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## Gentrification as Secularization: The Status of Religious Belief in the Post-Industrial City

*Les affirmations classiques à propos de la sécularisation ont été faites à l'ère de l'industrialisation dans les sociétés occidentales et trouvèrent dans le contexte urbain leur application la plus frappante. Mais le réaménagement des cités au cours des 25 dernières années a entraîné de nouvelles tendances nulle part aussi aiguës que dans les villes où le phénomène de la gentrification [retour des classes riches et moyennes des banlieues vers le centre ville] a pu être observé. L'auteur analyse les conséquences de la société post-industrielle sur les comportements liés à la foi religieuse, et ce, à trois niveaux: à l'échelon national, dans les villes organisées selon le système urbain canadien; dans les quatre villes les plus importantes du Canada, en établissant le lien entre gentrification et foi religieuse; enfin, à une micro-échelle, en observant la désaffection religieuse dans deux quartiers de Vancouver où la gentrification a été très rapide. La question finale étant de préciser quel type de gentrification dans une ville post-industrielle entraîne l'accomplissement — ou le renversement — de la thèse de la sécularisation.*

In the late 1920s, an independent gospel hall, Bethany Mission, opened its doors in Kitsilano, a socially mixed neighbourhood in Vancouver's inner city. By the 1950s, now renamed Bethany Tabernacle, it had relocated a few blocks to a strategic intersection to minister more effectively to an aging community, by then with a working-class plurality. But in the 1960s and 1970s, Kitsilano underwent substantial social transformation. In the 1960s, its old apartment buildings and rooming houses completed their downward filtering, becoming home to the city's principal countercultural population. This social transition was followed in the 1970s by widespread redevelopment and an influx of young professionals into condominiums and renovated older homes. At the end of the decade Bethany Tabernacle disbanded, its congregation aged or moved away, and sold its property. The building was demolished and following redevelopment the site was occupied by a neighbourhood public house.

The life-cycle of Bethany Tabernacle is by no means unique. Elsewhere in Kitsilano and the adjacent district of Fairview, former church sites have been occupied by a medical building, shops catering to a discerning middle class, the city's Mercedes-Benz dealership, a massage therapy clinic, and luxury condominiums. Across Canada in comparable inner-city neighbourhoods settled in the past 20 years by the new middle class, church

structures have, more often than in Vancouver, been renovated into other uses, often an arts or cultural centre. In Halifax several apartment buildings have been constructed around the shell of former churches, incorporating façade elements of the religious structure into a reconstituted residential function. In this manner, sacred space survives as a mere memory, a museum trace of an era when religious belief was more widespread in the Canadian inner city.

The life-cycle of the inner-city church is not of course a new theme in North American urbanization. The volatility of immigration and social mobility have contributed to a long-established pattern of ethnic churches becoming geographically stranded as an immigrant population dispersed away from its initial concentration in the inner city. Over the course of the 20th century some old Vancouver churches have passed through three or four distinct ethnic identities. That pattern continues today as churches established by European-origin congregations are shared or purchased by recent immigrants of Asian origin. A second pattern, widely discussed in the United States, is an alternative geography where the church suburbanizes with its congregation, abandoning its inner-city parish. This suburban-ward exodus in pursuit of a mobile middle-class constituency has raised in some quarters a vigorous critique of the cultural captivity of the Church, and its reticence to continue ministry in the more demanding circumstances of inner-city poverty and multiculturalism.

But neither of these historical and continuing geographies of religion is the subject of the present paper. We are instead interested in a third, and more recent, tendency which brings a new departure to the spatial relationships of religious beliefs in the inner city. In this new conjuncture of society and space, certain cohorts of the middle class actively seek out an inner-city place of residence. This process of gentrification, dating from the late 1960s, is closely associated with the restructuring of cities in advanced societies from industrial to post-industrial status.<sup>1</sup> If the economy of the industrial city was characterized by its factory chimney, the downtown office tower is the exemplar of the post-industrial skyline. Rapid job growth in senior white-collar, or quaternary, occupations has been coincident with the downtown office boom dating from the 1960s. There is, then, a symbiotic relationship between the growth and change of the downtown labour market and the appearance of a new middle class in the inner-city housing market. In a number of cities this constellation has eclipsed the earlier geography of inner-city factories encircled by blue-collar neighbourhoods. Deindustrialization has savagely pruned this former economy and society. For example, in the heart of New York, Manhattan lost 150,000 jobs in manufacturing, 35 percent of its total, in only seven years, from 1969 to 1976; a surge in office development also began in 1969, adding an astonishing 65 million square feet of office space to the downtown and midtown sections of New York in only five years.<sup>2</sup> If less dramatic, tendencies in the same direction have affected virtually all North American cities. Our research question, then, is to explain the consequences of the coming of the post-industrial city for patterns of religious belief, and in particular

to analyse these changes in the gentrifying inner city, where we might expect the transition to be most marked.

