the Conservatives "harboured a secret agenda designed to trample on Canadians' Charter Rights (Ellis and Woolstencroft 2006, 80)—an accusation that hindered the party from gaining enough moderate votes to form government in the past. Clearly, on the issue of SSM, Harper was effective at reconciling the "rambunctious theo-cons" (McDonald 2008) in his party in a way that does not alienate the broader electorate.

Harper's strategic challenge on LGBT rights

Despite Harper's success at simultaneously appeasing the demands of social conservatives and widening the party's electoral appeal, the "strategic dilemma" (Thomas and Sabin 2019, 4) of doing so continued to cause problems. As Rayside and colleagues (2017) observed, "moral traditionalists are not always content to have the issues around which they have traditionally mobilized be sidelined" (72). It bears remembering that although Harper gave social conservatives the opportunity to resist lesbian and gay right to marriage in 2006, Christian interest groups that continued to support the party did not stop from being strongly opposed to same-sex marriage. To name a few, well-organized and well-funded Christian pressure groups such as Focus on the Family Canada, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), REAL Women, and Cardus continued pressuring Harper's government to at least reverse some aspects of the same-sex marriage law (Rayside et al. 2017; Malloy 2011; Farney 2012, 121). Additionally, the party's Christian moral traditionalists continued to lobby against other measures to advance gay rights such as funding for pride parades, Status of Women Canada and the Court Challenges

program which were "long scorned by social conservatives" (McDonald 2010, 43; Lafrance 2019) for being supportive of the LGBT-rights cause.

Because of Harper's resolve to keep "the front door barred" (Rayside et al. 2017, 57) on such contentious social issues, some social conservatives started to think that Harper was "never really one of them" (Wells 2006, 314), "never a member of the Christian-right tribe" (McDonald 2010, 30) and nothing more but an opportunist who capitalized on social conservatives as a means to an end. Indeed, some prominent Christian conservatives in the party even started to call for a leadership election in 2008 to select a more hardcore social conservative like Jason Kenney (McDonald 2010). Such occurrence harks back to Manning and Day's experience who were both eventually repudiated and disavowed by the same Christian social conservatives that brought them to power after falling short on promoting a cause held dear by this support base. Clearly, the dilemma of placating the party's strong religious profile in order to widen its electoral appeal continued to prove challenging under Harper. As McDonald (2010) vividly described, "Harper appeared to be a prisoner of the very theo-con strategy that had brought him to power" (49)

In stark contrast with Manning and Day, Harper continued to succeed at "navigating the tricky waters" (McDonald 2008) of retaining the Christian SoCons' loyalty or support without risking the alienation of the broader electorate. According to Warner (2010), Harper did such through "many small and and possibly imperceptible steps...presented as seemingly moderate and unthreatening" (235). Although the Liberals and the NDP continued to weaponize CPC's social conservatism in the 2008 and more so in the 2011 federal election by "rekindling the discomfort" (Ellis and Woolstencroft 2006, 84) that voters had with the Conservatives in 2004, the party still formed government. The CPC's success in this regard could be attributed to Harper's covert tactic of appeasing the demands of social conservatives pertaining to lesbian and gay rights that gave them a sense of incremental victories (Thomas and Sabin 2019, 5; Rayside et al. 2017, 58).

A clear example of Harper's "dog whistle tactic" (Bean 2014, 226) to galvanize the support of social conservatives was his appointment of notable Christian social conservatives who were against the advancement of lesbian and gay rights to top governmental posts. Harper deliberately hand-picked cabinet members who were known for their public antagonism to LGBT inclusiveness. For example, instead of stamping Day out of the party after Harper unseated him as the Alliance leader in 2002, Day was even appointed to the prestigious

portfolios of public security, international trade, and later as the head of the Treasury Board. Similarly, Vic Toews, a prominent opponent of same-sex marriage who once said that extending legal matrimony to lesbians and gays could result in polygamy (Cordon 2002), was appointed as Justice Minister.

Likewise, Julian Fantino, a former Ontario policeman who was once accused of "mounting an anti-gay witch hunt" (Hannon 1995) was appointed as Minister of State for Seniors and later as the Associate Minister of Defence. Among these cabinet ministers infamous for their faith-based social conservatism, Jason Kenney was "the most enduringly influential" (Rayside et al. 2017, 59). A charismatic Catholic known for his opposition to Bill C-38 in 2005 (Rayside et al. 2017), Kenney became Harper's "point man for the religious right…playing emissary to groups with whom Harper doesn't wish to leave prime ministerial fingerprints" (McDonald 2006). During Harper's years, Kenney was appointed to key government positions such as Parliamentary Secretary, Minister of Employment, and Minister of Defence.

In Rayside's view (2011), Harper surrounded himself with these Christian individuals as he believed that they would be "a source of satisfaction to religious conservatives" (401) and would effectively "signal [his] empathy with social conservatives" yet in in a way that "were less visible to the general public" (Thomas and Sabin 2019, 2). Janet Epp Buckingham, a Canadian religious historian, saw these appointments as the government's way to finally listen to the sentiments of Christian social conservatives (McDonald 2006). Clearly, by appointing figures who were strongly connected to the Christian Right, Harper gave the party's moral traditionalists a sense of validation—a tactical move to ease their disappointment with Harper's failure from overturning the *Civil Marriage Act*.

Harper on abortion

Much like lesbian and gay rights, the issue of abortion required Harper's strategic approach. Similar with his response after the motion to repeal the *Civil Marriage Act* was defeated, Harper consistently stated that he was not interested in revisiting the law on abortion:

> As long as I am prime minister we are not opening the abortion debate. The government will not bring forward any such legislation and any such legislation that is brought forward will be defeated as long as I am prime minister…. I'm not opening this debate. I don't want it opened. I have not wanted it opened…. The public doesn't want to open it. This is not the priority of the Canadian public or this government and it will not be. (qtd in. Ibbitson 2011)

A 2000 poll conducted by the National Post and Environics found that 66% of the population agreed to the question: "every woman who wants to have an abortion should be able to have one" (Joyce 2002). Four years later, this figure had risen to 78% who agreed with the idea that women should have complete freedom on their decision to have an abortion (Joyce 2002). As such, it makes sense that Harper was unsettled about openly siding with social conservatives on the issue as it would put the party out of the mainstream and play to the Liberals' accusation that the Conservatives had a secret moral agenda. Sharing this view, Basen (2013) noted that an open opposition to abortion was "bad politics" for a party trying to reach out to progressive voters.

But because overturning abortion rights remained a "first cause" (Ibbitson 2011) to the party's Christian social conservatives, Harper had no choice but to be more adept at keeping the issue "at a certain distance" (Coren 2017) but never too far away that the base would feel they were being overlooked. He did such by exercising strict control over his religious MPs to ensure that their public statements were well-coordinated and that "they stayed on-message" (Ellis and Woolstencroft 2006, 70) but more so by undercutting legislative attempts that would have incrementally undermined abortion rights (Malloy 2013, 189; Rayside 2011, 282; McDonald 2010, 17; Farney 2012, 115; Rowe and Bird 2013).

To show traditionalist Catholics and evangelical protestants that he was not willing to completely jettison their pro-life agenda either, Harper allowed his Conservative MPs to put forward motions that would have regulated abortion. Between 2006 and 2013, ten Conservative proposals were advanced that would have either restricted abortion services, recognize fetal rights, or insulated medical professionals from performing an abortion on the grounds of moral conscience. In 2006, a proposal was tabled that would have made it a separate criminal offence to cause injury to an unborn child when a crime was committed against a woman (i.e, murder will be automatically two counts). To the dismay of Christian Right proponents in the party, the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business held that the bill was unconstitutional and therefore non-votable. According to Rayside and colleagues (2017), such was mocked by Conservative pro-lifers as merely "a way for the government to bury the bill" (86). In 2010 and 2012, respectively, Conservative motions to criminalize any form of coercion that would intimidate a woman to have an abortion and to re-examine the legal definition of a human being were put to a vote but were both defeated.

Although Harper personally voted against both proposals, he did not whip his caucus to do the same. More importantly, he never went as far as prohibiting his MPs from introducing such motions in the first place. Crucially, such was because Harper did not want to openly insult his socially conservative base by resolutely shutting down any attempts to revisit the abortion issue. However, he neither wanted to allow the party to openly and formally roll back abortion rights as it would renege on his commitment not to legislate on the issue and once again "arouse accusations of a hidden moral agenda" (Rayside et al. 2017, 79) and ultimately "doom attempts to gain voters" (Rayside 2011, 282). As Ranklin (2009) rightly observed, Harper's strategy for "keepings its pro-life caucus majority happy was to give backbenchers leeway to introduce measures but then to ensure that they did not pass" (242). Similar to Harper's deft handling of same-sex marriage, Harper did "a masterful job" (Malloy 2019) at preserving the support of the Christian Right yet in a way that reflected an awareness that an outright support for their cause would be a political suicide. Such a strategy bears on the idea advanced by Flanagan (2007) where Harper would not permit his MPs to launch a full-scale assault on abortion rights but would permit motions that "are less likely to scare [median] voters" (282).

