

# **Statistics of Orthodox Christianity in Canada**

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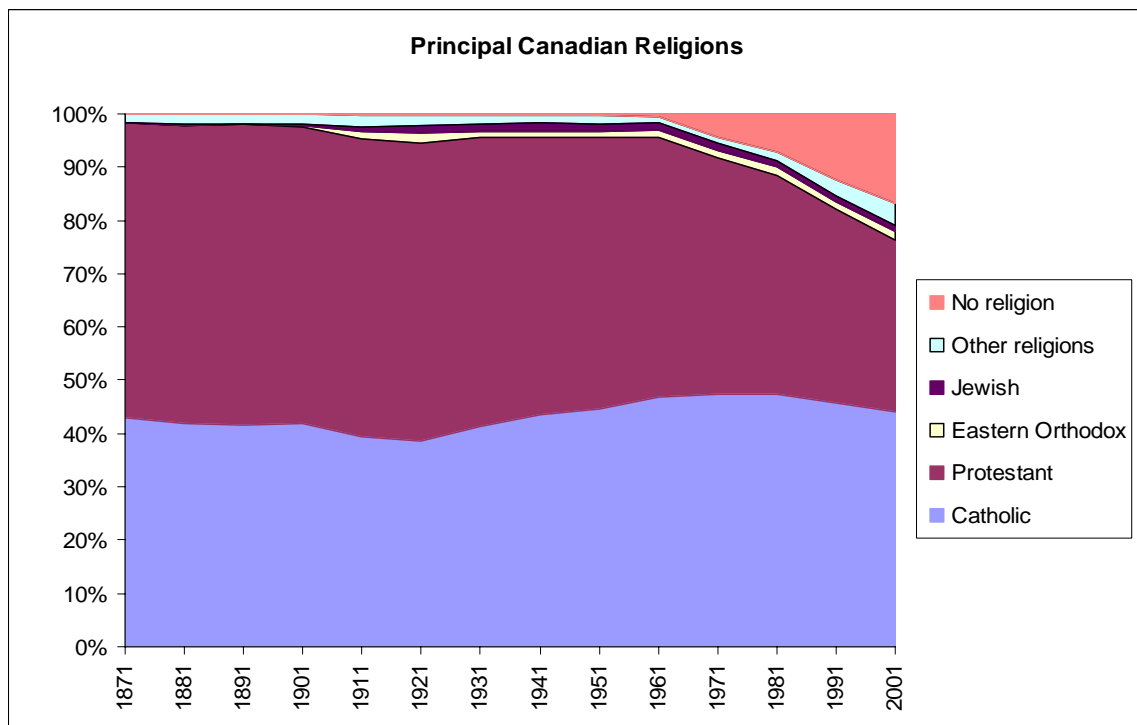
## **Introduction**

The original intent of this paper was to determine the provincial percentages of Eastern Orthodox Christians throughout Canada's history. Statistics Canada collects the religious affiliation of Canadians every 10 years. However, this data is only available on a nation-wide level from 1871 to 1981, and provincial break-downs were only available for 1991 and 2001. Therefore, the scope of this paper was changed slightly to include a time-line of some Orthodox events in Canada and North America.

Statistics collected by the Government of Canada has changed slightly over the years, along with the demography. This is especially true in the last two decades; therefore, an attempt has been made to categorize the data in a way that makes old and new information comparable. The information shown reflects both the percentage and population of Orthodox Christians in Canada. For consistency, all of the data has been reduced to the following six categories: 'Catholics,' 'Protestants,' 'Eastern Orthodox,' 'Jewish,' 'Other Religions,' and 'No religion.'

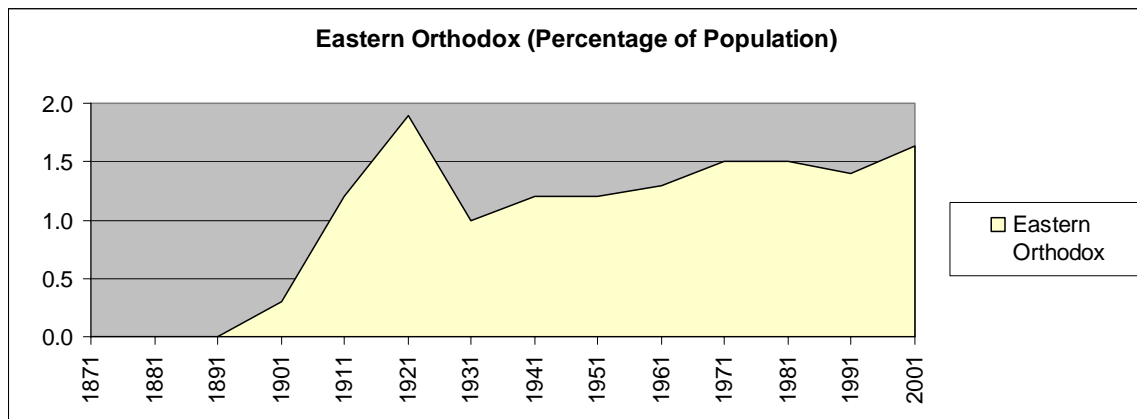
### Religious Affiliation in Canada

The data collected from Statistics Canada has been incorporated into various graphs for easier display. Figure 1 shows the religious make up of Canada through its history. Although founded almost exclusively Protestant and Roman Catholic, the country has shown a dramatic change during last few decades. The most significant decline has been experienced by the Protestant denominations, and it has been mostly replaced by people claiming no religious affiliation. There has also been a decline among Roman Catholics and an increase in "Other Religions," but both of these are less obvious than the changes mentioned above. Also note that this figure shows percentage of population, not actual population numbers, which have obviously increased over time.