### **Religious Belief in a Post-Industrial Society**

Daniel Bell has provided the fullest, and also the most controversial, discussion of the configuration of a post-industrial society.<sup>3</sup> His principal theme, of a decisive orientation toward a knowledge-based society, sustained by a cadre of well-educated professionals and managers, is now widely accepted, and this trajectory has been noted by a number of authors in advanced societies outside Bell's case study of the United States. Far more contested, however, is Bell's treatment of the prevalent culture of a post-industrial epoch. He argues that the culture of post-industrial society is inherently antinomian, released from traditional constraints and freed to pursue the irrational and hedonistic impulses first charted out by an intellectual and artistic avant garde.<sup>4</sup> To combat this unfettering of desire Bell advocates a redemptive individual and institutional belief system organized around the renewal of traditional religious values.<sup>5</sup> Bell's proposal has received little support from the social sciences. One of his more careful critics has been Jürgen Habermas, who treats Bell as a representative of the new conservatism to which he stands firmly opposed.<sup>6</sup> But the disagreement expressed by Habermas is less than complete. He concurs with a knowledge (not a labour) theory of value, and terms such as "hedonism" also colour his own scattered discussions of contemporary culture. But it is the disagreements which loom larger for Habermas. He has no sympathy for an account which looks to individual agency as the explanation of an antinomian culture, thereby neglecting the guiding hand of economy and polity. Nor is he sympathetic to denunciations of the avant garde particularly when art, notably avant-garde art, has a privileged critical and emancipatory role to play in his own theoretical programme, like that of earlier members of the Frankfurt School.

Meanwhile both authors regard traditional religious belief to be a largely spent force, Bell in urging the necessity for its restoration, Habermas in endorsing its passing as an instrument of reaction. It remains for other scholars to make the sociology of religious unbelief more explicit. In his reflections on the new middle class, Gouldner, like other authors, has noted the association between secular values and a rising level of educational attainment, locating these values with little sympathy for religion squarely within a humanistic new class with a liberal arts education.<sup>7</sup> This intuitive assessment of the social location of secular values is supported by a meticulous examination of American public opinion polls which found the most pronounced rejection of religion, and a simultaneous endorsement of left-liberal politics, to coincide with a cultural new class, constituted by professionals in the arts, the media and education in particular.<sup>8</sup> Besides endorsing Gouldner's intuitive thesis, this empirical relationship also rounds out the argument pursued by Habermas concerning the liberal (but not

necessarily emancipatory) status of the arts.<sup>9</sup> In this equation, then, the arts and related professions within a cultural new class are simultaneously sceptical of traditional religious belief and welcoming of a critical and reformist politics. In this double-edged rejection of tradition and engagement with dissent among the cultural new class, one may discern also the anticipation of Matthew Arnold that the arts would displace traditional faiths and provide an exemplary religion and politics for an emergent, secular society.

Besides its social position, the cultural new class may also be positioned geographically. Brint's analysis shows that these bearers of an adversarial and secular politics are disproportionately located in large central cities. This finding is consistent with more targeted studies of inner-city gentrifiers in Canada which indicate clear tendencies for the cultural new class to be over-represented in gentrifying neighbourhoods which are also supportive of reform politics.<sup>10</sup> As highly educated, youthful, predominantly childless, and politically liberal, there are clear grounds for expecting inner-city neighbourhoods with considerable numbers of new middle-class residents also to be centres of religious unbelief.

### **Religious Unbelief in the Post-Industrial City**

Any attempt to provide an empirical account of the relationship between religious belief and the trajectory of a post-industrial society immediately encounters some formidable operational difficulties. There is a substantial problem of definition. In this study, a measure of religious belief (in effect, unbelief) is taken from the decennial Census of Canada which has consistently asked Canadians to identify their religious affiliation. Since 1971 respondents have been presented with the opportunity of specifying no religious affiliation if they wish. There are evident weaknesses with this measure as an indicator of religious belief. Only a minimal commitment is required for association to be made with any religious group, and there is no means of separating out affiliation on the basis of social or cultural identification compared with spiritual motives. The variable incorporates, and treats equally, both casual and dedicated believers. None the less this indicator, for all its rawness, offers considerable opportunity. It is systematic, available at the most detailed geographical scale, and in a continuous decennial time series. Above all, as part of the census schedule, it allows an almost endless array of hypotheses to be examined.

With its focus on secularization, this paper examines the geographical variations in responses specifying no religious affiliation in Canadian cities. The analysis proceeded in two steps. First the spatial variation in religious unbelief between metropolitan areas in Canada was correlated against several independent variables, including an index measuring the post-industrial status of each metropolis. Second, restricting the analysis to census tracts in the very largest cities, religious unbelief in the inner city was correlated against a set of independent variables including an index of gentrification.