Despite Harper's relatively successful bid to strike the right balance between appeasing social conservatives and widening the party's electoral appeal, prominent Christian conservatives were disappointed with Harper's reluctance to support the incremental reversal of abortion rights. When Harper disowned the 2008 Conservative motion that would have made it "a separate offence" when a fetus was harmed by a crime against the mother (Taber 2011), many traditionalist Catholics were the first to call for the "immediate replacement of Stephen Harper as party leader" (Warner 2010, 237). According to McDonald (2010) observed, prominent evangelical Protestants followed suit with this call and sternly warned that Harper "would pay a price at the polls" (44) for his unwillingness to clearly stand with pro-lifers. Clearly, similar with the fallout of Harper's reluctance on legislating against same-sex marriage, many social conservatives saw Harper's "furtive mixture of awkwardness and calculation" (44) on abortion as a form of "crass political expediency" (44) that would ultimately upset their loyalty to the party.

Adding to Harper's problem, the Liberals and the New Democrats continued with their relentless accusation that the CPC "harbours a secret agenda on social issues" (CTV News 2011) given that Harper always stopped short of barring his MPs from introducing any motions that

would regulate abortion rights. Also, other parties were "quick to pounce" (Ibbitson 2011) on the idea that Harper was a "ruthless ideologue" (Ibbitson 2011) when he excluded funding for abortion in Canada's initiative to aid women in developing nations (Lafrance 2019; Urback 2019; Ang and Petrocik 2012; Farney 2012, 127). The case of Stephen Harper's handling of LGBT rights and abortion reflect the endurance of the conservative's religious conundrum experienced by conservative leaders since Manning as they tried to simultaneously cater to religious conservatives and attract much-needed progressive voters.

The Case of Stephen Harper: An Outlier?

As a counterpoint, one could argue that the conundrum of reconciling the strong base of Christian social conservatives with the need to widen the party's electoral appeal had not been a problem during the Harper years. Harper, who was also propped by religious conservatives in a leadership race and even led the party that undoubtedly became the bastion of Christian social conservatives, won three consecutive federal elections. For some, this is proof that a conservative leader's struggle of building an electable party with a strong social conservative profile is not that big of a problem. However, this counterpoint fails to appreciate several key differences in Harper's leadership style in comparison to that of Manning's and Day's.

Unlike Manning and Day, Harper said very little about his religious beliefs prior to and during his time as the conservative leader. All the media and his political opponents knew of him was that Harper belonged to a church that holds socially conservative views on touchstone moral issues such as homosexuality and abortion. Even during his time as a Reform MP, Harper had long recognized that a leader's public exposition of social conservative views was a "tactical nightmare" (McDonald 2010, 29). Because of Harper's relative silence, he "remained an enigma" (McDonald 2010, 38) to his political opponents and to the Canadian public which made the Liberals' weaponization of the conservatives' social conservatism unfounded and largely ineffective. Manning, on the other hand, had no shortage of instances when he spoke about his religious views and his spirituality. Similarly, Day's faith-based opposition to same-sex marriage and abortion rights was also exceedingly visible to the public and to the media.

Further, Harper was arguably cleverer and tactical whenever the media and his opponents dig into his religious views. As Nikiforuk (2015) comically remarked, "Harper was the smartest evangelical politician you never heard of" as he was successful at "keeping his God talk below

the media radar" which made him look like "a boring centrist" to secular and progressive voters when in reality he appealed to "the views of an extreme religious minority." This goes back to Harper's "dog-whistle politics" where the support of the Christian Right was rallied in a way that remained undetected by the public.

Additionally, Harper exercised a tight control of his caucus to ensure that the party's religious appeal and rhetoric were effectively downplayed when necessary. As Rayside (2011) observed, the control he exercised over his MPs was "as tight as that exercised by any federal party leader within living memory" (285). Unlike Manning and Day who had great difficulty with keeping outspoken religious MPs from speaking about their morally traditionalist beliefs publicly, Harper practiced a "tightly disciplined style of politics" (Farney 2012, 115). For instance, his office closely monitored the public statements of his MPs during election campaigns to make certain that they did not veer too far away from the official party approach and message about contentious moral issues (Malloy 2013). Also, compared to his predecessors, he was quicker in disavowing patently anti-gay comments made by staunch social conservatives in the party (Malloy 2013, 193). Hence, Harper's proven ability to win federal elections should not be construed as proof that the conservative leaders' religious conundrum stopped at him: he nevertheless struggled with it many times during his time as the CPC leader and prime minister. A fundamental reason why Harper was by far the most successful conservative leader was because he had the opportunity to experience and learn from history about the electoral danger of overplaying moral traditionalism—especially same-sex marriage and abortion rights.

Chapter Conclusion

As secularization became rampant and social progressivism increasingly successful in the social, political, and legal spheres, socially conservative Catholics and Protestants could no longer afford to remain divided like they did for most of their history. In their mutual goal to push back against secularization and social progressives, they have channelled their efforts to form a united coalition which was later called the Christian Right. Increasingly, this united front of Christian social conservatives gravitated disproportionately to the major conservative party of the day: starting with Manning's Reform, the evangelical Protestants were found in disproportionately large numbers in comparison to other parties.

Also, there was evidence that a significant minority of traditionalist Catholics slowly shifted its support away from the Liberals and toward the Conservatives. Upon the Alliance's formation in 2000, the concentration of socially conservative Protestants and Catholics became clearer. By 2004 when the conservatives were reunited into a single party, it could no longer be denied that the Conservative camp had become the bulwark of Christian social conservatives. This chapter inquired what caused the gravitation of this base to the Conservative camp and not into the other federal parties. I argued that the Liberals and the New Democrats, parties that both held significant proportions of evangelical Protestants and traditionalist Catholics in the past, changed course towards social progressivism. As the Conservatives starting with Reform did the exact opposite, the direct result was the uneven and disproportionate appeal of the party to social conservative constituents.

Further, this chapter tackled the pros and cons of this strong religious profile brought by the gravitation of the Christian Right to the party. I demonstrated how Manning, Day, and Harper struggled with the same conundrum: moral traditionalists were key to a leader's success internally but an anchor to a leader trying to become prime minister. When a leader adjusted their strategy of not veering too far to moral traditionalism to attract median voters, the same moral traditionalists that once supported them were the first ones to call for their removal as party leader. This cycle of a conservative leader's dilemma is centred on the difficulty of balancing this support base that was extremely helpful to the party financially, in membership recruitment, and in leadership races with the need to court moderate voters who do not want anything to do with faith-based traditionalism. Each leader's experience illustrated how exceedingly difficult such a task was. Manning, Day, and Harper all had the challenge of making the party electable by being tactical and judicious at picking which contentious social issues they could polarize and when they should do it. Unfortunately, all three experienced defeats in a federal election precisely because of their failure to strike the right balance between these two competing bases of support.

With the end of Harper's 10-year rule in 2015 and the succession of a new Conservative leader in 2017, the question that is yet to be addressed is whether this Conservative conundrum endured. In the next chapter, the focus will shift on the case of Andrew Scheer and how he navigated through the difficult waters of simultaneously catering to social conservatives and courting enough moderate voters to form government.

Chapter Three

The Case of Andrew Scheer and the Endurance of the Conservative Religious Conundrum

> "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other."
>
> – Matthew 6:24

Chapter Introduction

The cases of Manning, Day, and Harper all demonstrate that the party's Christian social conservatives were adept at mobilization as well as forming well-organized and well-funded lobby groups powerful enough to determine the outcome of a leadership race. In other words, it was in a Conservative leader's best interest to court this constituency during a leadership election in order to secure victory. At the same time, the experiences of these conservative leaders also illustrate the electoral precariousness of being associated with the agenda of this base during a federal election. After the 2015 federal election, it did not take Harper long to assume full responsibility for his party's defeat and resign. Taking the helm as interim leader, Rona Ambrose led the CPC from November 2015 to May 2017.