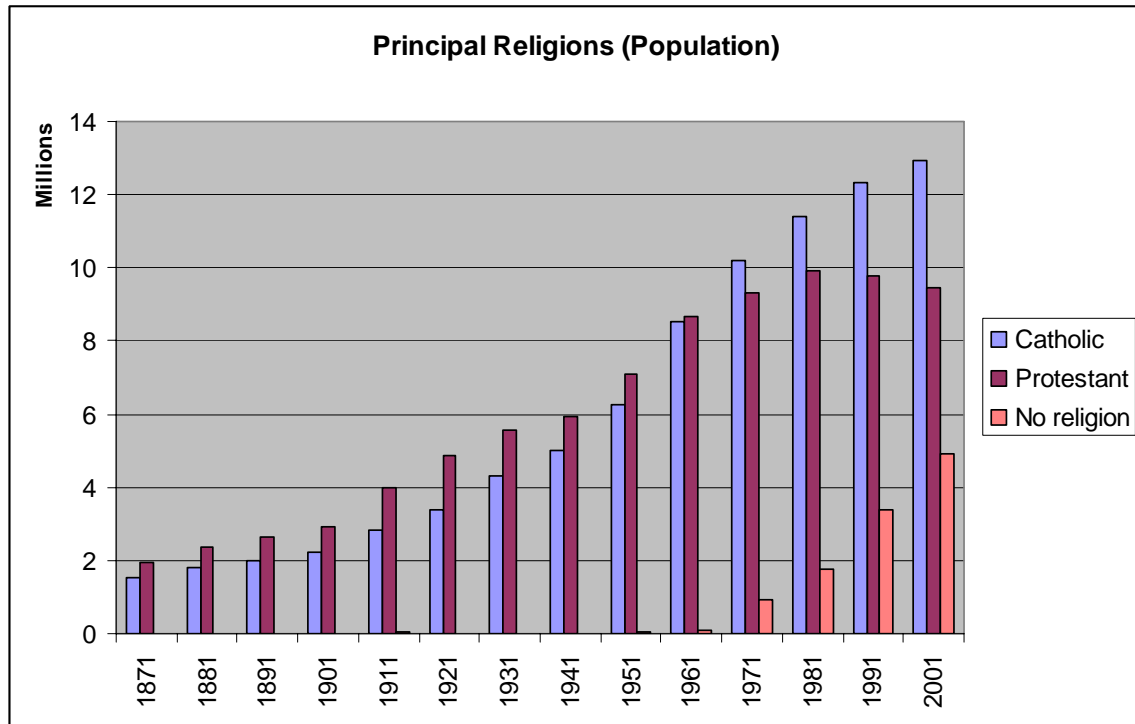
**Figure 1:** Principal Canadian Religions through History (Percentage).

Figure 2 shows the Eastern Orthodox category taken from Figure 1, and expanded so that relative changes are more easily seen. The census of 1901 was the first time Eastern Orthodoxy was a large enough percentage to be charted, corresponding with the large Uniate immigration. A peak occurred in 1921, the end of the Russian Revolution. There was a drop by 1931 and a slow and gradual increase from then until 2001.



**Figure 2:** Eastern Orthodoxy in Canada.

Total population numbers for Principal Religions have been split into two figures in order to better note the distinctions. Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, and 'Other Religions' were significantly smaller, so they have been plotted at a different scale. Like the percentage figures above, there is also a jump in the 1921 population of Eastern Orthodox Christians, though it does not appear as drastic.



**Figure 3:** Principal Canadian Religions 1 (Actual Population).

The increase shown in 1921 in both Figure 2, and Figure 4 was likely influenced, at least in part, by people from various countries within the former Russian Empire trying to escape the Bolshevik Revolution. It would make sense that the decrease by 1931 may have been due to the return of some of these people to their homelands or outmigration to the United States. It is interesting to see a similar trend between Eastern Orthodox and Jewish populations within Canada, though the latter does not have any statistical jumps in growth. Due to the changes of religious categories since 1981, it is difficult to compare more recent values with those used in 1971 and earlier.

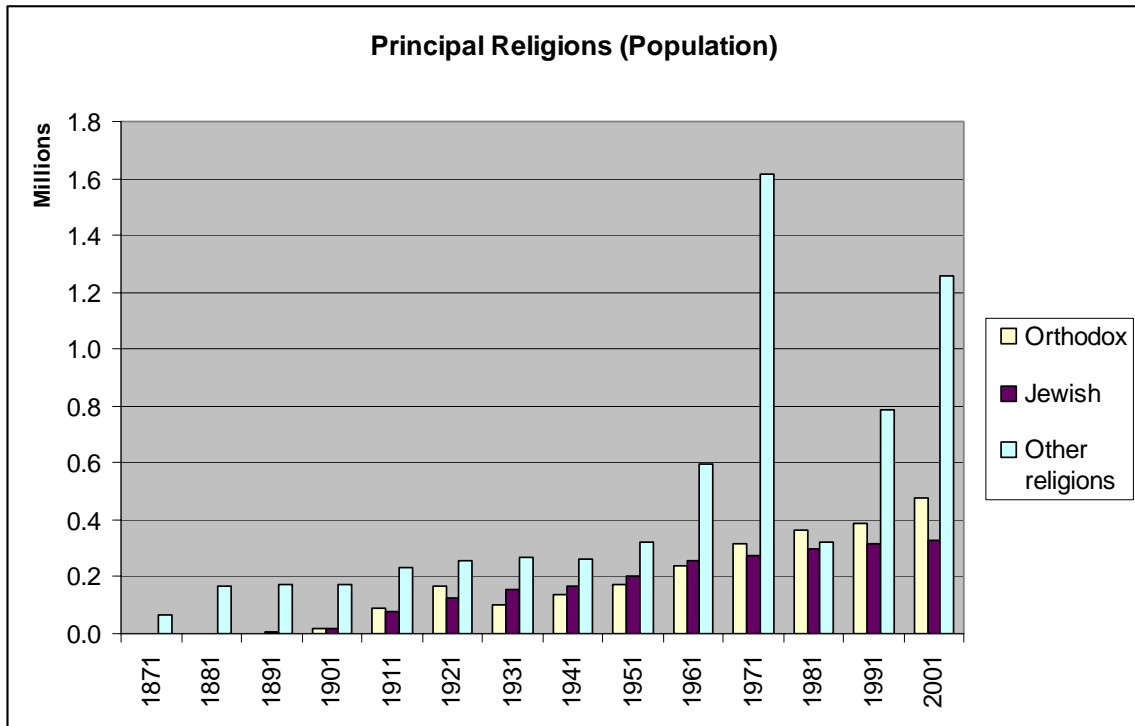


Figure 4: Principal Canadian Religions 2 (Actual Population)

### Religious Affiliation at the Provincial Level

For 1991 and 2001, the Principal Religion figures were also accessible at the provincial level. In order to display the data legibly, full-page figures have been included in the Appendix. These figures show nation-wide distribution, and provincial percentages of Orthodox Christians as well as principal religions broken down into provinces.