Several other authors have made use of the unbelief variable from the 1971 or 1981 census.<sup>11</sup> A major national trend in all studies has been a progressive disaffiliation from organized religion across the nation, from a minimal level in Atlantic Canada, but rising steadily westwards to the highest degree of scepticism in British Columbia along the Pacific Coast. Amongst metropolitan areas, Vancouver in British Columbia showed a disaffiliation rate of 23 percent in 1981 compared with a metropolitan mean of 8 percent. At the other extreme, both Quebec City and St Johns, Newfoundland, had rates of below 2 percent. At the intrametropolitan scale several variables correlate significantly with religious unbelief, including age (with unbelief peaking among the 20–29 age-group), ethnicity (with Asian and northwest European origins showing the lowest level of religious affiliation, and Catholic groups the highest), and family status (small families are more secular than larger ones). Post-secondary education and professional-managerial status have a consistently positive association with disaffiliation.<sup>12</sup>

These ecological studies have provided a clear sense of a constellation of personal and social traits which shape the map of secularism in Canada. At the same time they contain a number of anomalies and do not provide a direct engagement with the thesis of a post-industrial society. A second operational challenge, then, is to develop some measure of the post-industrial status of different Canadian cities. Here the results of an earlier round of research proved useful.<sup>13</sup> In attempting to provide an explanation of the incidence of gentrification in urban Canada, a set of 35 independent variables were amassed describing demographic, housing, quality of life, and economic conditions in 22 metropolitan areas in 1981. A principal components analysis of the best predictors of gentrification produced a leading factor with high loadings on the following variables: office space per capita, housing values, art galleries per capita and perceived environmental quality. A moderately strong loading was recorded against the presence of a substantial young adult (20–35-year-old) population. This cluster of variables, describing a city with a predominantly service economy, a middle-class population, and generously endowed with cultural and environmental amenities, meets many of the terms of Bell's post-industrial thesis. This factor was therefore interpreted as an index of post-industrial city status, an attribute which may be scaled numerically from the factor score for each city.

This post-industrial index was one of three independent variables correlated against the percentage of religious unbelief expressed for each metropolitan area. To derive a sense of the significance of the post-industrial factor its performance was compared with two other variables which have traditionally been regarded as correlated with the national map of unbelief in Canada: Roman Catholic status and region of origin. The percentage of the population Catholic was readily derived from Census data, while regional status was measured by a dummy variable partitioning Canada into its four major divisions, Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario and the West.

As expected, both region of origin ( $r = .70$ ) and Catholic status ( $r = -.69$ ) correlated strongly with religious disaffiliation for the 22

metropolitan areas, and indeed were of almost equal significance. Les expected was the high correlation against the post-industrial index ( $r = .79$ ) which out-performed the other two independent variables. This is a finding of considerable theoretical interest. Cross-cutting such established cleavages as regionalism and Catholic status, we find the force of a new dimension assessing the coming of a service-based economy and a middle-class, amenity-oriented society. The configuration of a post-industrial society does indeed seem to mark a significant diversion away from traditional religious commitment.

The residuals from the linear regression of religious unbelief against post-industrial status show the contribution of the remaining independent variables. Unbelief is consistently overpredicted for the cities with the highest proportions of Catholics (Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa) and for the cities of Atlantic Canada (St Johns, Saint John, Halifax). In contrast the metropolitan areas of southern Ontario had higher degrees of religious disaffiliation than expected, though the most extreme outliers were on the west coast, in the British Columbia cities of Victoria and Vancouver, by far the most irreligious metropolitan area in the nation according to this measure. Combining the effects of all three independent variables accounted for over 80 percent of the inter-metropolitan variation of religious disaffiliation (adjusted  $R^2 = .83$ ). The regression equation, using standardized beta coefficients, showed the continuing prominence of post-industrial status as the leading explanatory variable:

$$Y (\text{unbelief}) = 14.97 + 0.53 X_1 (\text{post-industrial status}) - 0.38 X_2 (\text{Catholic percentage}) + 0.25 X_3 (\text{region of origin})$$

Residuals from multiple regression indicate that Vancouver and Victoria remain as positive outliers, indicative of a west coast culture of pronounced religious disaffiliation, a finding which has also been noted in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

### **Gentrification and Secularization**

The variable distribution of social values across metropolitan areas has been known for some time, for example the differential endorsement of careerism and consumerism in the central city compared with familism and communalism in the suburbs.<sup>15</sup> These dimensions have a particularly middle-class ambience, and the consolidation and expansion of a professional and managerial middle class in many post-industrial inner cities over the past 25 years might be expected to sharpen predispositions to such ends as consumption and career advancement. Indeed, gentrification, the settlement of the middle class in formerly lower-income inner-city areas, is tightly bound to the configuration of a post-industrial society; the post-industrial index showed a correlation of  $r = .63$  with an index of gentrification (discussed below) across Canadian metropolitan areas in 1981.<sup>16</sup>

As we have seen, earlier studies have indicated that the ecology of

secularization in Canada incorporates such traits as the young adult stage in the life-cycle (20–29 age-group), small households, post-secondary educational attainment and professional or managerial occupations. These traits are also shared, *par excellence*, by gentrifying districts, so that there are empirical as well as theoretical grounds for anticipating linkages between gentrification and religious unbelief. Complicating this association, however, are other variables and particularly ethnicity. The Asian-origin population, with a disproportionate inner-city concentration in 1981, is also positively correlated with religious disaffiliation as measured by the census, and is therefore likely to confound the relationship with gentrification in cities where this group is numerous.

