Everyday Infidels:
A Social History of Secularism in the Postwar Pacific Northwest

by

Tina Marie Block
B.A., University of Calgary, 1996
M.A., University of Victoria, 1999

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

Together, British Columbia and Washington State have constituted a uniquely secular region. Residents of the Pacific Northwest were (and are) far more likely than their counterparts elsewhere to reject or ignore religious institutions, and religion itself. Historians have devoted little attention to this phenomenon. This dissertation draws on a wide range of manuscript, quantitative, and oral history sources to interrogate the nature and meanings of Northwest secularism in the years between 1950 and the early 1970s. Scholars have typically depicted secularism as something produced and disseminated within institutions and by cultural elites. Inspired by the rich literature on popular and lived religion, this study departs from convention and explores secularism at the social and everyday level. It does not reveal any coherent doctrine of secularism, nor does it suggest that the Pacific Northwest was a region of atheists. Just as church involvement is not the sole measure of religiosity, atheism is not the singular expression of secularity. Northwesterners were secular in multiple, ambiguous, and contested ways - ways that did not exclude encounters with the sacred. This dissertation traces certain widely shared elements of secularism in the postwar Pacific Northwest, including an indifference towards organized religion, and ambivalence around personal religion and belief. Influenced by normative ideas of race, class, gender, and family, postwar religious and cultural commentators blamed the distinct irreligion of the Northwest on single, working-class men in the region. Northwest secularism also tended to be constructed as a problem
particular to whites in the region. In rejecting religion, white Northwesterners were seen as contravening dominant expectations of respectable whiteness. This study argues that Northwest irreligion was broadly based rather than anchored to a particular demographic group within the region. It challenges the assumption that secularity had little to do with women, the middle classes, and families. At the same time, this study also contends that class, race, gender, and family shaped and differentiated the meanings and experiences of religion and irreligion. For example, white, middle-class women in the Pacific Northwest were far less committed to organized religion, and religion itself, than their counterparts in other regions. However, in everyday life, secular women confronted and struggled against entrenched ideals of feminine and middle-class piety. On the other hand, working-class men were freer to behave in non-religious ways, since for them this behaviour conformed to, rather than contradicted, class and masculine norms. For men and women from all social locations, the deepest tensions around religion emerged in relations with family. The ambivalent secularism of the Northwest took shape in ordinary households, as people worked to reconcile their own secular impulses with family demands and expectations. Although they were secular in different ways, all social groups helped to produce and sustain the distinct irreligion of the Northwest. This dissertation argues that certain historical, demographic, and imaginative factors combined to broaden the possibilities for rejecting or avoiding religion in this cross-border region. While the region has been, and remains, a place of abundant spiritual energies, over time irreligion has become entwined in the myths and expectations of Northwest culture. This dissertation highlights the neglected intersections between geography and religion, and demonstrates the importance of place to secular and religious practice and identity.
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Introduction

On May 14, 2003, a daily newspaper in Victoria, British Columbia carried a startling headline: “1.3 million in B.C. profess no religion.” Drawing on recently released data from the 2001 census, the article noted that 35% of British Columbians claimed to have no religion, as compared to only 16% of Canadians more generally. Readers of the article learned that BC was the only province in Canada where having no religion was, in fact, the “number one religion.” The release of figures from an American survey in 2001 provoked similar commentaries in newspapers south of the border. The survey results prompted one Seattle reporter to write: “It’s Sunday morning in the state that leads the nation in a soul-shaking statistic: the highest percentage of people who say they have no religion.” Washington residents learned that 25% of their state’s population claimed no religion, compared to 14% of the wider US population. While some readers may have found such statistics surprising, references to the unusually non-religious character of the Pacific Northwest were certainly not new. In 2001, the proportion of people in both countries professing ‘no religion’ was larger than ever before, but the distinct secularity of the Pacific Northwest relative to both nations has remained constant since the nineteenth century. Over the years, the uniquely irreligious character of the Pacific Northwest has been the subject of much comment, but little critical interrogation. This dissertation considers this phenomenon in the postwar

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1 Times Colonist, 14 May 2003, A1; also see Vancouver Sun, 14 May 2003, A1.
context. It explores how this regional secularism was represented and lived, and seeks to shed new light on Pacific Northwest culture and identity in the twentieth century.

Residents of British Columbia and Washington were not universally secular, but they were (and are) far more likely than their counterparts elsewhere to reject, avoid, or ignore religious institutions, and religion itself. Why (and in what ways) was the Pacific Northwest distinctly secular in the postwar era? What did this regional secularism mean to the people who lived and created it? How was (and is) religiosity defined and measured by those within and outside the region? Did ordinary Northwesterners understand themselves as non-religious? What were some of the normative expectations of this secular culture? How did class, race, gender, and place define and delimit the possibilities for being secular? My dissertation addresses these questions in an effort to deepen our understanding of secular, religious, and regional identities in postwar North America. Regularly assumed rather than studied, secularism has been overlooked as a social category and significant dimension of daily life. Viewed in the realm of the everyday, secularism, like religion, appears as a complex cultural phenomenon with its own set of choices, priorities, and practices. Northwesterners were secular in multiple, creative ways in response to a range of influences, including social mores, family pressures, material circumstances, and personal impulses. Secularism, then, has a rich social history that needs to be studied in its own right. My dissertation explores this


4 Although my dissertation focuses on Washington and British Columbia, Oregon has also maintained distinct patterns of secularism. For a discussion of Oregon’s unique religious and irreligious history, see Mark Shibley, “Religion in Oregon: Recent Demographic Currents in the Mainstream,” Pacific Northwest Quarterly 83: 3 (July 1992): 82-87.
social history within the context of the Pacific Northwest between 1950 and the early
1970s. It weaves together three principal arguments. First, it contends that secularism
was a central element of Pacific Northwest culture in the postwar era. Second, it argues
that this region’s distinct secularity was produced and sustained, in large part, by ordinary
people in the spaces of everyday life. Finally, it maintains that Northwest irreligion was
ambivalent and contested, and that it was experienced differently according to class,
gender, and other social identities.