Specific changes to the 2001 data include the addition of the category of "Other Christian" outside of the three main branches of Christianity as well as the dispersion of "Other Religions" into more specific groups. In order to attempt comparison with previous data, "Other Christian" has been grouped with "Protestant" for this analysis.

It also seems that what Protestant Christians would call "Christian Cults" have still been included under the category of "Protestant."

Figure 6 and Figure 7 show the geographical distribution of the total Eastern Orthodox population in Canada. *Living Orthodoxy* may help to explain this distribution:

The three largest Orthodox jurisdictions in Canada are the Greek Orthodox Metropolitanate of Canada, with parishes throughout the country, especially in Ontario, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada, present notably in the Prairie provinces, and the Orthodox Church in America, with parishes throughout the country, especially in the West. These jurisdictions have separate Canadian dioceses and resident bishops in Canada. Other Orthodox parishes are affiliated with dioceses based in the United States. It is estimated that there are about 400, 000 Orthodox in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

The 2001 data from Statistics Canada, using a 20% sampling, gives a total of 433,815 Orthodox in Canada. This is specifically broken down as follows: 215,165 Greek Orthodox, 20,520 Serbian Orthodox, 32,710 Ukrainian Orthodox, and 165,420 Orthodox not included elsewhere. In 1991, there is only one category of "Eastern Orthodox" with a total of 387 385, found under the "Other Religions" section. This has been separated out, while the rest have remained grouped as "Other Religions."

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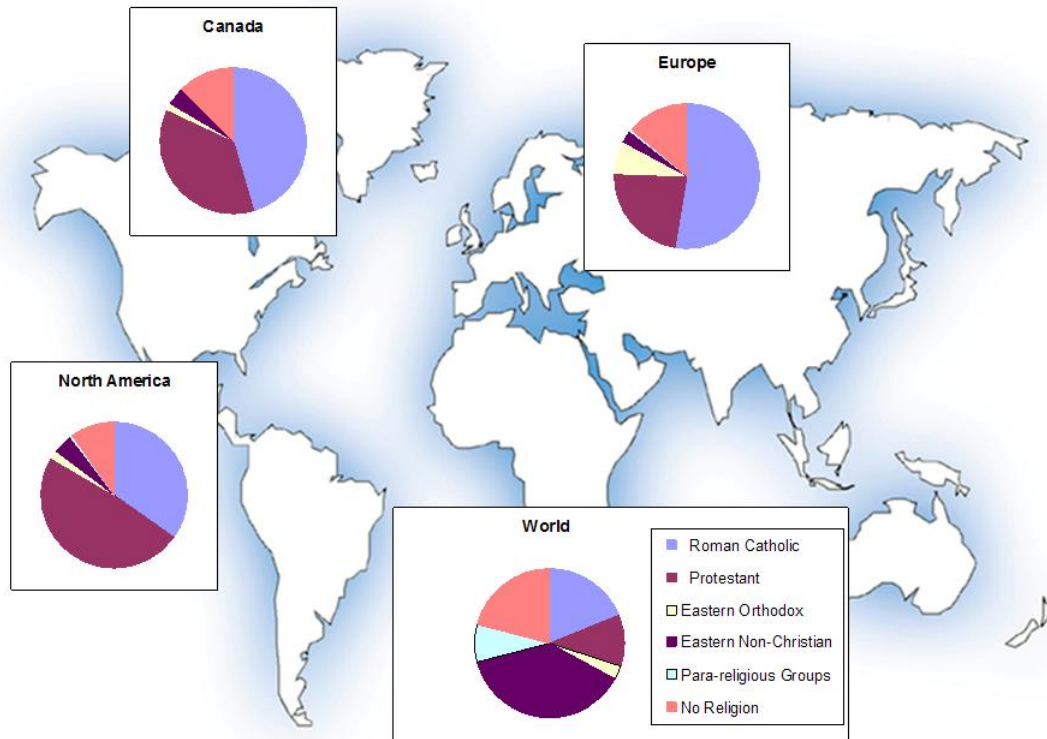
<sup>1</sup> Archdiocese of Canada, the Orthodox Church in America, *Living Orthodoxy*, Montréal, Quebec, Canada: Alexander Press, 2003, pp. 47-48.

Figure 8 and Figure 9 show the actual percentage of Orthodox Christians within each province. These values are shown in a more detailed representation in

Figure 10, and Figure 11 where the full range of principal religions for each province are given. This enables us to see general trends, such as B.C. and the Yukon have the highest percentage of the "No Religion" category, while Quebec has a significant Catholic majority, distantly followed by New Brunswick, and the Maritime Provinces have high percentages of Protestants, and B.C. and Ontario have the highest levels of "Other Religions."

### **Religious Affiliation at World Level**

An interesting comparison, but outside of the scope of this project, is that of religious composition in other areas of the world. Statistics here are taken from the 1994 Canadian Year Book, so it is not intended to be a full comparison with Canadian data. Figure 5 compares the religious composition of Canada, North America, Europe and the whole world. From these graphs it is certainly valid to consider these three world areas as being dominantly Christian. It is also of no surprise that Europe has a noticeably higher percentage of Eastern Orthodox Christians.