Days after Ambrose's official announcement that she would leave federal politics, the CPC held its leadership election to formally select the party's contender for prime minister in the upcoming 2019 federal election. That leadership race ended up with Andrew Scheer—a long-time CPC MP, a practicing Catholic, and a former speaker of the House of Commons—as leader. In this chapter, the key question is whether the dilemma of Manning, Day, and Harper persisted in the time of Scheer. This chapter is broken into three major parts: Scheer's experience in the leadership contest, his performance during the federal election campaign, and the consequence of failing to defeat the Liberals. In each section, I will argue that the case of Scheer has multiple points of similarity with the experience of Manning, Day, and Harper as they attempted to balance the strong Christian social conservative base with the need to court enough moderate voters to form government.

Scheer during the 2017 leadership election

Like the 2000 and 2002 Alliance leadership races, the 2017 CPC leadership contest began with religious traditionalists "seeking the opportunity for greater influence" (Thomas et. al 2017, 2).

However, despite being widely perceived as a religious moral conservative with a strong track record of siding with social conservatives, Scheer was not the first choice of this support base. The preponderance of evangelical Protestants and Catholic traditionalists threw their support behind Pierre Lemiex and Brad Trost, whom they thought were the "unabashed social conservatives" (Thomas et al. 2019, 14) who would never enter into compromises just to win a federal election. In this section, I will make the case that Scheer was not the Christian Right's first choice because of his reluctance to resolutely side with their agenda on LGBT rights and abortion.

Scheer on LGBT rights

As early as the leadership contest, Scheer was already cognizant of the dangers associated with being overly attached with the sentiments of the Christian Right. It is worth remembering that when the *Civil Marriage Act* was being debated in 2005, Scheer was one of the many social conservative MPs who mounted a fierce opposition against it. He argued that the defining factor for marriage was the ability of the couple to procreate. As homosexual couples cannot procreate, he contended that it goes against the very definition of marriage. One would have a strong reason to believe that such opposition was grounded in his religious views: Scheer's contention that "there is no complementarity of the sexes" (qtd. in Open Parliament 2005) sounds close to the Catholic Church's Catechism (1995) that says homosexuality "do[es] not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity" (625). The salient point is that Scheer had a record of being a staunch defender of Christian social conservatism.

A year before the leadership race, in a complete about-face decision, Scheer spoke in favour with party members to axe the CPC's traditional definition of marriage as "the union between a man and woman" (McGregor 2016) from the party's official policy document. Upset with the results, faith-based social conservatives who claim they make up 40% of the party's constituency threatened that "they would stay home and stop supporting the CPC" (McGregor 2016) at all levels particularly in the upcoming 2019 federal election as the move was "an attack on [their] fundamental values and principles" (McGregor 2016) concerning marriage. For Scheer and other more progressive CPC MPs—such as Michelle Rempel, Lisa Raitt, and Rona Ambrose—the party's decision was warranted as same-sex marriage had been legal since 2005 which made the move inevitably forthcoming. It would be fair to surmise that Scheer's vocal

support for this move was a key factor for social conservatives not picking him as their first choice in the leadership race.

From the outset, it was clear that the lack of preferential support from the Christian Right was a disadvantage for Scheer given this base's record of influence and strength in swaying the outcome of a leadership election (Thomas et al. 2017; Thomas and Sabin 2019; Simpson 2018). However, as Thomas and colleagues (2017) surmised, Scheer learned from the experiences of his predecessors that a party with a strong base of social conservatives could only be electable if the party could build a "broader coalition of interests, of which only one was socially conservative" (31). Clearly, as early as the leadership race, Scheer was already experiencing the difficulty of courting socially conservative supporters without setting him up for an easy Liberal take-down fueled with accusations of a hidden moral agenda.

Scheer on Abortion

Another reason why the Christian Right did not prefer Scheer as the party's leader was due to his vow not to reopen the abortion debate. According to Smith (2019), the highly influential anti-abortion group Campaign Life Coalition that propped Day to unseat Manning and Harper to defeat Day "disqualified Scheer as their preferred candidate" because of his promise not to resurrect the abortion debate. Another potential cause of social conservative reluctance about Scheer was his conspicuous absence in the annual anti-abortion rally, called March for Life, while the two other socially conservative leadership contenders—Trost and Lemiuex—were present (Thomas et al. 2017; Platt 2017).

Similar to his stance on LGBT rights, it would be fair to surmise that as Scheer knew how the anti-abortion agenda was a losing battle since the time of Manning, he would surely come under fire from the Liberals' negative campaign should he win the CPC leadership. Again, this illustrates the problematic double bind in which conservative leaders since Manning have been caught: a leader cannot win a leadership contest without galvanizing the support of social conservatives, but that leader could also not win a federal election without tempering that sentiment.

Scheer wins the CPC leadership

Against all odds, Scheer won the leadership race with the help of significant runoff support from the social conservatives' preferred candidates. To the dismay of social conservatives, their two standard bearers of Christian social conservatives in the race, Lemieux and Trost, only finished

seventh and fourth in the final ballot. This goes to show that although the Christian Right make up a significant proportion of the CPC's support base, they are not the majority. As Thomas and colleagues (2017) aptly observed, the CPC remained a "coalition of conservatisms" (2) where social conservatives consist of just one big chunk of a bigger picture. Nevertheless, the Christian Right base continued to "punch well-above its weight" (Coren 2019b). It turned out that Scheer's top contender in that race was the libertarian and socially moderate Maxine Bernier. When Christian social conservatives realized that their preferred candidates stood little chance of winning the leadership, they had to cast their ballot to Scheer who was a far more palatable alternative to Bernier. It is worth noting that Bernier was far more unwilling than Scheer to revisit contentious moral issues. Also, he had long offended the Christian Right by marching on a pride parade (Aiello 2019). As a result, social conservatives had no choice but to channel their votes to Scheer (Coren 2019c; Aiello 2019).

According to Coren (2019a), the social conservative runoff vote that went to Scheer was key to his victory over Bernier in a tight final tally of 50.95% for the former and 49.05% for the latter. In any event, the fact that Scheer's victory could be directly attributed to the support of Christian social conservatives automatically compelled him to represent their views on the political sphere. Even though Scheer was not the first choice of the Christian Right, his leadership win was still celebrated as a victory for faith-based traditionalism. As the Campaign Life Coalition announced:

> The results of the race demonstrate the strength of the social conservative movement and importance of pro-life and pro-family voters. The principled, bold social conservative candidates Brad Trost and Pierre Lemieux finished forth and seventh respectively, and Andrew Scheer, who has a pro-life voting record, won. (qtd. in Thomas et al. 2017, 31)

However, the Christian Right made it clear that their support always comes with a price. As one social conservative MP ominously warned, "we are a lot stronger than you think we are, we are a lot more vocal than you think we are, and we are going to put a lot more pressure on you than you think we will" (qtd. in Thomas et al. 2017, 32). Clearly, such a stern warning already hints at Scheer's impending challenge of giving them the political space to voice out traditionalist views on sexuality and human life in a way that would not open him up to accusations of bigotry and faith-based prejudice.

The 2019 Federal Election

Similar to Manning, Day and Harper, Scheer was hounded on LGBT rights and abortion rights election campaign the most. Scheer's difficulty with fending off criticisms over his social conservatism concerning these two issues reflect the trouble of retaining religious supporters that helped him win the leadership yet in a way that would not harm the party's electoral prospects.

Scheer Deals with Questions about LGBT Rights

Scheer's struggle with deftly handling the questions about same-sex marriage reflects the same conundrum of his predecessors. During the campaign, concerns about Scheer's personal and religious views came to the fore when the Liberals unearthed a 2005 House of Commons speech of Scheer vociferously opposing the Civil Marriage Act:

> Whatever is decided here on [Bill C-38], marriage itself will not be changed in reality. The government may force all Canadians to recognize homosexual marriages. It may force marriage commissioners to resign if they refuse to perform something that is against their conscience. The state may even threaten religious institutions and clergy who stand up against such actions….Abraham Lincoln has been credited with this quote, which goes something like this, "How many legs would a dog have if you counted the tail as a leg?" The answer is just four. Just because a tail is called a leg does not make it a leg. If Bill C-38 passes, governments and individual Canadians will be forced to call a tail a leg, nothing more, but that is not inconsequential, for its effect on marriage, such an integral building block of our society, would have far-reaching effects….There is no complementarity of the sexes. Two members of the same sex may use their God-given free will to engage in acts, to cohabit and to own property together. They may commit themselves to monogamy. They may pledge to remain in a loving relationship for life. In that sense they have many of the collateral features of marriage, but they do not have its inherent feature, as they cannot commit to the natural procreation of children. They cannot therefore be married. (qtd. in Open Parliament 2005)

Undoubtedly, the Liberals unearthed this decades-old speech during the campaign to undermine the Conservatives' electoral prospects. Such Liberal strategy of attacking a conservative leader's social conservatism with regards to marriage resonates with the experience of Manning, Day, and Harper. In the past, the Liberals had long used the conservative leader's religious background and the Christian social conservatives that disproportionately support them as a political weapon to "send up alarms about potential extremism" (McDonald 2010, 38). Ultimately, the goal had always been to undermine the conservatives' appeal to median and

progressive voters who were either disappointed with the Liberals or reluctant to vote conservative.