This study seeks to illuminate the social history of secularism in the Pacific
Northwest through an analysis of three sets of primary sources: printed materials,
quantitative data, and oral interviews. I probed a wide range of archival and published
printed sources for insights into the values and expectations associated with religion,
secularism, and regionalism in the postwar world. I examined extensive local, regional,
and national church records, including those of specific denominations such as the
Anglican Synod of BC, and those of ecumenical organizations such as the Washington
and Northern Idaho Council of Churches. These sources, along with scores of
denominational newspapers, offer a lens on how church leaders in BC, Washington State,
and beyond, perceived and constructed religion and irreligion in the Pacific Northwest.¹
For an alternative perspective, I turned to the records, correspondence, and newspapers of
several Secular Humanist and Rationalist organizations within and outside of the region.
Such materials further illuminate how the Pacific Northwest was viewed and defined in
terms of religion and secularism. I also moved beyond explicitly religious and secularist
writings to explore a range of travel literature, popular histories, and local newspapers

¹ My analysis of church records and narratives takes its cue, in part, from Bret Carroll, who recently called
for more qualitative approaches to region and irreligion; see “Reflections on Regionalism and U.S.
published in the region during the postwar decades. This wider cultural media was analyzed for what it reveals about the dominant images, symbols, and myths (religious and otherwise) associated with this cross-border region.

Qualitative sources such as popular literature and church records do not offer an unmediated window on an objective past. Such sources do, however, provide at least a partial view of culture which, David Hall reminds us, “has multiple dimensions; it presents us with choice even as it also limits or restrains the possibilities for meaning.” In this study, the words of cultural commentators are not treated as simple reconstructions of actual human behaviour. Rather, such narratives are read against the grain for what they disclose about the “possibilities for meaning” in the postwar Northwest. As we shall see, although they were directed at different audiences and guided by competing ideologies, church, secularist, and popular writings reproduce many common assumptions about the class, race, gender, family, and regional meanings of religion. In this study, I contend that the lived experience of Northwest secularism cannot be understood apart from how this secularism was imagined. The qualitative sources indicate that this secularism was typically imagined as an element of the white, male wageworkers frontier. Cultural commentators shared in disseminating commonsense ideas about the innate piety of women, the natural irreverence of male miners and loggers, and the sacralizing effects of the family. Such ideas were often based more on unexamined essentialisms - on what was already ‘known’ about the religious lives of women, workers, and families - than about what was actually happening on the ground.\(^6\)

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7 In probing the printed sources for embedded class, race, and gender assumptions, my dissertation draws on the growing literature on cultural history in North America and Europe. See, for example, Elizabeth
These ideas were not irrelevant in everyday life, but rather formed part of the web of expectations that framed religious and non-religious behaviour in the Northwest. As we shall see, decisions around religion were made in relation to these wider expectations, which differed according to class, gender, race, family, and other social categories.

This study also draws evidence from a wide range of quantitative sources. The published Canadian census is among the most comprehensive of statistical sources on religion for this period. The census illuminates the demography of religion in Canada, and points very clearly to the uniquely non-religious character of British Columbia. On the contrary, the US census does not include questions on religion due to the requirements of church-state separation. To ascertain the religious demography of the US, it was necessary to comb through several local, regional, and national surveys. In both countries, I consulted extensive polls and studies conducted by independent, government, academic, and church organizations. These various statistical sources confirm that BC and Washington State made up a distinctly secular place, especially with respect to religious preference and participation. In recent years, scholars have rightly pointed out that statistical measures of organized religious involvement fail to capture spiritual practices and engagements that have thrived outside of the institutional realm.⁸ Although the figures on religious belief are fragmentary for this period, the available statistics suggest that people in the Pacific Northwest were comparatively less committed to religion in all of its forms, not just organized.

Like other types of historical evidence, statistics must be approached, not as
disinterested facts, but rather as selective constructions bound to the conditions of their
making. For instance, a typical census or survey question such as ‘what is your religion?’
carried with it a host of normative assumptions, including those concerning the meanings
of religion itself. This seemingly straightforward question called up different social
pressures depending on who was doing the responding (and the asking). In this
dissertation, statistical evidence is treated not as durable and disembodied, but rather as
contingent, shifting, and culturally situated. As sociologist Bruce Curtis reminds us, even
censuses “are made, not taken.”

When considered with critical caution, quantitative materials can open new lines
of inquiry, and add further texture to our understanding of the past. In this study, the
statistical evidence contradicted many of the qualitative findings, and challenged me to
think in new ways about this regional phenomenon. While cultural and religious
observers usually attributed Northwest irreligion exclusively to working-class men, the
statistics suggest a more complicated story. The quantitative evidence points to a
secularism that was broadly based, rather than isolated to a particular demographic group
within this region. Class, gender, and other categories shaped and gave meaning to
Northwest secularism, but they did not, in a demographic sense, determine it. In the
Pacific Northwest, working-class men were less religious than their counterparts
elsewhere, but so too were women and the middle classes. Statistical sources compelled
me to broaden my view of Northwest secularism, and to bring new actors into this story,

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9 Bruce Curtis, The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-
1875 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 33. For a fine study of religion that draws on both
qualitative and quantitative methods, see Hugh McLeod, Piety and Poverty: Working-Class Religion in
actors who were largely invisible in official postwar writings. Such sources were also useful for sketching out broad, regional patterns of religious involvement in postwar North America.