**Figure 5:** Religious Composition of Selected World Religions, 1991.

### Time Line of Orthodoxy in Canada

When Canada was founded in 1867, the right to the Alaskan territory had just been sold by Russia to the USA.<sup>2</sup> Up to this time, Orthodoxy flourished in Alaska, and had made its way into the lower 48 US states. In 1867, Archbishop Innocent Veniaminov was overseeing Alaska from Siberia, and encouraged this sale.<sup>3</sup> In 1870,

<sup>2</sup> Michael Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission*, New York: SVS Press, 1998, pp. 163-164.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.



the Episcopal seat of the Russian Orthodox Mission was moved from Alaska to San Francisco.<sup>4</sup>

It was only in the 1890's when Eastern Orthodoxy started spreading into Canada.<sup>5</sup> The Canadian government was offering free land for people to settle, which drew a lot of Uniates from Ukraine and Eastern Europe, and during the first three decades of Canadian self-rule, the Greeks also immigrated in large numbers. It was then in 1897, when Fr. Dmitri Kamnev held the first Divine Liturgy in Stariy Wostok, Alberta.<sup>6</sup> The missionary priests were dispatched by Bishop Nicholas (Ziorov, of the Russian Church) from the United States.<sup>7</sup> With his efforts the Orthodox parishes outside Alaska almost tripled, and Bishop Nicholas became the first Orthodox bishop to visit Canada in 1897.<sup>8</sup>

During Bishop Tikhon's (subsequently canonized as St Tikhon of Moscow) time in office (1898-1907) many Ukrainian Greek-Catholics returned to Orthodoxy, and in 1901 three parishes were consecrated in Alberta. The Diocese of Canada was officially founded in 1903, and the following year Bishop Tikhon consecrated Holy Trinity Cathedral in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and other parishes in Alberta, and Saskatchewan.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Stokoe and Leonid Kishkovsky, *Orthodox Christians in North America, 1794-1994*, Orthodox Christian Publication Centre, 1995, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> "Chronology," *History*, Archdiocese of Canada, Orthodox Church in America, <[http://www.archdiocese.ca/e\\_history/chronology.htm](http://www.archdiocese.ca/e_history/chronology.htm)>

<sup>7</sup> Vadim Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers: Ukrainian and Belarusan Immigration from the Russian Empire to Canada*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, p. 140.

<sup>8</sup> J. Gordon Melton, *Religious Leaders of America: A Biographical Guide to Founders and Leaders of Religious Bodies, Churches, and Spiritual Groups in North America*, New York: Gale Group, 1999, p. 410.

<sup>9</sup> "Chronology."

The year 1907 saw Sts. Peter and Paul Church established in Montreal.<sup>10</sup> That same year was the first All American Sobor (Council) of the Diocese of the Aleutians and North America, where they took on the new name of the "Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church." At this Sobor was Archbishop Platon became the ruling bishop of the diocese. It was during this year as well when the Pope revoked his allowance for married priests in the Roman Catholic Church.

From 1908 to 1910, Winnipeg was graced by Fr. Arseny (Chahovtsov, subsequently Bishop Arseny, currently canonized as St Arseny of Winnipeg)), who was also assigned dean and administrator of the Canadian parishes.<sup>11</sup> Right from the start, he was a much loved priest, later earning the name "Canadian Chrysostom."<sup>12</sup>

His efforts were concentrated on receiving Ukrainian Catholics back into the Church, as well as welcoming the many Bukovinians and Galicians immigrating *en masse* at that time.<sup>13</sup>

Archbishop Evdokim was the ruling bishop in San Francisco during the First World War, 1914-1918, at the start of which about 75% of Uniates in the US became Orthodox. It was in 1916 when Bishop Alexander (Nemolovsky) became the first resident bishop in Canada, establishing his cathedral in Winnipeg.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> "Archbishop St Arseny: 'Canada's Chrysostom,'" *Canadian Orthodox Messenger*, Ottawa: Canadian Archdiocese, OCA, Summer 2005, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, 46.

The year 1917 saw the start of the Russian (Bolshevik) Revolution, which ended all financial support from the Church in Russia to the North American missionary efforts. Financial situation of the Church in North America deteriorated, and by 1919 it accumulated debt of US\$200,000.<sup>15</sup> The financial woes did not help the already ethnically minded jurisdictionalism in Canada, and the Ukrainians were the first to head out on their own, followed by others. It was during this time when many Russians left Russia due to the civil war of 1917-1921.

At the second All American Sobor (Council), in 1919, the council recognized the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada (UOCC), at the same time many Canadian parishes became affiliated with ethnic jurisdictions based in the US.<sup>16</sup> When the fourth All American Sobor was held, in 1924, the Russian North American diocese changed its name to "Russian-Greek Orthodox Church in America," declared to be "temporary self-governing," and soon became also known as "the Metropolia," as it was ruled by a Metropolitan.<sup>17</sup>

The year 1926 was a favourable year for Canada; this was the year Fr. Arseny returned to Winnipeg, but this time as an archimandrite,<sup>18</sup> and soon he was appointed the ruling bishop of Canada.<sup>19</sup> He opened monasteries in Bluffton, Alberta, and Sifton, Manitoba, starting a pastoral school in the latter as well.<sup>20</sup> This was a

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas E. FitzGerald, *The Orthodox Church*, New York: Praeger, 1998, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, 46.

<sup>17</sup> Mark and Kishkovsky, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> *Canadian Orthodox Messenger*, summer 2005, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> *Canadian Orthodox Messenger*, summer 2005, 11.

time of growth for Orthodoxy in Canada and many people fondly remember St. Arseny. In 1927, Bishop Emmanuel (Abu-Hatab) was consecrated to the Canadian Arab community.<sup>21</sup> Bishop Arseny was shot in the leg in 1936,<sup>22</sup> forcing him to leave Canada with its 67 parishes, 34 priests, 2 deacons, and 6 deaneries.<sup>23</sup>

The year 1938 saw Bishop Joasaph elected as ruling bishop and the Canadian Diocese was divided into three regions, and in 1940, the church in Canada became a distinct diocese of the Metropolia.<sup>24</sup> In 1946, the UOCC opened St. Andrew's College in Winnipeg for the training of clergy for the Ukrainian Church.<sup>25</sup> In 1952, the national cathedral was moved from Winnipeg to Toronto, and in 1954, Canada was declared an Archbishopric.<sup>26</sup> Bishop Silvestre, hailing from France, was ruling bishop from 1963-1981, and moved the cathedral to Montreal.<sup>27</sup>

In 1970, the North American Metropolia was canonically granted autocephaly, and it adopted the name of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA).<sup>28</sup> In 1987, Bishop Seraphim (Storheim) became an Auxiliary Bishop,<sup>29</sup> and took full charge in 1990 as Bishop of Ottawa

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<sup>21</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, p. 47.

<sup>22</sup> *Canadian Orthodox Messenger*, summer 2005, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> According to the 1934 data, "Chronology."

<sup>24</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, 47.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> "Chronology."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> The autocephalous status has not recognised by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which has allowed multi-jurisdictional arrangements to remain in both Canada and the United States.