A useful precedent suggesting possible relationships between gentrification and unbelief is provided by a correlation analysis reported in *The Social Atlas of Sydney*.<sup>17</sup> In this Australian city, a profile of young urban professionals was compiled from occupational and age data in the 1986 census and correlated against other variables for census tracts covering the entire metropolitan area. Though there is minimal discussion of the correlation matrix in the Atlas, the association between young urban professionals, the principal agents of gentrification, and religious unbelief is reported as well as the ecology of unbelief itself. The correlation between young urban professionals and unbelief is remarkably robust ( $r = .76$ ), one of the strongest relationships in a large matrix. While the distribution of young professionals is not synonymous with gentrification, as the analysis covers the entire metropolitan area, the overlap between the two is substantial, with the major concentration of young urban professionals, predictably enough, bound to the inner city.

The growth of a new middle class of quaternary workers living in Canadian inner cities has been amply demonstrated; so too has the tendency for cultural professions to be disproportionately included among them. In six principal cities (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, Edmonton and Halifax), there was a net growth of 115,000 workers in the quaternary sector (professionals, managers, administrators and technical workers) who took up residence in the inner city between 1971 and 1986.<sup>18</sup> Over the same time period, there was a corresponding net reduction of 210,000 workers in other job sectors living in these same inner-city neighbourhoods. As a result a significant transformation occurred in the relative concentration of the quaternary sector. In 1971 residents with quaternary jobs were relatively underrepresented in the inner city; by 1986, however, they were overrepresented in the inner city relative to the remainder of the metropolitan area. Some of the highest incidences of overrepresentation occurred among cultural professionals. While the strategic importance of this group has often been identified in gentrification studies, its presence is equally apparent in aggregate census data. Artists, for example, often regarded as the nemesis of the conventional religious personality, show a strong predilection for a central city location.

Analysis proceeded through an examination of the correlates of unbelief in the inner-city census tracts of the four largest cities, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Ottawa. The inner city was demarcated in a federal

government classification which used the criteria of housing age and proximity to the central business district.<sup>19</sup> The dependent variable was the expression of religious unbelief in a tract in 1981, which was correlated against a set of independent variables, including a measure of gentrification during the 1970s. Gentrification was operationalized as an increase in the social status of a census tract between 1971 and 1981, and social status was defined as the mean of the percentage of the labour force employed in the quaternary sector plus the percentage of the population with university education. The development and validity of this index are discussed in more detail elsewhere;<sup>20</sup> here it is sufficient to note that in empirical work occupational and educational status have repeatedly emerged as the most sensitive indicators of gentrification.

As well as an index of gentrification, the set of independent variables included measures of the social status, family status and ethnic status of census tracts, all variables which earlier studies have shown to be correlated with religious belief. A second group of characteristics, derived from land use maps, specified a tract's distance from environmental amenity (a major park or waterfront), a large hospital or university (major nodes of professional employment), industrially zoned land, and elite districts. These locational variables provided some measure of neighbourhood ambience, a matter of some importance in residential selection among middle-class lifestyle cohorts. A total of 32 independent variables were tested against the expression of religious unbelief.

Variables which were leading correlates of unbelief in at least two of the four cities appear in Table 1. It is immediately apparent from the direction of the correlations that Vancouver is an anomaly and needs to be discussed separately. As with earlier research, ethno-cultural variables show the greatest sensitivity.<sup>21</sup> In Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, Catholic adherence is a leading predictor, but immigrant status (percent foreign born) and the use of English as a mother tongue also define an ethnic profile of unbelief, a profile which is non-Catholic, immigrant, and more likely to be English-speaking. Indicators of social status provide a second dimension of unbelief in the three cities of central Canada. Belief declines the higher the social status, the slighter the presence of a blue-collar workforce, and the greater the proximity to universities, hospitals, and existing elite areas. In this complex, the restructuring of space through gentrification is significant, and in all three cities the gentrification of a tract in the preceding decade is a strong predictor of religious disaffiliation in 1981. It is noteworthy that the presence of artists, members of the cultural new class often associated with gentrification, is also consistently and positively correlated with unbelief.