The issue of Northwest secularism appears differently from the viewpoint of statistical sources and cultural commentaries; it is further complicated in the oral histories of this region’s residents. This project partly derives from my interest in how ordinary people engaged, and disengaged from, religion. It made sense, then, to talk to Pacific Northwesterners themselves. For this study, I conducted forty oral interviews with a total of forty-four people between June of 2003 and March of 2004. Pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation to protect the privacy of the interviewees. I carried out thirty-six interviews with individuals, three with married couples, and one with a mother and son. I spoke with people who were born in 1943 or earlier, and who had lived in British Columbia or Washington State for all or part of the period between 1950 and 1971. I focused my interviews on five cities: Vancouver and Nanaimo in BC, and Seattle, Olympia, and Port Angeles in Washington.\(^\text{10}\) In the end, I interviewed twenty-two people who had lived in British Columbia during the postwar decades, and twenty-two who had lived in Washington State during that era. The vast majority of the interviewees were white, and of European origin. I interviewed an equal number of women and men, and approximately the same proportion of working- and middle-class individuals. Most of my informants were exposed to some Christian influences as children. Thirty-three interviewees had at least one nominally Christian parent. Eight of my informants described both of their parents as non-religious or atheistic; however, even those with

\(^{10}\) I originally intended to conduct interviews in four cities, but encountered some difficulties finding participants in Port Angeles. As such, I eventually shifted my efforts from Port Angeles to Olympia.
non-religious parents celebrated religious holidays and rituals as children - seven were raised with Christian traditions, and one with Jewish traditions. Two of the interviewees were raised as Mormons, and one as a Muslim.

For this study, I endeavoured to interview people who fit one or all of the following criteria in the postwar decades: 1: considered themselves non-religious; 2: did not attend or join a church or other religious institution; and/or 3: left a church or other religious institution. While they had varying secular/spiritual identities, my informants shared a common detachment from organized religion. I adopted what has been called a "semi-structured" approach to interviewing.11 Using a general interview guide (see Appendix A), I asked my informants questions pertaining to a range of subjects, including the role (if any) of religion in their family lives, their reasons for turning away (or staying away) from organized religion, and their thoughts on the place of religion in the postwar Pacific Northwest. Oral history is increasingly seen as a collaborative exercise involving the input of both interviewer and interviewee. With this in mind, I used open-ended questions, and sought to allow my informants as much freedom as possible to take the interview in directions that were most interesting and meaningful to them. I made every effort to provide them with detailed information about the interviewing process, and spoke candidly with them about the objectives of my larger project. Of course, as scholars who use oral history have long been aware, no amount of self-disclosure will erase all imbalances of power from the interview situation.12 The oral


12 See Valerie Yow, Recording Oral History, 2; and Maurice Punch, "Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research," in Handbook of Qualitative Research, ed. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (Thousand
narratives in this study do not “speak for themselves,” but rather are framed by my own interests and subjectivity: in the end, the power to interpret rests with the researcher.¹³

There is an extensive, interdisciplinary literature on the merits and limitations of oral history.¹⁴ In oral history projects, questions arise about whether or not the interviewees are representative. For this study, participants were located primarily through newspaper advertisements (for a sample advertisement, see Appendix B). Such an approach does not guarantee a random sample of the population since, as Valerie Yow notes, it “is the articulate who come forward to be participants.”¹⁵ The people who responded to my advertisement were likely more interested in the issue of irreligion than average individuals. At the same time, as we shall see, many of my informants expressed a deep indifference towards religion; perhaps this indifference would have been even more apparent in interviews with people who did not have their eye caught by a newspaper advertisement on this subject. Although the individuals in this study offer a range of class and gender perspectives, most of them encountered the world from positions within the racial and religious mainstream. As we shall see, levels of involvement in all religions, not just Christianity, were comparatively low in the Northwest. However, non-Christians in this region who chose to disengage from religion likely met specific challenges, as they worked against not only the dominant Christian

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¹⁵ Valerie Yow, Recording Oral History, 17.
society but also their own religious heritage. This dissertation does not pretend to speak for people of colour, or for those who were raised in non-Christian religions. It is mainly a story of how people in positions of racial and religious (though not necessarily class or gender) privilege, encountered and contested religion in the particular context of the postwar Northwest.

Of course, the forty-four interviewees in this study cannot be said to represent a definite cross-section of even the white, Christian population in the Pacific Northwest. Of the forty-four individuals that I interviewed, approximately fifteen self-identified as atheists, which is a greater proportion than in the Pacific Northwest region as a whole. My atheist informants were (and are) more secular than most Northwesterners; nevertheless, their stories offer a rare lens on this small but significant group in the region. My interviews were not limited to active secularists or atheists. I also spoke with approximately sixteen individuals who identified as spiritual or religious, and thirteen who considered themselves neither spiritual nor atheistic. In an effort to mitigate some of the issues of representation, I chose to conduct interviews in five cities that approached the statistical average in terms of religious involvement in the region (for more details on these cities, see Appendix C). Also, I transcribed and cross-referenced all of the interviews. While recognizing that each life history is unique, this dissertation draws

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16 I use the term “people of colour” cautiously, aware of its many inadequacies. The term is problematic, as it sets up a demarcation between whites and all other races, and reproduces the normativity of whiteness. The term also belies the constructedness of race, implying instead that race is straightforwardly linked to skin colour. For an illuminating discussion on constructions of race, see John Lutz, “Making Indians in British Columbia: Power, Race, and the Importance of Place,” in Power and Place in the North American West, ed. Richard White and John Findlay (Seattle: Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest, 1999), 61-84.

17 As we shall see in greater detail in Chapter 1, levels of belief in a God remained high in the Pacific region and across North America through the postwar decades; in the 1970s, only about one in ten people in the region claimed not to believe in any God.