<sup>29</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, p. 47.

and All Canada.<sup>30</sup> The Canadian Archdiocese continues to enjoy growth under his leadership.<sup>31</sup> Archbishop Seraphim has overseen significant advancement in theological education in Canada. In 1997, a program granting the Certificate in Orthodox Theology was initiated at the Université de Sherbrooke in Longueuil, QC,<sup>32</sup> and in 2002 St. Arseny Orthodox Christian Theological Institute opened its doors in Winnipeg.<sup>33</sup>

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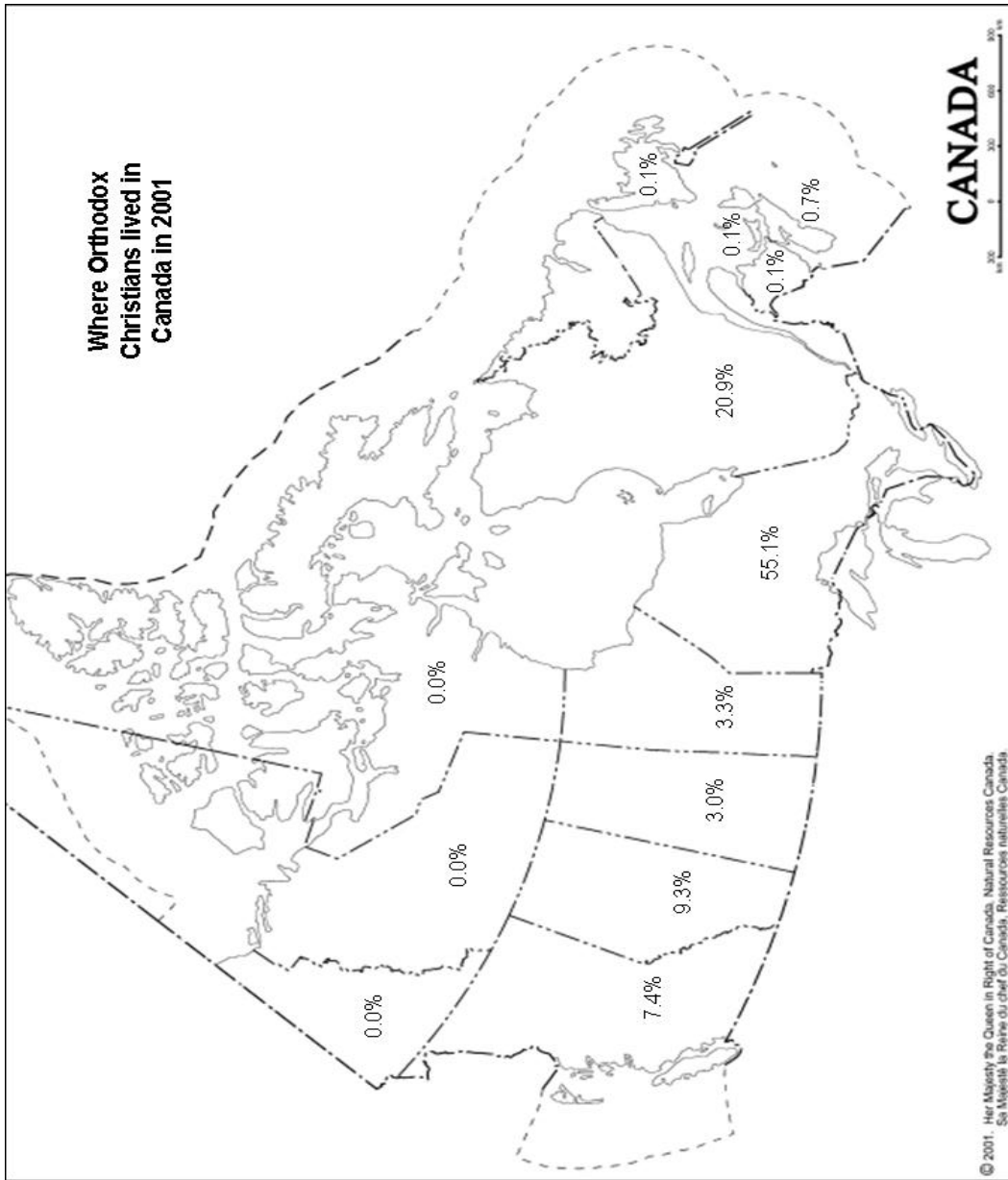
<sup>30</sup> "Our Archbishop," Archdiocese of Canada, Orthodox Church in America, <[http://www.archdiocese.ca/e\\_bishop/archbishop.htm](http://www.archdiocese.ca/e_bishop/archbishop.htm)>

<sup>31</sup> As of December 2009, Archdiocese of Canada has 7 deaneries, 7 monastic communities, and 101 parishes. <[www.archdiocese.ca](http://www.archdiocese.ca)>

<sup>32</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, 47.

<sup>33</sup> Other Orthodox jurisdictions have made advances as well: In 1999, the Greek Orthodox Theological Academy was founded in Toronto, Ontario.