These relationships are most robust in Montreal and Ottawa with their large Catholic populations. In Toronto the overall strength of correlations is lower, indicative of a more complex social structure. Only here do life-cycle factors emerge among the leading factors, with substantial correlations against the rate of residential turnover ( $r = .56$ ), and the percentage of married households ( $r = -.52$ ). Together with the primary role of proximity to downtown, the Toronto results contain the added dimension of



**TABLE 1**  
**Leading correlates of religious unbelief in the inner cities of major Canadian urban centres, 1981**

	Toronto ( <i>n</i> = 119)	Montreal ( <i>n</i> = 214)	Ottawa ( <i>n</i> = 40)	Vancouver ( <i>n</i> = 50)
Social status	.41	.56	.78	-.51
Blue-collar (%)	-.46	-.52	-.71	.57
Catholic (%)	-.58	-.65	-.90	
Distance to univ./hosp.	-.59	-.59	-.79	
Gentrification index	.57	.60	.77	
Artists (%)	.46	.55	.68	
Distance to elite		-.61	-.73	.49
Born outside Canada (%)		.69	.75	.64
Distance to downtown	-.63	-.51		
Anglican (%)			.74	-.61
English-speaking (%)		.45	.79	
Median rent			.70	-.38
Low-income individuals (%)			-.61	.65

unbelief expressed by an urbane, downtown population, in rental units ( $r = .34$ ) neither married, nor in families ( $r = -.43$ ), and including divorced and separated households ( $r = .37$ ).

We noted earlier that Vancouver displayed the most marked religious disaffiliation of any Canadian city. In part this is a result of a province-wide cultural predisposition which includes small towns as well as suburbs. Some 80 percent of British Columbia census tracts in 1971 showed a mean disaffiliation rate of over 10 percent, whereas in the rest of Canada such a high level was limited to fewer than 3 percent of tracts. In the inner city, an additional element is a high proportion of Asian-origin residents. As noted earlier, this ethno-cultural category has the highest level of declared disaffiliation, some four times greater in 1971 than the rate of the British-origin group (itself above the national average), and more than 20 times greater than Canadians of French origin. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that Chinatown and its northern extension comprised the two tracts with the most extreme scores of disaffiliation in Canada in 1971.<sup>22</sup>

By 1981 expressed unbelief exceeded 50 percent in Chinatown and an astonishing 66.7 percent among Chinese-origin groups in the metropolis as a whole, so that the diffusion of Chinatown residents east and south contributed to rates of over 30 percent in a number of Vancouver's working-class inner eastside districts. As a result there is a quite distinctive complexion to the city's religious geography by social class. The two tracts describing Chinatown are simultaneously the most irreligious and the poorest in the metropolitan area. The higher status westside districts, despite rates of unbelief which are high by national standards, are eclipsed by the yet more resolute disavowal on the working-class eastside. Consequently the configuration of correlations in Vancouver's inner city take on a unique form, inversely related with social status (Table 1). While in agreement

that immigration is positively associated with religious disaffiliation, Vancouver differs from the cities of central Canada in locating dissident immigrants in low-status not high-status districts. So unbelief in Vancouver's inner city is associated with increasing spatial and social distance from elite districts. Indeed the best predictors of unbelief are the proportion of low-income families ( $r = .67$ ) and low-income individuals ( $r = .65$ ) in a census tract.

In Vancouver, then, the coincidence of a distinctive regional and ethnic effect suppresses social class effects which are more prevalent elsewhere. Gentrification which we have seen to be a recognizable feature linked with religious unbelief in other major cities disappears in inner Vancouver at the aggregate scale of a correlation matrix ( $r = -.10$ , gentrification vs. unbelief). Yet this paper began with the plight of Bethany Tabernacle in Vancouver's Kitsilano neighbourhood which lost its congregation as the district gentrified. In the final section of the paper, as we turn to a third spatial scale, that of the inner-city neighbourhood, we shall see that relations between gentrification and unbelief which are obscured at the aggregate level of Vancouver's inner city may yet be discerned as paramount in particular districts.<sup>23</sup>

### **Gentrification and Religious Belief in Inner Vancouver**

Within the City of Vancouver the inner westside neighbourhoods of Fairview and Kitsilano, between them the homes of over 50,000 residents in 1986, have demonstrated the most rapid social upgrading in the period since 1971.<sup>24</sup> Census tracts in these districts experienced the most marked inflation of the gentrification index in the 1971-1986 period, while a range of related social indicators point in the same direction (Table 2). During the 1960s there was a substantial growth of residents with some university education, the leading edge of the baby boom who were then undertaking, or had just completed, their higher education. By 1971 both neighbourhoods had almost a quarter of their population in the 15-24-year-age cohort, and Kitsilano had emerged as the countercultural centre of the city, a popular location of artists and prophets of alternative lifestyles; it was during this period that the environmental movement, Greenpeace, was founded in Kitsilano. This countercultural reputation was shared by a section of Fairview, the Fairview Slopes, where rapid gentrification occurred after the mid-1970s.

This first wave of economically marginal gentrifiers contributed to a substantial growth of childless households, but did not enhance the economic status of either district which remained below the median level of earnings in the city in 1971. During the 1970s, however, substantial embourgeoisement occurred, as condominium redevelopment swept through both districts, contributing to a rapid inflation of young professionals with above median earnings. By 1981 a third of occupations in Fairview and 40 percent in Kitsilano fell in the quaternary sector, while more than a quarter of Fairview residents and a third of those in Kitsilano were aged 25 to 34 years.