18 I use the term “approximately” because these categories were fluid rather than fixed. There were those, for instance, who defined themselves as both atheist and spiritual.
mainly on those ideas, emotions, sentiments, and stories that were echoed across several narratives. Finally, I analyze and assess the oral history findings in relation to evidence from a wide range of printed, statistical, and secondary materials.

Critics of oral history often point to the unreliability of memory. Extensive research on human memory indicates that while people often forget specific details and dates in their histories, memories of how they felt about particular incidents, relationships, or issues tend to deepen over time. In this study, oral narratives are mainly probed for feelings, emotions, and thoughts around religion and irreligion, rather than for specific facts or dates. Furthermore, the narratives are not approached as unmediated reconstructions of the past, but rather as cultural constructions filtered through the present. Historian Sarah Williams suggests that in oral history analyses, “when the focus of the endeavour becomes the way in which memory is constructed and the manner of the telling is treated as equally important as that which is told, then the way is opened for the source to yield its unique value, which lies in the first instance in its expression of culture.” This study looks not only to what the people said, but also to the “manner of the telling” for insights into Northwest culture. For instance, women and men spoke different languages of atheism, revealing the powerfully gendered character of Northwest secularism. Women talked more hesitantly and uncertainly about their unbelief, which, I argue, reflects the influence of past and continuing ideals of feminine piety. This gender discrepancy, along with many other subtleties of culture, would be missed if we looked only to statistical and published sources. In this study, oral narratives are examined for insights into the ingrained cultural symbolism of this region.

My informants reproduced shared essentialisms of the Northwest, describing it as an especially rugged, independent, and outdoorsy place. Rather than debating the ‘truth’ of such assertions, this study interrogates such assertions for what they reveal about the taken for granted elements of this regional culture. As we shall see, the Northwest’s secular identity has been partly imagined into being through the stories that ordinary people tell and retell about the Pacific Northwest.

Although not without limitations, oral history offers a rare window on private spiritual and secular impulses, thoughts, and practices. American and British scholars, more than their Canadian counterparts, have drawn on oral narratives to enrich our understanding of popular religion. Oral history is invaluable for exploring the hidden textures of everyday life, and for providing ordinary people with a voice in their own history. In postwar writings, cultural and religious leaders regularly discussed the phenomenon of Northwest secularism, but we rarely hear from the people themselves. This study gives ordinary people the chance to tell their version(s) of this story. Oral history has the advantage of pointing the researcher in interpretive directions that may not otherwise have been considered. So as not to close down interpretive possibilities, and in an effort not to “abridge, even to censure, the messiness that leaks into everyday life,” I structured my interview criteria very loosely.

My informants were all outside of religious institutions, but they ranged from the actively atheistic to the deeply spiritual.

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interviewed people who described themselves as unbelievers, but who felt it was important to be married in a church; people who prayed regularly but who considered themselves anti-organized religion; people who went to church only to set an example for their children, and who left the church once their children were grown. This kind of messiness does not show through in the statistical sources. The interviews reinforced my awareness that humans rarely fit comfortably into the neat little categories that are set out for them. At the same time, the interviews also compelled me to take secularism seriously as an element of human experience. Postwar cultural observers often depicted Northwesterners as unwitting secularists - as a people inexorably drawn away from religion by external, often environmental, factors. As we shall see, the people themselves tell a different story in which they are agents (rather than passive observers) of secularism. Residents of this region often cast secularism in a positive light and helped to embed it in ideals of the 'true' Northwesterner.

This study weaves together separate strands of evidence from oral narratives, quantitative sources, and printed materials. These three sets of sources offer different, and occasionally conflicting, views of Northwest irreligion. Of course, to encounter opposing 'truths' in different sources is not an issue peculiar to the present work, but rather a challenge of all historical research. Contradictions invariably arise when we examine our subjects from multiple vantage points. Such an approach compels us to abandon the search for single, settled answers to complex problems. By drawing on multiple perspectives, my dissertation reveals that Northwest secularism was neither settled nor determinate. Rather, it embodied the same kinds of ambiguities and contradictions that permeate all human experience.
My study explores these ambiguities and contradictions within a context that has rarely been addressed in the existing literature. Scholars of religion in both Canada and the US have yet to devote much attention to either the post-1950 period or the Pacific Northwest. While research on the social and cultural history of religion is growing in Canada, it remains far more developed in the American context. On both sides of the border, most of this work has centred on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The postwar era has been especially neglected in scholarship on the Pacific Northwest. Historian Carlos Schwantes attributes the lack of research on the twentieth-century American West to the predominance of the “heroic-nature - heroic-men” approach to this region’s history. On both sides of the border, popular and scholarly observers have remained preoccupied with the frontier era in the West; this partly explains the absence of religion from histories of this region, since religion rarely assumes centre stage in frontier imaginings. With the exception of missionary-native encounters, the religious history of the North American West more generally has drawn limited attention from scholars in

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Canada and the United States. As historian Laurie Maffly-Kipp notes, religious history has been “moored in an east to west framework: the farther west we go, the less important religious events seem to become.”

The Pacific Northwest and the second half of the twentieth-century also rarely appear in the wide literature on secularization. Proponents and detractors of the secularization thesis in the United States and English Canada have focused mainly on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Also, on both sides of the border, scholars

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have tended to depict secularization as a nationally uniform rather than regionally divergent process. Canadian scholars have viewed the rise and fall of religion almost entirely through the lens of Ontario; in the United States, the focus has been on the Northeast states. In both cases, a particular region has been taken to represent the nation’s religious history as a whole. Scholars have examined how, when, and even if secularization occurred, but few have asked specific questions about where it occurred. Although this dissertation is not primarily concerned with the issue of secularization, some of its findings challenge the notion of a settled trajectory of religious growth or decline. For example, it points to the striking rise in religious involvement in the 1950s, and to the persistent commingling of sacred and secular in everyday life, factors which complicate any easy or linear interpretation of religious change. “No one any longer holds the secularization thesis to be universally true,” writes Robert Orsi. “Abandoning the outlines of a single story, scholars now talk of alternative modernities and of varying patterns of negotiation across the globe in the encounter of inherited religions with the social, political, and economic circumstances of modernity.”28 As Orsi suggests, scholars have redirected the focus in recent years away from universal theories of religious change, and toward the “varying patterns” of religious negotiation across time and space. My study contributes to this redirection by probing the creation and negotiation of secularism in a specific, and often overlooked, historical context.