To illustrate, since the period when Manning was the leader of the major conservative party of the day, the Liberals have taken advantage of the popular opinion that has increasingly shifted towards majority support for extending marriage rights to same-sex couples (Rayside 2011; Langstaff 2011; Thomas and Sabin 2019). In the 1993 and 1997 federal elections, the Liberals focused on making moderate voters wary about the Conservatives' "perceived fundamentalism" (Basen 2013) when Manning resolutely took the social conservative stance on same-sex marriage. As Farney (2012) recalled, the Liberals accused the Reform Party of following the example of Ronald Reagan who openly ran on a promise to incorporate Christian views in his governmental agenda. A hotspot for Liberal scrutiny was Manning's close relationship with major evangelical interest groups such as EFC and Focus on the Family Canada (Farney 2012) and was further fueled by the fact that Reform disproportionately attracted MPs who were known for their outspoken social conservative leanings.

The case of Stockwell Day and Stephen Harper further evidenced the endurance of the Liberals' ploy of targeting the conservatives' moral traditionalism in order to undermine them before the eyes of the median voters. Day's social conservatism, particularly his belief in biblical creationism, was widely regarded as the prime cause for the Alliance's failure to widen their electoral base in the 2000 federal election. Such was equally true with Harper whose open opposition to same-sex marriage in the leadup to the 2004 federal election was blamed for their their defeat (Gidengil et al. 2006, Rayside 2011; Segal 2006). In any event, the Liberals' main goal whenever they try to paint the conservative party as a harbourer of hardline religious traditionalists has been to prevent the party from expanding outside their traditional bases of support. More specifically, in Scheer's case the Liberals wanted to prevent the CPC from attracting centrist voters who were disillusioned by the Liberals' string of undelivered electoral promises, gaffes, and controversies. The point to stress is that the experience of Scheer during the campaign shows that the Liberals continue to "force the Tories onto the defensive" (Coren 2019) on lesbian and gay rights. More importantly, Scheer's case reinforced the conservative leaders' double bind problem where courting the loyalty of social conservatives would inevitably alienate much-needed moderate voters—and vice versa.

Another point of similarity between Scheer and his predecessors was his response to the accusation that he would reopen the law on same-sex marriage. In some instances when his opponents raised the spectre of a covert moral agenda on LGBT rights, Scheer was quick to dismiss it on the grounds of "fear-mongering and character assassination" that attempts to paint him as "a social conservative extremist" (Stone 2018). For him, the Liberals were merely "dredging up divisive social issues" in order to hide its failures such as "broken promises, massive deficits, tax increases and ethical and corruption scandals" (qtd. in Harrison 2019). However, on most occasions Scheer offered a reassurance that as prime minister he will not reopen the same-sex marriage debate and would oppose measures to revisit it (Harris 2019; Victoria News 2019; Stone 2018; Rabson 2019) as it was an issue settled long ago and "not to be revived" (Rayside et al. 2017, 340). Strikingly similar to Manning's and Harper's tactic, Scheer continued to use of "the language of direct democracy" (Malloy 2013, 194) through free votes on contentious moral issues: he promised that he will neither drive away social conservatives from his caucus nor will he stop his MPs from tabling bills that would regulate aspects of same-sex marriage.

Scheer's balancing strategy resonates the most with Harper's who retained the loyalty of the Christian Right by giving them latitude to introduce socially conservative measures but "ensure[d] that they did not pass" (Rankin 2009, 242) so that the party could continue to "reassure moderates" that he was "merely a benign, piano-playing centrist" (McDonald 2010, 48). The salient point is that the old conservative tactic of playing a brokerage-style compromise where neither social conservatives nor social moderates would be alienated persisted in Scheer's case. Crucially, such suggests that Scheer continues to struggle with the same predicament experienced by conservative leaders who were not able to simply take one side of a contentious moral issue as it would either alienate the loyal base of moral conservatives or harm attempts to widen the party's electoral appeal: a conservative leader needs to go through the trouble of exercising "strategic caution" (Rayside et al. 2017, 58) by "choosing battles carefully" (Rayside et al. 2017, 55) on contentious moral issues.

Scheer and Pride Parades

Scheer's handling of the issue concerning his refusal to attend any of pride parades further illustrates this conservative religious conundrum. Undoubtedly, his non-attendance in such

parades fueled the Liberal ploy to make voters suspect a secret conservative moral agenda. As Matt Pascuzzo, a Liberal PMO spokesman, consistently stated, "by refusing to attend Pride events, Andrew Scheer is showing his true colours and is turning his back on the LGBTQ2 community" (quoted in. Aiello 2019). This position was echoed by Justin Trudeau himself who retorted that "leaders support people…leaders need to defend everyone particularly people who are marginalized…people need to know that their prime minister will defend them… it's not enough to reluctantly support [LGBT rights]" (qtd in. Global News 2019). Breakenridge (2019) advances the view that the Liberals' emphasis on Scheer's non-attendance in pride parades was a tactic to prevent voters who were disappointed with the Liberals from jumping ship to the Conservatives: "the message is very simple: you can have us, warts and all, or you can have Andrew Scheer."

This view was shared by Coyne (2019) who argued that as a "replay of the same appeal to progressive voters" back in 2015 will no longer work for the Liberals, they "returned to an older strategy [of] frightening the pants off of them with tales of the horrors that would follow if...they were so foolish as to stray into the conservatives." Clearly, the Liberals hoped that the Conservative leader's "perceived fundamentalism" (Basen 2013) illustrated by his conspicuous absence in gay parades could be potent enough to suppress the glare of their own failings. In the past, this Liberal strategy worked well when in 2004 Harper failed to defeat the Liberals despite the widespread disillusionment caused by the sponsorship scandal: instead, the highlight of that election was the suggestion that Harper was a "ruthless ideologue" (Ibbitson 2011) who was keen to step on the rights of LGBT people.

In defence of his decision not to march in any pride parades, Scheer contended that it was unnecessary to take part in such events given the Conservatives' "proud history in fighting for the rights and protection of all Canadians, including those in the LGBTQ community, at home and abroad" (qtd. in Aiello 2019). Scheer's claim of defending and promoting LGBT rights has weight: in 2017 he strongly condemned human rights violations against the lesbians and gays which were carried out in countries like Brunei and Russia; the party has advocated for increasing the number of LGBT asylum claimants that Canada accepts; the Conservatives ran openly gay candidates in several ridings; and Scheer supported the Liberal apology in 2018 to the LGBT community who were systematically discriminated against by the Canadian government (Aiello 2019; Smith 2019), Essentially, Scheer hinges his refusal to attend on his

strong record of supporting the LGBT community in many ways—which for him makes marching on a pride parade either redundant or lacking in utility.

Scheer's refusal to participate in the event resonates with Harper's strategy of defusing accusations that the Conservatives had a hidden anti-gay agenda. Like Scheer, Harper never took part in any pride parades (Aiello 2019) and even reduced the event's federal funding at one point (McDonald 2010; Malloy 2013). However, the most fundamental point of similarity between Scheer and Harper was their rationale for not marching: Harper also rationalized his absence from such events based on his party's record of protecting gays and lesbians from "draconian punishments and unspeakable violence inflicted" (Hopper 2012) on them abroad. For instance, Harper tasked his Foreign Affairs minister to openly denounce criminal sanctions against homosexuality that were passed in Russia, Iran, and Uganda (Hopper 2012; Chase 2013). This was followed by Harper's order to fast-track and accept significantly more asylum applications by homosexual refugees from these countries who fled an impending execution (Chase 2013). More interestingly, the CPC under Harper even started to hold annual conferences for LGBT Conservative MPs (Hopper 2012). For Hopper (2012), Harper took these actions to make the CPC look like the "unlikely warriors for gay rights" in a bid to defuse allegations of a hidden anti-gay agenda. Clearly, Scheer and Harper realized that not having any concrete actions that appear to defend lesbian and gay rights would not bode well with the party's desire to widen its electoral appeal—considering the increasing support for homosexual rights in Canada (Thomas and Sabin 2019; Martyn 2013; Laflamme and Reimer 2019). Put simply, just like Harper, Scheer still had to reason his way out of pride parades in ways that "dodge sly digs about his religious wing nuts" (McDonald 2006).