### Appendix



**Figure 6:** Where Orthodox Christians Lived 2001.

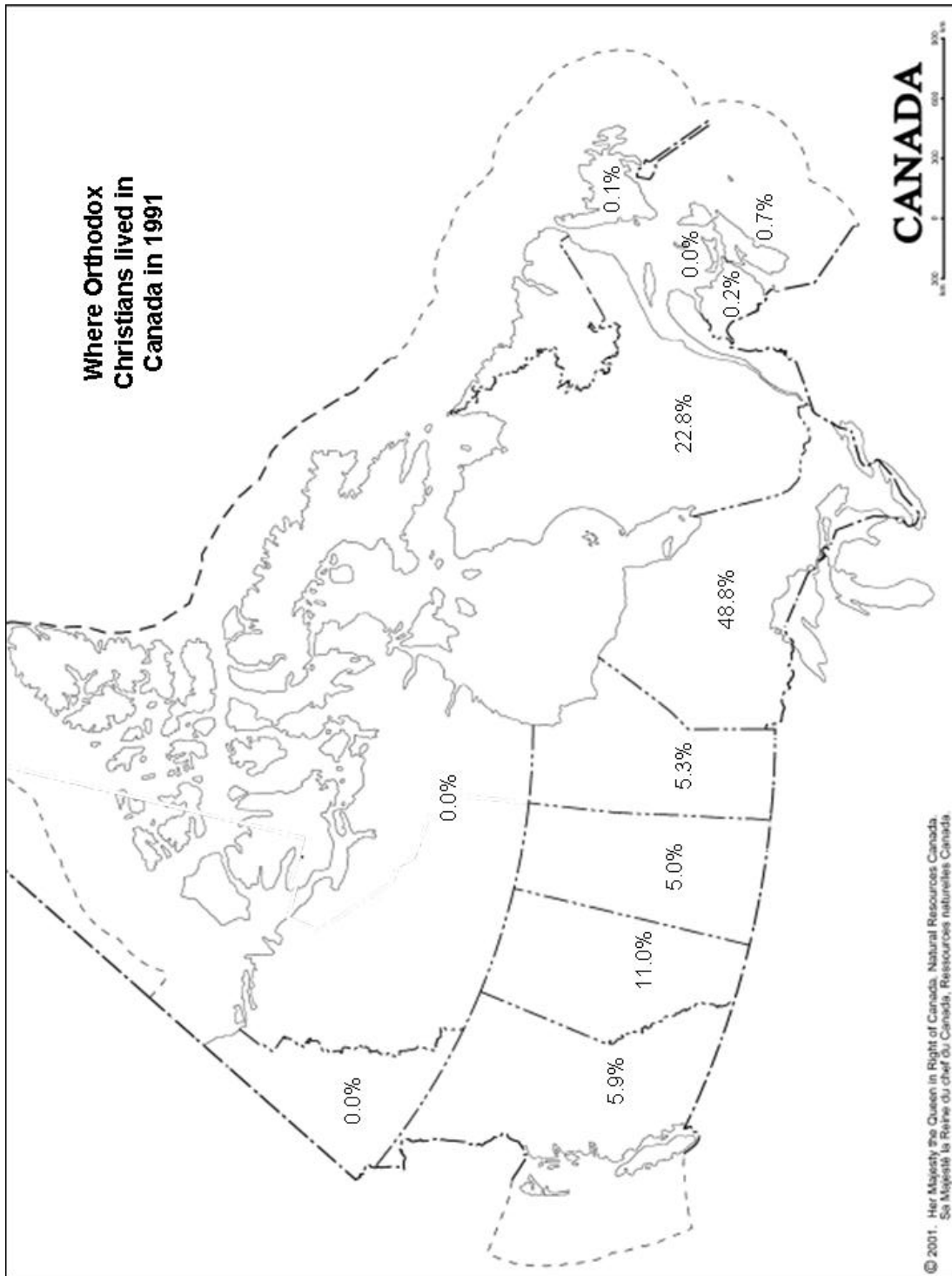


Figure 7: Where Orthodox Christians Lived 1991.

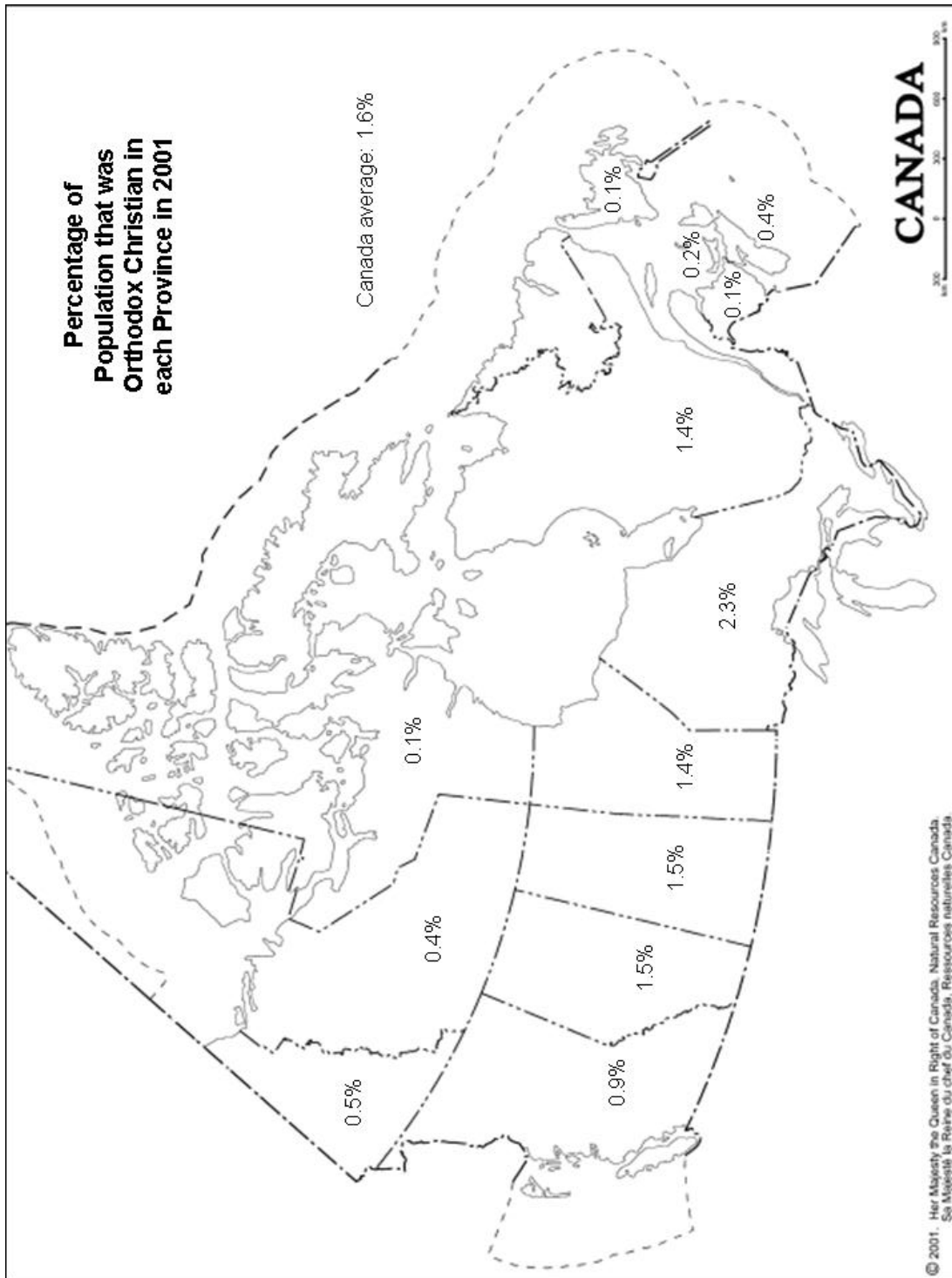


Figure 8: Provincial Percent of Orthodoxy 2001.