Certain methodological considerations figured in my decision to focus on the postwar decades. To attain a deeper understanding of the secular and religious identities

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28 Robert Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth, 10-12.
of ordinary people in the Northwest, it was important to be able to speak with residents of this region themselves. Oral history methods necessarily limited this project to a more recent period. In addition, there is a dearth of quantitative materials on religion in the United States for the years prior to 1950. Focusing on the post-1950 era gave me access to a far wider array of statistical sources, which allowed for a richer, more textured analysis of this regional secularism. While guided partly by methodological concerns, I was also drawn to the intriguing, yet relatively under-studied, religious context of the postwar decades. On both sides of the border, convention has it that the 1950s was a time of religious revival, and the 1960s a decade of religious declension. Although a few scholars have assessed the (apparent) religious changes across these two decades, they have been less attuned to how (or whether) these changes played out in regional and everyday spaces.  

This dissertation does not present the postwar era as a discrete turning point in a broad meta-narrative of religious growth or decline. Religious meanings and practices are constantly in flux, and this time period was no exception. Nonetheless, this study treats the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s as a single era. Connecting these years together might seem surprising given the ostensibly sharp division between the 1950s revival and 1960s declension. Such an approach was, however, appropriate for several empirical and methodological reasons. First, a close reading of a wide range of printed materials revealed more continuities than changes in discourses on religion between 1950s and the

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30 Other scholars have also made strong cases for studying the 1950s and 1960s together. See, for example, Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 308; and Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom, and Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
early 1970s. For example, the class, race, gender, and regional assumptions embedded in church writings were remarkably consistent, despite changes in context and subject matter over these years. Second, the primary focus of this study - the distinct secularism of the Pacific Northwest - remained stable across this period. National developments in religion did not pass over the Northwest, but they also did not determine this region's particular religious culture. This region, like others in Canada and the US, experienced rising levels of institutional religious involvement in the 1950s, and decreasing levels in the 1960s; despite such changes, the relative secularity of the Northwest stayed constant. Finally, this dissertation explores the negotiation of sacred and secular in ordinary life, a space without sharp lines between religious eras. My informants described their religious histories in ways that were fluid and seamless, rather than discrete or discontinuous.

In the social imaginary, staid, churchgoing, close-knit nuclear families of the 1950s are often juxtaposed against the radical, sexually liberated, anti-establishment individuals of the 1960s. Although not without cultural resonance, these kinds of caricatures gloss over the complexities of human experience in both decades. This study resists the impulse to fit the regional and everyday stories of Northwesterners into this conventional (and over-simplified) trajectory. This does not mean, however, that there was nothing historically specific about their stories. For instance, cultural officials and ordinary people in this region reflected upon, and helped to shape, the wider critique of the Christian churches that emerged in the 1960s. Northwesterners, along with other Canadians and Americans, encountered new secular impulses in the mid 1960s as Time

magazine famously wondered about the death of God, and authors like Pierre Berton railed about the self-satisfied, undemanding, “comfortable pews” of the Christian churches.\textsuperscript{32} While events of religious significance occurred at points through the postwar decades, this era was itself distinct in the wider history of Northwest irreligion. A phenomenon with a deep past, Northwest secularism took on meanings specific to the postwar decades. It was, for example, far less tied to labour radicalism and a demographic gender imbalance in the postwar decades than it had been in the nineteenth century. As we shall see, in gender, class, and a range of other ways, postwar Northwest secularism was time as well as place-specific.

From a cross-border, postwar perspective, this study demonstrates the contingency and permeability of boundaries not only between historical eras, but also between nations. Regions are by now well understood as shifting cultural constructions rather than concrete, stable entities.\textsuperscript{33} There is no general, shared agreement in academic or popular discourse on what constitutes the “Pacific Northwest.” While some use the term to refer to the states of Washington and Oregon alone, others include all or part of the states of Idaho, Montana, and Utah. Historian Richard Brown notes that it is


something of a "geographical absurdity" to refer to BC as the 'Northwest,' since from a Canadian perspective this province is in the Southwest. Nevertheless, scholars regularly include all or part of British Columbia in their definitions of the "Pacific Northwest."\textsuperscript{34} BC was also often included as part of the Pacific Northwest in the cultural media, tourist literature, and everyday discourse of the postwar era. While recognizing the contingent, contested, and indeed somewhat 'absurd' character of all regional categories, this study uses the term "Pacific Northwest" to refer to the cross-border region of BC and Washington State. Much of the qualitative and quantitative evidence suggests that Oregon shared the secular patterns of BC and Washington. Due to the limits of time and resources, however, I decided to exclude Oregon from in-depth consideration. While some of my conclusions might be cautiously extended to Oregon, I do not pretend to fully account for the specific religious history of that state.\textsuperscript{35} California also sustained relatively low levels of institutional religious involvement through the postwar decades. However, California's particular social, economic, and religious circumstances distinguish it from the Northwest states, making it deserving of separate study.\textsuperscript{36}

Several scholars have demonstrated the permeability of the border between BC and Washington. These two places are (and have been) interlinked on economic, cultural, and social terrain.\textsuperscript{37} Washington and BC followed rather similar economic and