The lingering question here is why Scheer, who says he supports LGBT rights, stops short of participating in pride parades. This question was posed to him point-blank by an interviewer who asked why he singled out pride parades as a means to show support for LGBT people—suggesting that there was something about it that makes him uneasy (The West Block 2019). This is a question worth asking because would it not have been in Scheer's electoral interest to just take part in those events to disprove accusations of being a hardline fundamentalist once and for all? One reason could be Scheer's own religious views on homosexuality which prevent him from taking part in such an activity. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1985), homosexual acts are considered as "intrinsically disordered" "contrary

to natural law" and "gravely depraved" (625). As such, maybe because he was a practicing Catholic, Scheer was unwilling to transgress the official theological belief of his religion by openly taking part in a celebration of homosexuality.

A more plausible reason could be Scheer's unwillingness to turn off his faith-based traditionalist supporters to whom he owed his narrow victory during the leadership race. It is worth understanding that perhaps a key point of similarity between evangelical Protestants and traditionalist Catholics, who form the Christian Right, is an emphasis on Scripture. For them, God had long decided that matrimony was only intended for heterosexual couples as grounded in Bible verses such as Genesis 2:24, Mark 10:6-9, and Matthew 19:3-12 (Flaman 2015). To this end, Christian social conservatives generally see pride parades as a condonement of sin that is patently offensive to God:

> When we partake in 'pride' events and celebrate 'LGBT values', we are doing a great injustice to our brothers and sisters in Christ who experience same-sex attraction, because we are leading them to believe that God gives his blessing to same-sex sexual intimacy and encouraging them to act on attractions that God has identified as sinful and forbidden. Even when churches support and encourage 'gay pride' saying they uphold values such as 'tolerance' and 'equality', they are really celebrating 'values' that go against God's word. (Christian Concern 2018)

To illustrate, consider the social conservatives' vociferous outrage when they heard a Harper Conservative minister allocated funding for a pride parade. In 2009 a portion of the federal stimulus package was apportioned towards a Toronto pride parade that resulted in some of the party's most influential Christian social conservatives and interest groups to "explode in anger" (McDonald 2010, 48) and lobby for the "swift reversal" (Malloy 2013) of the move. Particularly furious, Charles McVety claimed that Harper betrayed the social conservative base once again and sternly warned that the party would pay the price in the polls. Similarly, Conservative MP Brad Trost, a former Mennonite minister, called for the suspension of Diane Ablonczy who was the minister responsible for apportioning funding for the said event (McDonald 2010). In damage control, Harper quickly overturned the decision and claimed that the Prime Minister's Office itself "was taken by surprise" (Westen 2009) when Ablonczy made that decision.

According to Malloy (2013), Harper's quick reversal of the funding was "driven primarily by anti-Pride social conservative pressures" (198) and was meant to play "visibly to the social conservative base" who were outraged. Considering this occurrence in the past, Scheer probably speculated that a similar forceful outcry would ensue from the party's Christian MPs

and interest groups that supported him in the leadership race if he dared to march in a parade. Clearly, like his predecessors, Scheer was still trapped in a double bind where he had to fend off accusations of a covert anti-gay agenda yet in a "nuanced fashion" (Malloy 2013, 199) that would not alienate the highly motivated and well-organized base of Christian social conservatives. As McDonald (2010) vividly described, the strong influence of the Christian Right in the party created "a strategic straitjacket" (48) for conservative leaders: Scheer continued to "walk on an uneasy policy tightrope…never talking too extreme a step" (McDonald 2010, 37) where every decision must neither make the social conservatives nor social progressives feel that the party sold them out to the other.

Scheer Deals with Questions Concerning Abortion Rights

In addition to the issue of LGBT rights, the abortion issue equally dogged Scheer's election campaign. Unlike the issue of same sex marriage which was deliberately highlighted by the Liberals, the resurrection of the abortion debate came primarily from concerns that the resurgence of pro-life sentiments in some U.S. states will "slowly creep" into Canada (CBC News 2019). Nonetheless, the Liberals capitalized on this opportunity to keep "hammering away at [Scheer's] positions on social issues" (Simpson 2019) in a bid to keep moderate voters out of the CPC's reach. In both the federal leaders' debates, Trudeau did not miss any chances to make Scheer's social conservatism on abortion rights a line of attack: "do you as a leader, as a father, and as a husband believe that women have a right to choose?" asked by Trudeau during the French debate (Global News 2019). Such lends credence to the idea that the Liberals wanted to revive a contentious social issue during the election and that the Conservative leader would continue to face the challenge of being associated with the unpopular side of the debate.

Scheer's response with criticisms on his pro-life position reflect the same approach used by Manning, Day, and Harper when their "rivals sought to exploit their deeply held convictions" (Levitz 2019). Repeatedly during the campaign trail, Scheer held that although he is personally pro-life (Simpson 2019) he will neither reopen the debate on abortion nor welcome any measure to revisit the law. As he said in one interview, his personal views on abortion should be beside the point:

> I believe you can have both of those positions: you can have a personal view and you can acknowledge that in Canada, the prime minister does not impose a particular viewpoint on Canadians. (qtd. in Levitz 2019)

Note that this tactic of demarcating the personal from the political was already used by Manning, Day, and Harper. For them, using this dodge could assure Christian traditionalists that the leader was "a man of God" (Rayside et al. 2017, 56) yet in a way that makes the party relatively immune from accusations of a covert moral agenda. When the Liberals were accusing Manning of furtively following the steps of Reagan and his Christian Right allies in the United States, he retorted that although he had "a personal agenda as a believer…it's not a political agenda" (Manning 1988, 13). Similarly, during the 2000 federal election when the Liberal presented Day's social conservative views in a negative light, Day was put on the defensive and said that although "he had personal beliefs…he would not impose them if he were elected" (Blais 2002, 42).

Such narrative also persisted under Harper who, after being questioned by the Liberals concerning the CPC's perceived fundamentalism, also defended with a similar statement: "I won't say I always keep my faith and politics separate but I don't mix my advocacy of a political position with my advocacy of faith" (qtd in. McDonald 2010, 20). Put simply, Andrew Scheer was a representative case in point of the same narrative used by previous Conservative leaders in the problematic attempt to reassure both the party's disproportionately large social conservative supporters and the much-needed moderate voters by drawing a line between the religious and the political.

The Aftermath of the CPC's Failure to Form Government

The 2019 federal election delivered a minority Liberal government. The Liberals lost twenty of its seats while the Conservatives gained twenty-six. Interestingly, the Liberals also lost the popular vote to the Conservatives which was only the second time in Canadian history where a party formed a government without winning the popular vote. The election results also marked the first time in Canadian history where no single party got more than 35% of the popular vote. Other key highlights include the failure of Liberals to win any seats in Alberta and Saskatchewan and the resurgence of the separatist Bloc as a strong regional party. The victory of the Liberals in that election—but more so the failure of the Conservatives to defeat the Liberals—begs the question: where did the Conservatives fall short and what prevented them from winning over much-needed moderate and progressive voters? I will argue that public knowledge of Scheer's religious background as well as the party's continued association with social conservatives (Simpson 2018) remained a fundamental factor for their failure to form government.

Post-mortem analysis of the CPC's defeat

Despite Scheer's consistent reassurances that he will not reopen debates and legislations on divisive social issues such as SSM and abortion, the majority of the median and progressive voters either remained with the Liberals or cast their votes for the BQ and the NDP. Political commentators attribute the Conservatives' near-miss to several factors which consist of not fully addressing climate change, a narrow party platform, focusing on the wrong issues, Scheer's personal unpopularity, and even Doug Ford's ineffectiveness in Ontario as Scheer's political ally (Cullen and Thibedeau 2019). However, the failure of Scheer "to mount a robust rebuttal" (Levitz 2019) whenever his rivals "sought to exploit" (Levitz 2019) his religious background and his party's disproportionately large number of Christian social conservative supporters was apparently the most salient.

Relentlessly hounded by suspicions and queries about his stance on same-sex marriage (SSM) and abortion throughout the campaign, Scheer lost because he failed to reassure median voters particularly in the crucial vote-rich Quebec, the 905 region, and the GTA that "he possessed sufficiently modern opinions" (McCullough 2019). It is worth noting that these regions have become the key battlegrounds during federal elections as the party that garnered the most seats in these regions was often the party that formed government (Gurney 2019; Harris and Thibedeau 2019). In line with this view, Urback (2019) contended that "earning super-support" in Alberta and Saskatchewan was insufficient if the Conservatives could not "siphon enough votes away in Ontario and Quebec." In Urback's (2019) opinion, the CPC's inability to gain electoral traction in these key districts were due to its failure to expand its appeal "beyond those who are already loyal." Such a hypothesis was buttressed by an Angus Reid poll (2019) which found that 27% of voters do not believe a politician's word to keep personal or religious views out of the political realm while the remaining 41% reported that they would doubt the authenticity of such assurances. When combined, these numbers would total to 68% of voters who were not persuaded by Scheer's efforts to combat suspicions of a hidden moral agenda.