**TABLE 2**  
**Indicators of gentrification in Fairview and Kitsilano, Vancouver, 1961–1986**

	Fairview				Kitsilano			
	1961	1971	1981	1986	1961	1971	1981	1986
Quaternary occupations (%)	25	26	33	45	22	23	40	43
Median earnings (% of City)	86	85	120	138	98	97	120	124
University education (% of City)	105	123	142	146	108	152	162	159
Average rent (% of City)	96	104	112	118	116	107	107	107
British origin (%)	56	62	53	—	65	60	54	—
Childless families (%)	56	78	78	75	48	58	68	67

Source: Martin (1989) — see note 23.

The young urban professional had arrived with a vengeance in each neighbourhood, a process which accelerated in Fairview, but grew more slowly in Kitsilano from 1981 to 1986. The condominium represents the landscape face of gentrification in each district, frequently adorned in aesthetic postmodern styles. Close to 1500 condominium units were built in Kitsilano in the first half of the 1970s, and for the next ten years the leading edge of revitalization shifted to Fairview. A counter-cultural slum in 1970, 15 years later some 80 new apartment buildings on the Fairview Slopes, with a seductive range of postmodern pastels and design nuances, represented the single largest concentration of award-winning residential architecture in Canada.<sup>25</sup>

What was the effect of this abrupt embourgeoisement upon the religious geography of the two neighbourhoods? Looking at Table 2, first, we should note that in neither district did substantial ethnic change occur between 1961 and 1981; in each instance, a British-origin group, if declining, remained in the majority. We must, then, look elsewhere to account for the substantial erosion of religious belief which was registered both in census data and in the membership lists of the principal Protestant churches in each district. Nor is there a simple relationship with the presence of children, for despite a precipitous rise in childless households in Fairview in the 1960s, the membership of the major Protestant churches as a percentage of the adult population diminished little during that decade.

Between 1951 and 1971 membership lists of neighbourhood Protestant churches showed limited fluctuation, accounting for between 7 and 8 percent of Fairview's adult population. The less demanding census indicator of Protestant affiliation did, however, show steady decline, and by 1981 over a quarter of the population professed no religious affiliation. But it was only after 1971, with a surge of widespread gentrification that severe membership losses occurred (Tables 2 and 3). During the 1970s mainstream Protestant churches in Fairview lost over 40 percent of their members. While the

**TABLE 3**  
**Indicators of religious affiliation in Fairview and Kitsilano, Vancouver, 1961–1986**

	Fairview				Kitsilano			
	1961	1971	1981	1986	1961	1971	1981	1986
Mainstream <sup>a</sup> Protestant affiliation (%)	61	47	36	—	69	45	38	—
No religion (%)	—	17	28	—	—	22	32	—
Membership:								
United	692	406	190	155	2439	1547	1119	1056
Baptist	229	182	89	79	—	—	—	—
Presbyterian	211	310	165	157	—	—	—	—
Anglican	180	169	170	157	60	153	130	107
Total	1312	1067	614	548	2499	1700	1249	1163
Adult population (%)	7.9	7.1	3.7	2.8	8.3	5.8	4.5	4.0

<sup>a</sup>United, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist denominations.

Source: Martin (1989) — see note 23.

rate of decline fell in the first half of the 1980s, these churches nonetheless continued to suffer a net loss of over 2 percent of membership each year. The hemorrhaging of members was particularly serious from the largest, and most theologically liberal denomination, the United Church. The activities of the four United churches in Fairview and Kitsilano were decimated. Sunday school enrolments of close to 1700 children in 1961 plummeted to little more than 100 children 20 years later. The downward spiral of membership has continued to the present, and in 1991 Chalmers United Church, with almost 700 members in 1961, closed its doors.

The timing of rapid disaffiliation came a decade earlier in Kitsilano, and coincided with the concentration of countercultural youth in the 1960s, establishing religious trends that have been sustained by the pronounced embourgeoisement of the 1970s, so that by 1981 one-third of residents professed no denominational affiliation (Tables 2 and 3). The role of the first wave of economically marginal gentrifiers is also apparent from the membership lists of mainstream Protestant churches, which were shortened by 53 percent from 1961 to 1986, although the rate of decline has slowed down, from 3.2 percent per annum in the 1960s, to 2.7 percent in the 1970s, and 1.5 percent in the first half of the 1980s.