\textsuperscript{35} For an in-depth discussion of religion in Oregon, see Mark Shibley, "Religion in Oregon."


social paths in the postwar decades.\textsuperscript{38} The years following World War II brought substantial economic growth to this region's service and manufacturing sectors, although resource extractive industries continued to predominate on both sides of the border. In these years, the population of this region grew at a faster rate than that of both nations. Both places received a substantial influx of immigrants, and became increasingly more ethnically and racially diverse. As we will see in detail in later chapters, BC and Washington were not dramatically different, in a demographic sense, from their respective nations. The Northwest shared in the baby boom, economic prosperity, and other national socio-economic trends of the era.\textsuperscript{39} This study is not the first to point to the shared economic and social development of BC and Washington, or to conceptualize this as a distinct cross-border region. However, the place of religion in this transborder culture has been overlooked.\textsuperscript{40} This study reveals that Washington and BC were bound together not only by a distinct social and economic, but also religious, history.


\textsuperscript{38} In the American context, there is an ongoing debate about whether or not World War II marked the beginning of a period of dramatic and overwhelming social and economic change in the Pacific Northwest. See, for example, Quintard Taylor, "'There was no better place to go'-The Transformation Thesis Revisited: African-American Migration to the Pacific Northwest," in \textit{Terra Pacifica: People and Place in the Northwest States and Western Canada}, ed. Paul Hirt (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1998), 205.


\textsuperscript{40} For an exception, see Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, \textit{The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
Most historians explore their subjects within the bounds of the nation-state; national borders are regularly taken for granted, but their meaning and significance is rarely examined. By adopting a comparative approach, this study brings the border into critical view, and offers new perspectives on the interplay between region, nation, and religion. The border mattered to religious meaning and experience. For instance, public atheism was more prevalent in BC than in Washington, in part, due to the greater cultural constraints around unbelief south of the border. British Columbians have also been more likely than their Washington counterparts to reject organized religion. For various reasons, there have been wider possibilities for being secular north of the border. While this dissertation addresses national differences, it argues that BC and Washington shared more in common, religiously, with each other than with their respective nations. Indeed, this region fits awkwardly into many of the prevailing myths around religion in Canada and the US. From the view of this transborder region, my project destabilizes many of the national meta-narratives that have dominated religious history in both countries, including that of secularization. It also challenges the thesis of American exceptionalism. Proponents of American exceptionalism argue that there were (and are) fundamental religious differences between Canada and the US. They contend, in particular, that strict church-state separation has significantly distinguished the US from its northern

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neighbour. My work shows that region often superseded nation in the religious realm, even when it came to those things considered central to nationhood such as relations of church and state.

This dissertation sets out to complicate, but not to replace, the master narratives of religion in Canada and the US. Do not expect to find any grand, universal theories of religion or secularism in the following pages, for my primary focus is on the ongoing, partial, and ambivalent ways in which Northwesterners encountered, and moved away from, religion. This study looks at a relatively unexplored time and place, but it also brings a new analytic approach to the study of secularism. It draws insights from the growing scholarship on popular religion and the social history of religion in North America and Britain. This scholarship has turned the focus away from religious leaders and doctrines and towards the diverse, complex religious lives of ordinary people in everyday contexts. Scholars of ‘lived religion’ in the US have also contributed to this redirection, although they have sought more explicitly than others to avoid placing human behaviour into the discrete realms of sacred or secular, elite or popular, and other kinds of oppositional categories that have little resonance in the real world. According to Robert Orsi, the study of lived religion moves away from formal doctrines or denominations and “toward a study of how particular people, in particular places and times, live in, with, through, and against the religious idioms available to them in culture - all the idioms, including (often enough) those not explicitly their ‘own.’” My dissertation contributes to this redirection, but departs from the usual path of inquiry by

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focusing mainly on how people “lived against” religion. Scholars of lived, popular, and social religion have shed increasing light on the cultural meanings of religion, and on the place of the sacred in social relations, but we know little about what it meant to be secular in the everyday. Why did so many Northwesterners avoid, or ‘live against’ religion, in all of its forms? What kinds of challenges did secularism evoke in ordinary lives? Did it make a difference if one was a man or a woman, working or middle class, living alone or within a family?

It is rare for a historian to ask these kinds of questions of secularism, a subject that is usually approached in relation to cultural institutions and elites and as part of the sweeping process of secularization, rather than as something embedded in daily human experience. Many scholars have argued that secularization has little to do with levels of popular religious practice, and instead refers to a decline in the influence of religion in the dominant culture. Historians have begun the important work of studying the social experience of religion, attending even (and perhaps especially) to those kinds of behaviours and imaginings typically excluded from conventional understandings of ‘true religion.’ Increasingly seen as the active creators of rich religious cultures, ordinary people often disappear when the discussion turns to secularism. In most studies of secularization, the ideas and decisions of religious and cultural leaders rather than average people take centre stage. Scholars of lived, popular, and social religion, by contrast, have shown that answers to the ‘big’ questions in religious history are to be found not in the theological rafters, but in the messy and often mundane practices of

46 For two very fine works see, in Canada, Ramsay Cook, The Regenerators, and in the U.S., T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace.
everyday life. Religious practices, notes Robert Orsi, are regularly attributed to the
“Puritan legacy” or the “evangelical impulse” rather than to “the creative working of real
men and women - using inherited, improvised, contested, and contradictory religious
idioms - with the actual circumstances of their lives.”47 Similarly, secularization (and
secularism) has tended to be conceptualized as something that happens to ‘real men and
women,’ rather than as something that was produced and articulated by them. This study
suggests that ‘real’ women and men, in everyday spaces and in negotiation with wider
social forces, at least partially made and sustained Northwest secularism.