More strikingly, 51% of voters reported that Scheer's religiosity and moral traditionalism had "a negative impact on their opinion of him" (Angus Reid 2019; Thomson 2019). To this end, many political commentators, party insiders, and analysts pointed to the visibility of Scheer's faith-based traditionalism combined with the endurance of the party's distinct appeal to and

association with Christian social conservatives (Coren 2019) as their "death knell" (Kheiriddin 2019) in the election.

Additionally, this view was shared by party insiders and former CPC MPs. Peter MacKay, the former leader of the PC party, infamously noted that the CPC's defeat was comparable to "having a breakaway on an open net and missing the net" (qtd. in Harris and Thibedeau 2019). For MacKay, Scheer's religious background and social conservative views on LGBT rights and abortion were the "stinking albatross…[that] hung around [his] neck" (qtd. in Aiello 2019)—causing "nervousness" (qtd. in Wherry 2019) among female and median voters. MacKay's view was corroborated by John Baird, a former minister in Harper's cabinet, who penned the official post-mortem analysis for the party. Specifically addressing Scheer's failure to deftly deal with LGBT rights and same-sex marriage when opportunities arose, Baird held that:

> One positive result of the otherwise dispiriting federal election is that it confirmed large majority support for LGBTQ rights. A political leader who considers gay families less worthy of respect or is visibly uncomfortable with marriage equality is now an electoral liability no party can afford. (qtd. in Aiello 2020)

Other party insiders such as Kory Teneycke and Sara McIntyre echoed MacKay's and Baird's analysis. Teneycke and McIntyre both claimed that Scheer's absence in pride parades was a mistake and that it is no longer electorally persuasive to claim that one's religious beliefs would not bleed over one's political agenda: half-hearted support towards pride parades and abortion rights are automatically viewed as bigotry by median and progressive voters (Aiello 2019).

Scheer's near-miss in this election which was widely attributed to his religious background and the CPC's strong religious profile buttresses the overarching claim of this paper: it was exceedingly difficult to reconcile the party's well-funded and disproportionately large number of moral traditionalists—which had been key to an individual's victory in a leadership race since the time of Manning—with the need to broaden the party's electoral appeal. In effect, Scheer alienated many potential voters by failing to look "commonsensical and moderate enough" (Farney 2013, 45). As McDonald (2010) vividly described, conservative leaders are bound to be "constantly rushing to put out ideological brush fires" (44) caused by their religious background and the strong presence of Christian traditionalist ideology.

Such experience echoes with Manning who never formed government because Joe Clark refused to merge due to concerns that bred hardline social conservatives and religious extremists (Harris 2015; Patten 2013). Like Manning, Day's bid to form government was also harmed by

the visibility of his religious views and also by prominent members of the Christian Right who wanted Day to push their agenda. In the same vein, Harper also fell short of defeating the Liberals once when in 2004—after he openly sided with his Christian Right constituents on the issue of same-sex marriage—the Liberals used it to fuel its negative campaign against the Conservatives. The overarching point is that Scheer's near-miss in 2019 and its cause reflect the experience of Conservative leaders since the time of Manning: the problematic double bind in which Manning, Day, and Harper were caught in was the same double bind in which Scheer was imprisoned.

Christian Social Conservatives Call for Scheer's Resignation

After the federal election, it did not take the same Christian social conservatives that helped him win the leadership race long to call for his resignation. For many of these constituents, Scheer both betrayed and failed to defend their beliefs during the election campaign by not resolutely siding with them. More specifically, they felt betrayed by Scheer's promise not to introduce measures that will reopen the same-sex marriage debate and the abortion law. Tanya Allen, an outspoken evangelical Protestant, regarded such commitment as "authoritarian and dictatorial" (qtd. in Cullen 2020). Particularly upset with Scheer, the Campaign Life Coalition which marvelled at Scheer's leadership win in 2017 did not hold back from wanting him removed as leader for failing to represent their views forthrightly during the campaign:

> In the end, many Canadians just want principled politicians who stand up for what they believe. Unfortunately, Scheer did not give the perception that he is such a man. Scheer and his team ran a blunderous campaign and snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. If Scheer had stood firm on his principles, not apologized for them, and told the hostile, Trudeau-loving apologists in the media to go jump in the lake, he would have endeared himself much more towards that large swathe of mushy-middle voters. (qtd. in Boutilier 2019)

Other prominent representatives of the Christian Right, such as Brad Trost, Jeff Gunnarson, Charles McVety, thought Scheer was an "indecisive and weak leader" (qtd. in Walsh 2019) for fumbling on LGBT rights and abortion during the election. For these people who backed Scheer's leadership bid, his attempt to walk in both social conservative and progressive camps during the campaign was "a recipe for disaster" (Walsh 2019). Here, there are echoes once again with the experience of Conservative leaders since the Reform Party. Manning also turned off the evangelical Protestants that helped him build Reform as a strong regional party. This base's

disillusionment with him ultimately led to his defeat at the hands of a more outspokenly religious politician—Stockwell Day.

Sharing the fate of Manning, after Day failed to showcase his views on abortion and same-sex marriage in the 2000 federal election to the liking of the Christian social conservatives, they replaced him with another evangelical Protestant—Stephen Harper. However, this cycle continued with Harper whose leadership of the CPC was threatened in 2008 by key figures of the Christian Right after they were disappointed with Harper's failure on reversing the *Civil Marriage Act* and his undercutting of a legislative attempt to regulate abortion. Significantly, the case of Andrew Scheer demonstrates the perpetuation of the same conundrum faced by his predecessors as they tried to simultaneously retain the loyalty of Christian conservatives and court the vote of moderates.

Chapter Conclusion

Like Harper in 2015, it did not take Scheer long to step down as party leader after he failed to defeat the Liberals in the federal election. A day after a revelation that party funds were being used to pay for the private schooling of his children surfaced (Fife 2019), Scheer announced that he is resigning as the CPC's leader but would stay on as an interim until a new leader is selected in June 2020. It is entirely possible that such a reason was merely a diversion to avoid blaming social conservatives directly. In any case, this chapter demonstrated that the religious dilemma of conservative leaders persisted with Scheer. However, this conundrum has been far more evident in the case of Scheer considering the simultaneous increase in the power and influence of the Christian Right within the party and the unyieldingly steady movement of the Canadian majority towards socially progressive values on sexuality and women's reproductive rights.

Conclusion Chapter

Summary

Any examination of the relationship between religion and politics in Canada would be incomplete if it does not address the long-standing political cleavage between Catholics and Protestants. Scholars of electoral behaviour had long observed a distinct proclivity for Catholics to vote Liberal and for Protestants to vote conservative. Such was evident in the first few decades after Confederation and could be attributed primarily to the historical conflict between the two founding nations of Canada—Britain and France. Fundamentally, this deep-rooted tension between Catholics and Protestants made its way to a polarized voting behaviour which persisted well into the twenty-first century.

The academic literature indicates a relative silence on any study that pertains to the association between religious affiliation and vote choice in the first half of the twenty-first century. However, some believe such political cleavage between Catholics and Protestants did not cease to exist. In any case, Meisel's pioneering case study of Kingston, Ontario voters confirmed the persistence and existence of the cleavage. Succeeding case studies led by other political scientists and sociologists found that this religion-party link endured until the last federal election of the twentieth century. Such was worth examining for causal factors as the political division between Catholics and Protestants endured despite the massive changes in Canada's religious and political landscape. Since the 1960s, the rate of church attendance has been in rapid decline for both Catholic and Protestant traditions. The dominance of Christianity was also challenged by the rise of non-Christian groups that emanate from Eastern religious traditions such as Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism, among others. By the 1990s, upon the emergence of the Reform Party and the Bloc Quebecois as strong regional parties, the political landscape also went under considerable upheaval: The PCs were decimated and lost official party status while the NDP lost more than half of its seats. Despite such change, Catholics remained electorally loyal to the Liberals while the preponderance of the Protestant vote had moved to Reform which was the major conservative party at the time.

In Chapter One, I argued that there are two complementary causal factors for the association of Catholics with Liberals and of Protestants with conservatives. The first factor was the historical tension between Catholics and Protestants characterized by the colonial struggle for

dominance between French and English Canadians. The second factor was the resonance of theological emphasis with ideological orientation: Catholic theology is grounded in the common good and collectivism which became increasingly the ideological leanings of the Liberal Party while Protestant theology is hinged on individualism which was increasingly emphasized by the conservatives. These two causal factors were complementary in the sense that one factor was more significant for a certain period than the other.