Gentrification involves far more than a transformation of the local housing market. There is also a restructuring of neighbourhood stores, services, institutions (notably schools) and community organizations such as churches. Social life does not disappear, but it is redefined around a new set of axes expressive of changing community values.<sup>26</sup> In its secularized form, social life in Kitsilano and Fairview in the 1990s is revealed in a public landscape of conviviality and recreation. Kitsilano has the highest concentration of fitness centres in the city, dedicated to the cultivation of the body. So too there has been a proliferation of neighbourhood services attendant to the cultivation of social identity. Restaurants, serving a population

seeking foreign cuisine and gourmet foods, quadrupled in Kitsilano between 1961 and 1981.<sup>27</sup> Fourteen applications for neighbourhood pub licences were tendered between 1977 and 1983. According to the government licensing agency, the pub is responsible to “a particular philosophy . . . it should function like a community centre, providing a place for residents of that neighbourhood to meet and socialize”.<sup>28</sup> As is so often characteristic of secularization, the structure of a pre-existing religious function, to build local community, is sustained but in secular form its content is reworked. People still gather on Sunday mornings for fellowship at the corner of Fourth and MacDonald in Kitsilano, but their destination is now the neighbourhood pub, no longer Bethany Tabernacle. The Sunday brunch congregations at neighbourhood restaurants are four times more numerous than the congregations of local churches.

But the meeting of social needs was not the only, or even the primary objective of the Protestant church in the inner city. In considering the replacement of the spiritual dimension of traditional religion the secularization thesis becomes decidedly murky.<sup>29</sup> While some young professionals adopt a conscious materialism which expels spiritual questions, others seek an unconventional and often eclectic philosophy of self-knowledge and self-transcendence. Since the countercultural presence of the 1960s; Kitsilano and Fairview have been centres of such faith without focus. While many of the spiritual homes of the counterculture — including the Church of the Radiant Flame, the Divine Light Mission, the Institute of Hypnotism, the Church of Divine Man and the Ontological Society — came and went quickly, others, such as the I AM Temple and the Psychic Study Centre lingered and were joined in the 1980s by a new round of organizations, including self-actualization groups like Uncommon Sense (“skills for creating what you most want in your life”) and events such as the Wiccan Summer Intensive (“an opportunity to study feminist ritual, magic and political change”). Consistent with this profile, Kitsilano and Fairview have become the core of the New Age movement in metropolitan Vancouver. New Age incorporates a variable theological menu including eastern religions, Judaeo-Christian elements, psychoanalysis, self-actualization and, recently, West Coast shamanism. One such group, New World Network, Incorporated, invites participants to a “Sunday Celebration” in Fairview “where what takes place is a whole lot of hugging, singing, speaking, listening, sometimes some tears, a visualization or meditation, tithing, and also some more hugging”.<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper we have explored the changing expressions of religious belief in the post-industrial city which have accompanied the economic, social and cultural restructuring of Canadian metropolitan areas over the past 25 years. At the broadest national scale, a measure of post-industrial status provides a robust correlate of religious disaffiliation in metropolitan areas, somewhat stronger than the more conventional attributes of Catholic adherence or

geographical region. In the inner cities, gentrification, an urban process closely associated with the advanced service economy of a post-industrial city, is a leading predictor of religious unbelief in the inner-city census tracts of Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa. However, in Vancouver the effects of gentrification are concealed at an aggregate scale by the high level of religious disaffiliation of a growing, but, in 1981, economically disadvantaged population of Chinese origin. But at the micro-scale of particular neighbourhoods, the consequences of gentrification are equally evident in inner-city Vancouver. In the districts of Kitsilano and Fairview, substantial gentrification during the past 25 years has been accompanied by disaffiliation from the mainstream Protestant churches and the proliferation of an alternate institutional fabric sustaining local social relations, including fitness centres, neighbourhood public houses and ethnic and gourmet restaurants. But caution should be reserved before declaring the completion of the secularization process in the gentrified inner city, for alongside the demise of the traditional church is a more hidden landscape of alternative movements, pursuing self-actualization, psychic awareness and spiritual exploration of many kinds.

More generally we are suggesting that the new middle class in the post-industrial inner city poses a new set of questions invoking both the sociology and the geography of religion. The new conjuncture of society and space implicit in the term "gentrification" indicates a new problematic: to the established research questions raised by the inner-city ethnic church and the suburbanization of the mainstream denominations, a new constellation of relationships is added for the scholar of religious belief in the city. Perhaps fundamental to this constellation is the consideration of whether gentrification represents the completion, or the subversion, of the secularization thesis.

## NOTES

1. The concept of the post-industrial society is not used uncritically here. Despite shortcomings identified by a number of critics, the post-industrial thesis remains useful for certain prescribed objectives, for example a discussion of the restructuring of employment with the transition to a service economy. Gentrification is a prime outcome of such restructuring. See for example, David Ley, "Alternative Explanations for Inner-City Gentrification: A Canadian Assessment", *Annals, Association of American Geographers* 76 (1986): 521-535; also Chris Hamnett, "The Blind Men and the Elephant: The Explanation of Gentrification", *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* 16 (1991): 173-189.

2. The data are presented as Tables A2, A3 in Charles Simpson, *Soho: The Artist and the City*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1981.

3. Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, New York, Basic Books, 1973.