This dissertation approaches the ‘everyday’ as more than just a new and
unexplored context for the study of secularism; it does not simply add everyday life to an
already finished picture of secularism. The everyday, notes sociologist Rob Shields, is
“the ground of sociality, culture, and the emotional ground tone of individual interaction.
The everyday is not only banal but so mundane that it is of the essence and yet beneath
the radar of domination and power relations.”48 Northwest secularism did not just affect,
but was made by, the mundane actions and inactions of the everyday. This interpretation
follows from the insights offered by Henri Lefebvre, Pierre Bourdieu, and other social
theorists who have defined the everyday as the

necessary ground to which the big and abstract questions of domination and
subordination, power and resistance have to be chased. In other words, it is in
daily experience, in the settings of ordinary desire and the trials of making it
through, that the given power relations are contested or secured, in an always-
incomplete process of negotiation, which is rarely unambiguously ‘lost’ or
‘won.’49

47 Robert Orsi, “Everyday Miracles,” 10. For a discussion of ‘practice’ theory, see Nicholas Dirks, et.al.,
“Introduction,” in Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory, ed. Nicholas Dirks
48 Rob Shields, “Space and Culture: A Resume of Everyday Life,” Space and Culture: International
49 Nicholas Dirks et.al, “Introduction,” in Culture/Power/History, 17.
Northwest secularism must be approached not only in elite and institutional spaces but also in the "settings of ordinary desire" and the everyday "trials of making it through." In ordinary decisions about such things as where to live, what to do on Sundays, how to celebrate the holidays, and what to tell their children about religion, Northwesterners produced and entrenched regional habits and parameters of religion and irreligion.

This project did not begin with the question: 'why was this place distinctly non-religious?' for such a question presupposes the existence of a uniform, shared definition of religiosity. Since no such definition exists, this study began, instead, with the questions: 'was this region less religious than other places? Or was it just differently religious than other places? In what ways was it secular, or differently religious, and according to whose definition?' From the perspective of Christian leaders, the Pacific Northwest was a distinctly secular place because such a large proportion of its residents stayed away from the churches. Church officials in this region and beyond bemoaned the tendency of ordinary people to disassociate church involvement from religiosity.

According to an article in a 1958 edition of the Canadian Churchman, those who saw churchgoing and religiosity as separable were, quite simply, "muddle-headed and incorrect." The writer offered the 'true' definition of religion: "Religion consists of being trained by regularity at church and prayer and a definitely planned spiritual growth and development...A religious person is one whose daily life is so planned that his or her spiritual training and duties takes precedence over everything else."\(^{50}\)

Several scholars have shown that church-centred definitions of religiosity fail to capture those diverse spiritual behaviours and ideas that have taken shape outside of the

\(^{50}\) Canadian Churchman, 20 February 1958, 79-80.
institutional realm. As Wade Clark Roof eloquently writes regarding religion on the west coast:

‘Who defines the meaning of a symbol?’ we continue to ask. On this coast in the United States and Canada, the chorus of responses has been fairly clear: the people do, often defying traditional religious authorities. Consequently, religious forms for the region are different – there are more home altars, hidden temples, folk festivals, activities that fail to get calculated in the usual indices of institutional religious participation advanced by social scientists. Moreover, by relying so heavily on an institutional model of the religious, commentators tend to overlook the spiritual qualities that flourish within the region.\textsuperscript{51}

As Roof suggests, people on the west coast were not always religious in expected ways; non-institutional forms of spirituality were especially prevalent in the region. The ‘spiritual qualities’ of the Pacific Northwest deserve further study, but they are not the primary focus of the present work. My research took me in a somewhat different and largely uncharted direction. Northwesterners were often religious in unconventional ways, but they were also more likely than their counterparts in other regions to ignore or reject religion, and to consider themselves non-religious. This was made evident not only in the printed and statistical sources, but in the oral narratives. The three levels of sources revealed a deep strand of ambivalence, indifference, and hostility around organized religion, in particular, but also other forms of religion in the Northwest. As my research progressed, it became more focused on this region’s secular, than its spiritual, qualities.

“What’s meant by ‘secularism,’” historian Wilfred McClay reminds us, “will depend upon the cultural and historical context in which one is using the word.”\textsuperscript{52} In this project, I use the term secularism flexibly (and interchangeably with other terms such as

irreligion, secularity, and non-religion) to refer to the multiple behaviours, actions, and discourses that countered, in passive or active ways, specifically religious orderings. Conceptualized in this way, secularism includes, but does not equate to, atheism. Scholars have done much to challenge definitions of religiosity that rely exclusively on church involvement; however, secularism continues to be conflated with unbelief. Just as church participation is not the sole measure of religiousness, atheism is not the sole measure of secularism. An exclusive focus on atheism obscures the complex, often ambiguous character of Northwest secularism. Most Northwesterners, like their national counterparts, did not adhere to any formal doctrine of secularism: this was not a region populated by outspoken atheists. This should not be taken as evidence of this region’s spiritual qualities, for people here ‘lived against’ religion in multiple, ambivalent, and partial ways, not only as atheists. Several scholars have revealed the commingling of sacred and secular in daily life, and effectively contradicted the idea of religion as something bearing a stable, universal meaning. Although it is not possible to pin down a single true meaning of religion, a word on how the term is being used here is in order. In this study, religion is not equated with a single belief system, such as Christianity, nor is it taken to mean any worldview, code of ethics, or system of meaning. Rather, the word is used to refer to beliefs, habits, symbols, and practices that people associated with the supernatural or divine or that, quite simply, they understood to be religious. I have deliberately kept the boundaries of religion open and fluid, and have tried as much as possible to capture how ordinary people understood the sacred and secular. Like religion, the term secularism is in some ways a fiction that must be defined loosely so as not to

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obscure the messiness of human experience. In this study, the word secularism is used to refer to the many ways that people avoided, resisted, or moved away from religion. Such an elastic concept makes room for encounters, compelled and otherwise, with the sacred.