In the twenty-first century, a new cleavage that involved religion has emerged: Christian moral traditionalists had disproportionately flocked to the conservatives while secular and social progressives gravitated toward either the Liberals or the New Democrats. Such was a dramatic change as it signalled the end of religion as a predictor for vote choice. Faith-based traditionalists with socially conservative views on sexuality and human life were increasingly found in the Canadian Alliance and later in the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC). In effect, religious affiliation was replaced by the degree of moral conservatism as the effective predictor for partisan alignment with the conservatives becoming the "pole of attraction for all Canadians who are attached to and practising their faith no matter what their particular affiliation" (Rayside et al. 2017, 44). I argued in Chapter One that traditionalist Catholics and evangelical Protestants were increasingly driven into an unexpected alliance as secularization became rampant since the 1960s and as socially progressive movements gained traction in the political and legal sphere.

Chapter Two addressed the question of what propelled the faith-based moral traditionalist into the conservative party and not into the other major parties. The movement of the Liberals and the New Democrats toward a more socially progressive agenda effectively drove moral traditionalists away. As the conservatives, starting with the Reform Party, became welcoming and sympathetic to social conservatism, it follows that faith-based traditionalists of varying Christian affiliation became disproportionately attracted to side with them instead. Such was the beginning of an emerging political cleavage between moral conservatives on the one hand and social progressives on the other that became most evident in the twenty-first century.

The fundamental consequence of a strong religious profile to the conservatives was a difficulty for party leaders to lead the party into victory during a federal election. Manning, Day, and Harper struggled with the conundrum of simultaneously retaining the support of Christian social conservatives and broadening the party's electoral base to include enough social moderates to form government. As Chapter Two illustrated, such a task was exceedingly difficult

because Christian social conservatives do not like their agenda being sidelined during a federal election even though their views were clearly a major turn-off to the electoral mainstream. Manning, Day, and Harper all reinforce the notion that it was extremely problematic to convince median voters that the party was either socially moderate enough or that it would not impose morally traditionalist views on Canadians once elected. Such difficulty could be attributed to the Liberal Party that continually weaponized the conservatives' religious and socially conservative profile to paint them as Christian extremists—a tactic that was key for the failure of Manning, Day, and Harper (in 2004) to form government.

Adding to the problem of conservative leaders, they all share the experience of an uprising and revolt from the same Christian social conservatives that helped them win the party leadership. The primary reason was the failure of these leaders to represent faith-based social conservatism fully come a federal election. As Harper (2003) recognized, it was difficult for social conservatives to "realize that real gains are inevitably incremental." Often, for Christian social conservatives their party leaders' strategic approach of downplaying their views for electoral reasons was merely a "cynical and opportunistic political tactic to avoid taking stands" (Warner 2010, 236) on the issues most important to them. This disappointment with the party leader had always resulted in their call for a leadership race to replace and punish the leader for not repaying them with loyalty. The overarching point in Chapter Two is grounded in this remarkably difficult undertaking for leaders to strike the right balance between retaining the loyalty of Christian social conservatives and broadening the party's appeal.

In Chapter Three, the main purpose was to test the continuity of this conservative religious conundrum after Stephen Harper. Andrew Scheer's experience during the leadership race, the federal election campaign, and in the aftermath of his party's defeat confirm the persistence of the double bind in which his predecessors were caught. He lost the election when he failed to garner enough seats in key electoral battlegrounds which many political observers attributed to the visibility of his religious and socially conservative background. Political commentators and internal party critics share the view that Scheer's image as a Catholic traditionalist and a vigorous opponent of same-sex marriage and abortion has now "acquired the status that rabid anti-bilingualism has long held. It is an out-there, fringe position, well beyond the mainstream" (Nerenberg 2019). Meanwhile, the Christian Right whose runoff vote gave Scheer the leverage over Bernier in the tight leadership race was equally disappointed with

Scheer but more so for his refusal to double down on his moral conservatism during the election campaign. Significantly, Scheer went through the same cycle of conservative religious conundrum that Manning, Day, and Harper had to go through. The case of Andrew Scheer strengthens the fundamental notion of this paper that reconciling the conservative party's distinctly large and powerful base of faith-based traditionalists with the necessity to form government was a problematic endeavor.

Canadian Pluralism and Diversity under Fire

The notion that religious and moral conservative values were anchors that weighed the conservatives' electoral prospects undermines the meaning and value of Canadian pluralism and diversity. Canada claims to be a beacon of diversity where individuals are free to think, speak, and hold differing values. As Harrison (2019) contends, the marker of any free society is "the notion that individuals are free to think as they want, so long as their views are not being forced on others." These conservative leaders all used the narrative of relegating their religious and morally traditionalist views to the domain of the private and personal in a bid to assure the electoral mainstream that such views would not be imposed on them. To the dismay of Manning, Day, Harper, and Scheer, this strategy was neither reliable nor effective. The secular and socially liberal mainstream probably doubt a politician's promise not to let one's religious views come in through the backdoor once in government or perhaps do not believe that a religious politician simply cannot be prime minister.

The insistence of the electoral mainstream on all party leaders vying for a governmental mandate ought to be either secular or socially progressive undermines the notion of societal pluralism that Canada prides itself on. At the bare minimum, a truly diverse and pluralistic society should be tolerant and aware that individuals will have differing viewpoints and worldviews on a wide array of matters. However, people must also accept that such would not be a hindrance to governing for all citizens. To illustrate, consider the fact that Scheer never even brought up the issue of same-sex marriage and abortion once on his own during the election campaign. More importantly, he reiterated time and again that his religious views will not impair him from governing for all Canadians and that he would not impose his values. The only time it became a huge issue was when the mainstream media and the Liberals made a big deal out of it in a bid to paint Scheer as a bigot that harbours religious extremism. As Rex Murphy (2019), a popular Canadian commentator on political and social issues, vividly described, "even the dogs

in the street, the very mutts of the alleyways, knew and know that Andrew Scheer was not running for PM to establish a new Catholic Dominion." The salient point here is that conservative leaders were often unfairly attacked for their religious beliefs and awkwardly scrutinized for their moral conservatism. This suggests that Canadian society is not as pluralistic as many people might think it is: the Canadian electorate actually applies a "religious test" to those vying to form government to ensure that those running for prime minister "bows down at the altar of all things sexual and women's reproductive rights" (Jarrett 2019). Implying that a traditionalist Catholic cannot be prime minister sends religious moral conservatives the message that they are not welcome in this country. Such is incommensurate with the popular Canadian claim that this is a heterogeneous country and that one's religion and worldview is not an impediment for a person's bid to advance in our society.

On the Liberal Hypocrisy and Double Standard

The attacks on these conservative leaders suggest a considerable degree of political hypocrisy on the part of the Liberals. As described in Chapter Two, many Liberal MPs and former prime ministers alike were either evangelical Protestants or traditionalist Catholics who were not always supportive of either same-sex marriage and abortion. It is worth remembering that the legalization of abortion and same-sex marriage faced considerable scrutiny from within the Liberal ranks itself. Even Ralph Goodale himself, who tweeted Scheer's video criticizing the Civil Marriage Act, voted against a motion from a Bloc MP in 1995 that proposed the legal recognition of same-sex spouses (Selley 2019). Also, four years later Goodale voted for a Reform motion to limit the definition of marriage as exclusively between a heterosexual couple (Selley 2019). Further, former Liberal prime ministers such as Jean Chretien and Paul Martin were both practicing Roman Catholics who claimed that they personally oppose abortion and same-sex marriage (Macdonald 2019). For these reasons, the Liberals' blast against these conservative leaders' religious views and social conservatism is problematic at best and hypocritical at worst. Canadians should be concerned because such hypocrisy casts doubt on what the Liberal Party really stands and its commitment to combat fearmongering for political gain.

More importantly, the scrutiny of these conservative leaders' religious moral conservatism reveals an extreme double standard. For instance, in the 2019 federal election it was staggeringly mind-boggling that Elizabeth May's, Jagmeet Singh's and Justin Trudeau's

religious views on abortion and same-sex marriage were never scrutinized as much as Scheer's. May is an ordained Anglican priest who once said that her personal hero was Jesus Christ (Brean 2019); Singh is a practicing Sikh; Trudeau once declared that he was personally against abortion (Tunney 2019) and that his Catholic faith was "an extremely important of who [he is] and the values that [he] try to lead with" (The Canadian Press 2011). Why neither the Liberals nor the mainstream media were putting up the same faith-based questions asked of Scheer such as whether they consider either homosexuality or abortion a sin. On the surface, Scheer, Singh, Trudeau, and May all have a strong religious background—so why were the criticisms and accusations of religious extremism solely fixated on the conservative leader alone? As Murphy (2019) retorted, "if we're going to have religious questions put to one leader, let's put them to them all." Canadians should be alarmed of such a double standard because it indicates a lack of fairness in our electoral politics and the cherry-picking of conservative leaders as scapegoats for accusations of a covert moral agenda.