4. A variant of this position appears in C. Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1987.

5. Daniel Bell, "The Return of the Sacred", *British Journal of Sociology* 28 (1977): 419-449.

6. Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1989.
7. Alvin Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*, New York, Seabury Press, 1979.
8. Steven Brint, " 'New Class' and Cumulative Trend Explanations of the Liberal Political Attitudes of Professionals", *American Journal of Sociology* 90 (1984): 30-71.
9. Brint's data suggest that these political tendencies among the cultural new class are reformist, not radical.
10. David Ley and Caroline Mills, "Gentrification and Reform Politics in Montreal, 1982", *Cahiers de Géographie du Québec* 30 (1986): 419-427; also Jon Caulfield, "City Form and Everyday Life: The Case of Gentrification in Toronto, Canada", unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of Sociology, York University, 1991.
11. Research examining the no religion variable in the 1971 Census of Canada includes: J. Veevers and D. Cousineau, "The Heathen Canadians: Demographic Correlates of Non-Belief", *Pacific Sociological Review* 23 (1980): 199-213; and D. Mitchell, "The Geography of Irreligion in Canada", unpublished MA thesis, Department of Geography, Carleton University, 1982. From the 1981 Census, see T.B. Heaton, "Sociodemographic Characteristics of Religious Groups in Canada", *Sociological Analysis* 47 (1986): 54-65. For a more general discussion, see Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*, Toronto, Irwin, 1987. In the context of this paper, note Bibby's remark that "Modern industrialization and post-industrialization have tended to lead to a loss of significance for religion in Canada" (p. 21). This observation (though not others) links him with such secularization theorists as Bryan Wilson and the earlier works of Peter Berger: B. Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982; P. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1969.
12. These findings are drawn from Veevers and Cousineau, op. cit., Mitchell, op. cit., and Heaton, op. cit., note 11.
13. Ley, op. cit. note 1.
14. R. Hale, *Who Are The Unchurched?*, Washington, DC, Glenmary Research Centre, 1977; R. Stark and W.S. Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1985.
15. W. Bell, "Social Choice, Life Styles, and Suburban Residence", in W. Dobriner, ed., *The Suburban Community*, pp. 225-247, New York, Putnam, 1955.
16. Ley, op. cit. note 1.
17. R. Horvath., G. Harrison and R. Dowling, *Sydney: A Social Atlas*, Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1989.
18. The data reported in this paragraph are drawn from David Ley, "Social Upgrading in Six Canadian Inner Cities", *The Canadian Geographer* 32 (1988): 31-45, and also "Gentrification in Recession", *Urban Geography* 13 (1992).
19. P. Brown and D. Burke, *The Canadian Inner City 1971-1976: A Statistical Handbook*, Ottawa, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1979.
20. David Ley, *Gentrification in Canadian Inner Cities: Patterns, Analysis, Impacts and Policy*, Ottawa, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1985.
21. See, for example, the findings reported in Mitchell, op. cit. note 11.
22. The data in this paragraph are derived from Mitchell, op. cit. note 11.
23. For a fuller discussion, see R. Bruce Martin, "Faith Without Focus: Neighbourhood Transition and Religious Change in Inner-City Vancouver", unpublished MA thesis, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, 1989.

<sup>24</sup>. For gentrification in Kitsilano through the 1970s see David Ley, "Inner City Revitalization in Canada: A Vancouver Case Study", *The Canadian Geographer* 25 (1981): 124-148.

<sup>25</sup>. Caroline Mills, " 'Life on the Upslope': The Postmodern Landscape of Gentrification", *Society and Space* 6 (1988): 169-189.

<sup>26</sup>. T.M. Gannon, "Religious Tradition and Urban Community", *Sociological Analysis* 39 (1978): 283-302.

<sup>27</sup>. Sharon Zukin, "Gentrification, Cuisine and the Critical Infrastructure", in *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disneyland*, pp. 179-215, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1991.

<sup>28</sup>. Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, "Obtaining a Licence for a Neighbourhood Public House", Victoria, no date. Cited in Jim Toy and Jeff Wong, "From the Church to the Pub: Social Life in Revitalizing Inner City Neighbourhoods", unpublished paper, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, 1984.

<sup>29</sup>. This issue is pursued in greater detail in Martin, op. cit. note 23.

<sup>30</sup>. New World Network, Incorporated, *Points of Light*, May-June 1989. For an autobiographical encounter with New Age in Kitsilano ("The hub of the New Age in Vancouver"), see Caroline Sutherland, "The New Age", *Vancouver*, November 1989. The rise of these alternative religions clearly challenges an unnuanced evolutionary view of secularization. "Sacralization" is intact, though it does not necessarily take the form of conventional religious belief. This interpretation supports the position of those who have been reassessing the secularization thesis, for example: David Lyon, *The Steeple's Shadow: On the Myths and Realities of Secularization*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1985; J.K. Hadden, "Towards desacralizing secularization theory", *Social Forces* 65 (1987): 587-611.

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