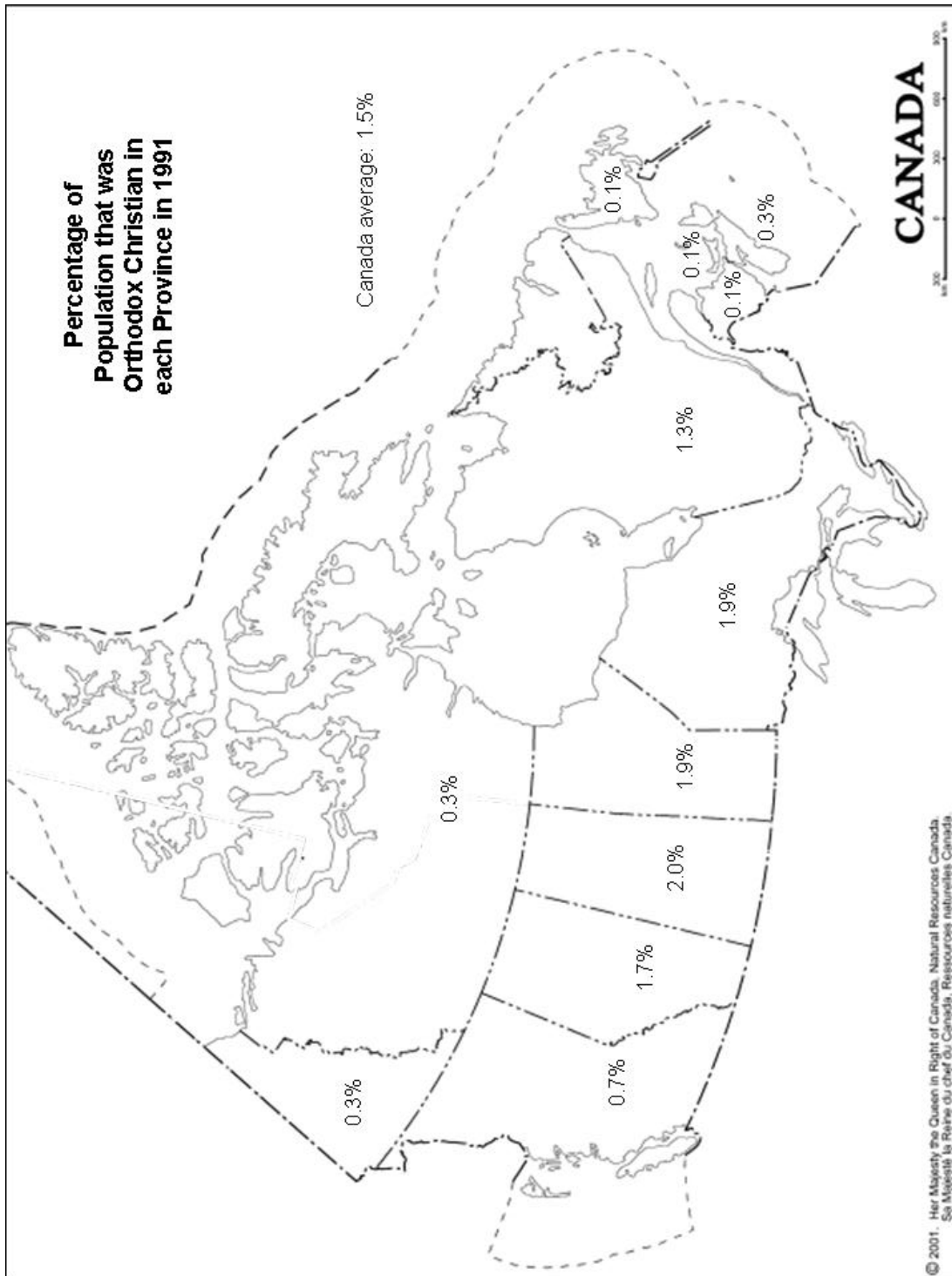


Figure 9: Provincial Percent of Orthodoxy 1991.