The Moment of Truth: Will History Repeat Itself?

At present, there are four main contenders for the Conservative leadership: Peter MacKay, Erin O'Toole, Derek Sloan, and Leslyn Lewis. So far, the conservative religious conundrum is already starting to rear its ugly head when Richard Decarie, an outspoken social conservative who said being gay was a choice, was disallowed from running. Many prominent social conservatives in the party such as Derek Sloan slammed the Leadership Election Organizing Committee's decision to ban Decarie as outrageous, undemocratic, and an attack on traditionalist values. Meanwhile, O'Toole was quick to denounce Decarie's remarks and supported the move to disallow him from running in the leadership race (Thibedeau 2020). Clearly, O'Toole was already showing the same degree of awareness that former conservative leaders had, particularly that of Andrew Scheer back in 2017's leadership contest, about the political danger of not seeming socially moderate enough. It is fair to assume that O'Toole knows how easy it was for the Liberals to sink the conservatives' bid to form government by capitalizing on the party leader's religious background and the party's disproportionately large base of Christian moral traditionalists.

However, like Manning, Day, Harper, and Scheer, O'Toole also seems to recognize that he cannot dispense with the value of the mobilizing capacity, financial power, and influence of the Christian Right in the party when it comes to swaying the outcome of a leadership race. Time

and again, moral traditionalists have demonstrated that they are organized and powerful enough to significantly influence a conservative leadership election. Because of this, it is not surprising that O'Toole has already signalled his sympathy to this base albeit in a cautious manner—like these former conservative leaders—when he criticized MacKay for vowing to ban the Conservative caucus from tabling legislations against abortion and same-sex marriage. For O'Toole, the strategy used by former conservative leaders of never whipping conservative MPs on moral issues should continue to be the official party policy of the CPC (Thibedeau 2020). Perhaps O'Toole was planning to imitate Harper's strategy of retaining the loyalty of moral traditionalists by letting Conservative MPs to table legislations that would regulate abortion but ultimately undercuts its prospect of getting passed. Clearly, O'Toole wants to utilize the language of direct democracy and free votes again to simultaneously keep the loyal support of Christian moral conservatives and appear moderate to median voters. In any event, such a strategy already suggests that O'Toole understands the Christian Right's power and influence within the party and how important it is to get the support of this base in order to win the party leadership.

Interestingly, like Scheer, O'Toole does not seem to be the standard bearer of the Christian Right at the moment. The Campaign Life Coalition suggests that it would throw its support behind either Sloan or Lewis as they are the most "ideal candidates for social conservative voters" (qtd. in Thibedeau 2020). For many prominent Christian social conservatives, O'Toole is just another opportunist "timidly trying to rub shoulders and perhaps lure" (Thibedeau 2020) their support but would bail on them eventually. On this point, there is a possibility that what happened in the previous leadership contest could happen again considering that neither of the preferred candidates of social conservatives are doing well at internal party polls right now. It seems that the race would be tight once again between two candidates who are both non-ideal for the Christian Right: moral traditionalists are unlikely to support O'Toole because of his reluctance about doubling down on morally conservative stances when it comes to human sexuality and reproductive rights. However, this support base is even more unlikely to support MacKay not only because he explicitly vowed to preclude his caucus from advancing any motions that would regulate either abortion or same-sex marriage but also because he recently called their deeply-held views as "stinking albatrosses." A tight race between these two contenders might once again present the old dilemma to the party's moral conservatives: who is

the least worst option? Here, one can already see the potential perpetuation of the conservative religious conundrum that plagued conservative leaders since the time of the Reform Party where the Christian Right would push the least worst candidate in a tight race to the finish line.

Even if the progressive MacKay wins the leadership race, it would still be in his best interest to unite the party's many different camps of conservatives—a huge chunk of which is the social conservative base. In other words, although he claims that he will whip his caucus either to refrain from legislating on abortion and same-sex marriage or to vote in a socially progressive direction, it is improbable that he would actively drive social conservatives away from the party—lest he wants to waste this base's loyalty and capability to raise party funds. This means that he would probably still be compelled to court this base in some way when it comes to LGBTQ rights and abortion on the campaign trail "simply to keep their partisan coalition together" (McCullough 2019). Also, his electoral chances of forming government in the next federal election would be hurt if he chooses to dispense with any effort to retain social conservatives. This is because it would further expose to the public how divided and disarrayed the party is. By the same token, if he makes an about-face decision to make direct appeals to social conservatives, he risks driving away centrist voters that are essential to form government. In any event, a Conservative leadership led by MacKay is likely to go through the same double bind in which former conservative leaders were stuck.

In the same vein, an O'Toole leadership is also likely to face the similar dilemma of previous conservative leaders. History has consistently shown that being on the fence of the moral traditionalism-versus-social progressivism debate either makes the leader look indecisive and disloyal to the Christian Right or a harbourer of a hidden moral agenda to moderate voters. Even if he follows through with allowing free votes on matters of moral conscience and continue to allow MPs to table motions that would regulate abortion and same-sex marriage, he would still be inclined to step in and undercut such efforts—just as Harper did. This is because openly opposing these well-established and widely accepted rights through legislation will always remain politically suicidal come federal election. By the same token, if O'Toole undermines the attempts of the Christian Right to make Canada a resolutely Christian nation that is devoted to resist the advancement of LGBT rights and women's reproductive rights, this base is likely to get disheartened yet again and cynical enough to start calling for O'Toole's resignation. As such, it

appears that no matter the outcome of the CPC leadership race this year the conservative religious conundrum would inevitably endure.

Potential Solutions to the Religious Conundrum

The likelihood of the religious conundrum persisting in the future begs the question: what are the possible solutions to this? One possible solution is better communication. It is useful to look back at the case of Stephen Harper and examine the things he did right which helped him defuse accusations of a hidden moral agenda. Harper was an effective communicator: he ensured that his party's official position on abortion and same-sex marriage was well-coordinated and that his Conservative MPs stayed on message. Also, his demeanor and responses to media interviews when he was asked to say something about his religious views were more consistent and self-assured. In other words, although the public knew he had a religious and a socially conservative background, he nonetheless projected confidence and forthrightness about it. This is in stark contrast with Scheer who gave garbled messages and fumbled responses whenever his views were scrutinized by the Liberals and the public. For instance, his strategy every time the Liberals attacked his views was either to point out how they were merely "dredging up" (Harrison 2019) the issue to cover their own failings or he just sidestepped the attacks as unimportant entirely. Additionally, it was not until the campaign's last leg when he started to make assurances that although he was personally pro-life, he will not impose his views on Canadians.

Interestingly, there was even an instance from the past when Scheer claimed he was a feminist and that he would support motions to fund overseas abortion (CTV News 2019). All these contradictory and confusing messages Scheer sent fueled the Liberals' negative campaign against the Conservatives: it made him look secretive and as if "the two hemispheres of his brain were warring with each other" (Todd 2008). Put simply, at the very least a conservative leader should not be giving obfuscated responses when pressed on LGBT rights and abortion. The conservatives need a leader that are effective at communicating the party's message and can deftly handle questions on these matters in a way that would neither upset the socially conservative base nor harm the party's electoral prospects to form government.

Further, solving the religious conundrum warrants the moral traditionalist base to better understand the electoral danger of moving too dramatically to have their sentiments realized in the political sphere. Unfortunately, as shown in this paper, faith-based traditionalists treat a conservative leaders' reluctance to fully side with their views as an opportunistic political tactic

and a betrayal of their trust. Perhaps the conservatives can solve their religious conundrum once this support base start to recognize that one of the primary goals of the party they belong to is to form government and stay in power. Of course, a party leader is duty-bound to represent the views of these social conservatives considering that they form a considerable constituency of the party. However, it seems that these Christian social conservatives often forget that they are not the only constituency or support base of the conservative camp. For instance, the leader also needs to retain and attract the support of other types of conservatives who may not be fond of social conservatism. Most importantly, the conservative leader needs to attract median or centrist voters as well come federal election time so it can form government. None of these will be workable and possible if the Christian Right would remain unwilling to be patient and realize the importance of an incremental approach. Even their Christian Bible speaks to the importance of patience when waiting for things that God's people are asking: "but if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (Rom. 8:25).

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