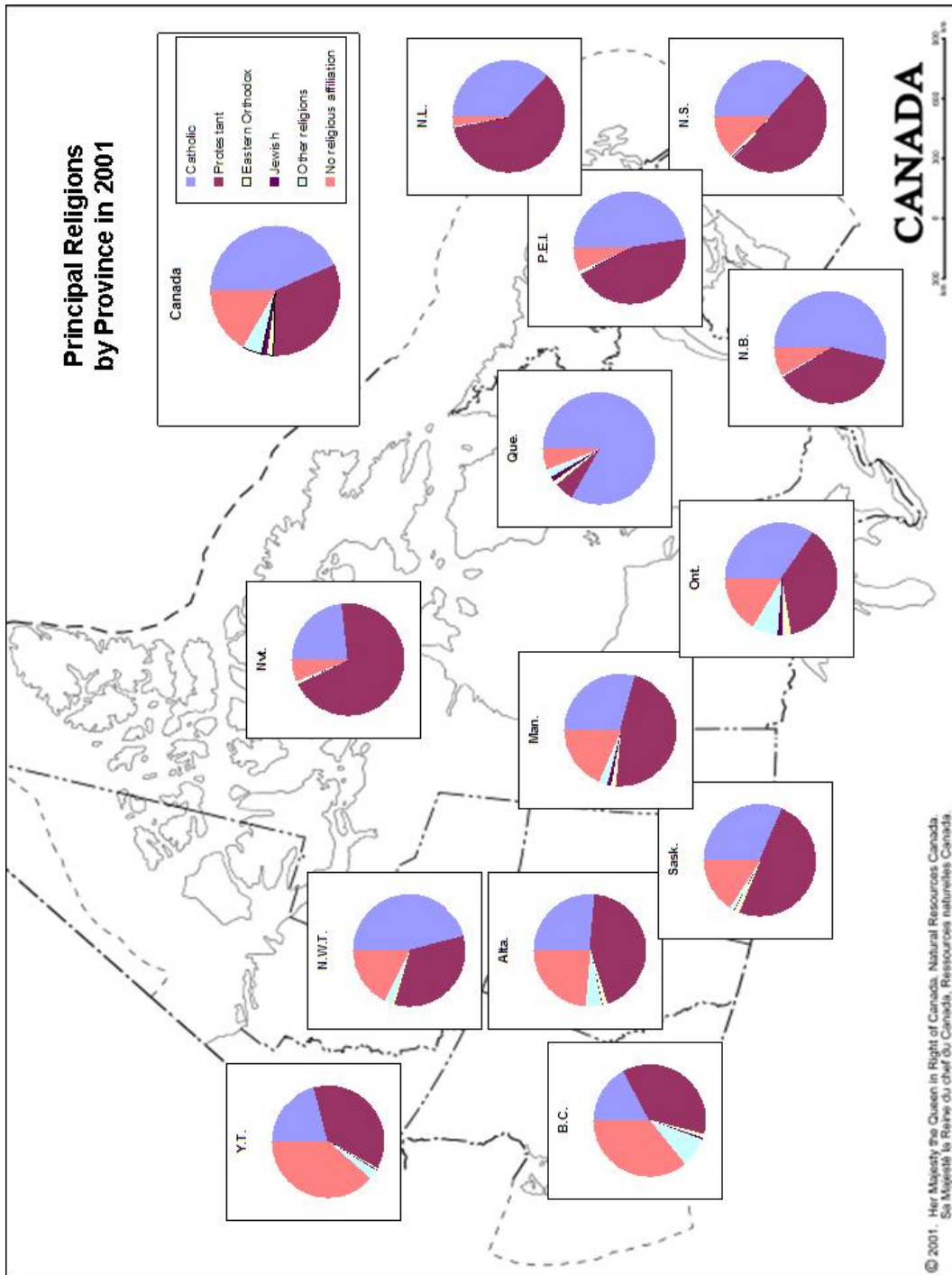


Figure 10: Religions by Province 2001.

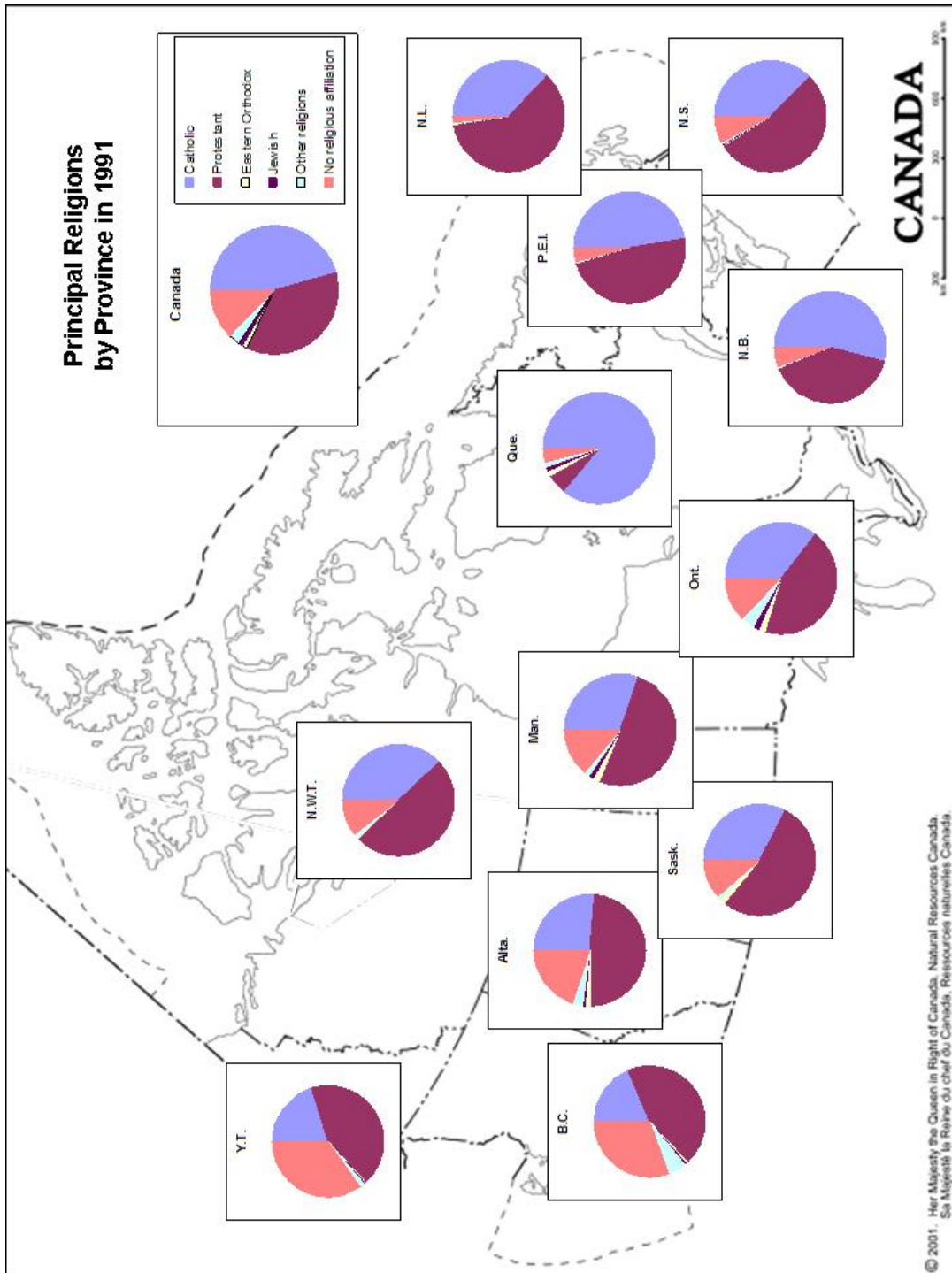


Figure 11: Religions by Province 1991.

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