While this dissertation seeks to account as much as possible for the intertwining of sacred and secular in daily Northwest life, its main analytic focus is on the secular. While increasingly sensitive to the interplay of sacred and secular, scholars continue to devote most of their attention to the creative ways that people have used, rather than rejected, religion. By ignoring secularism we risk rendering it invisible, neutral, and normative, in much the same way that whiteness and masculinity once were. This study embarks on somewhat unfamiliar terrain by bringing irreligion to the forefront of discussion. It explores the creation and negotiation of irreligion on two, overlapping levels. First, secularism is shown to be part of the dominant culture of the Pacific Northwest, reproduced in the myths, habits, stories, and symbols of this region. While always partial, contested, and contingent, regional imagery and discourses not only made religion an awkward fit but also marked out greater possibilities for the secular in the Northwest. Second, secularism was made in the homes, workplaces, pubs, and other everyday spaces of Northwest life. In daily actions and inactions, ordinary people helped to define the norms for religion and irreligion in the region. These two levels, of course, reinforced each other: everyday practices gave rise to shared cultural ideas and expectations, and such ideas and expectations framed, and occasionally delimited, individual thoughts and actions.\textsuperscript{54} Most scholars have moved beyond the debate about whether human experience should be interpreted in exclusively materialist or discursive...

terms. The material and discursive realms are now understood as mutually constituted.

As we shall see, Northwest secularism was simultaneously made (and contested) in material, everyday practice and on imaginative terrain.\textsuperscript{55}

Historians of social and popular religion have shown that shared religious idioms, beliefs, and behaviours have formed the basis for religious cultures in specific times and places.\textsuperscript{56} Following from this, it is possible to speak (cautiously) of a secular culture in the postwar Pacific Northwest, as long as we view this culture as partial and contested. This regional secularism was characterized by some common norms, parameters, and practices. For instance, to avoid or reject organized religion was (and is) considered normative in the Northwest. As the historian Mark Silk notes, “the Pacific Northwest is home to a sizable and growing minority of evangelical Protestants who regard themselves, correctly, as the counterculture in the region.”\textsuperscript{57} Even those who led or joined the churches knew that religious involvement did not confer social acceptance in this region, as it did in certain other places. Expectations for personal religion were more varied. People well understood that public atheism crossed the boundary of social acceptance. Although not a region of militant atheists, the Northwest was home to a significant (and typically overlooked) minority of people who were deeply ambivalent about religious belief. Increasingly, scholars across the disciplines are interpreting culture as neither hegemonic nor singular, but rather as “multiple discourses, occasionally coming together in large systemic configuration, but more often coexisting within

\textsuperscript{56} Lynne Marks, Revivals and Roller Rinks, 4; and Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture, 13. 
dynamic fields of interaction and conflict." This study describes a secular culture that was fragmented, amorphous, and conflicted, rather than universal and homogeneous.

Northwest secularism was lived and created by all groups; however, it was understood and experienced differently by people depending on their social location. As anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz-Adler notes, regional cultures embody shared and divisive elements at once: "People understand that they share frames and idioms of interaction (a culture of social relations) and, at the same time, they know that these sets of practices have different implications for the different actors." This study looks, in particular, at the different race, class, gender, and family implications of secularism in the Pacific Northwest. Although race, class, gender, and family are often teased apart in this dissertation for the purposes of analysis, these and other elements of human identity are lived simultaneously rather than consecutively or discretely.

As several scholars have shown, race has constituted a central marker of identity and difference throughout Pacific Northwest history. Unfortunately, this study is limited in what it can say about how aboriginal, black, and Asian Northwesterners negotiated religion and secularism, or about what living in BC or Washington may have meant to racialized 'others' in the region. Such limitations reflect the fact that my oral

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58 Nicholas Dirks et al., "Introduction," in *Culture/Power/History*, 4. Also see Chris Wilson and Paul Groth, "The Polyphony of Cultural Landscape Study," 15; and Gerald Friesen, "From 54°40' To Free Trade: Relations Between the American Northwest and Western Canada," in *Terra Pacifica*, ed. Paul Hirt, 104.


interview sample is made up mainly of white individuals of European origin. As we shall see, the quantitative materials suggest that the distinct secularity of this region crossed racial and ethnic lines. People of all backgrounds in this region were far less likely than their counterparts elsewhere to subscribe to a particular religion. However, source constraints make it difficult to adequately discern how religion was perceived, encountered, or contested by Northwesterners outside of positions of racial and ethnic privilege. My work does, however, trace racial and ethnic constructions of Northwest secularism. I argue that whiteness was central to understandings of regional and religious identity in BC and Washington. Secularism was imaginatively construed as part of the quintessential Northwest identity - a regional identity premised, in part, on unquestioned assumptions of white dominance. Christian leaders and other cultural commentators likened the ‘godless’ Northwest to foreign mission areas, and called upon racial tropes to situate and explain this regional secularism. However, for the most part, a reliance on Euro-centric frontier imagery meant that Northwest irreligion would be largely constructed as a problem particular to the white population.

Historians have given much attention to the subject of class relations in BC and the American Pacific Northwest. They have focused especially on labour radicalism and class conflict in the resource sector at the turn of the twentieth century. In both countries, there is a developing literature on the interplay between class and religion, but

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63 See, for example, Carlos Schwantes, Radical Heritage; and John Belshaw, Colonization and Community: The Vancouver Island Coalfield and the Making of the British Columbian Working Class (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002). In the scholarship on British Columbia, a central debate has concerned the relative importance of race and class in this province’s history. For the beginnings of this debate see Peter Ward, “Class and Race in the Social Structure of BC, 1870-1939,” BC Studies 45 (Spring 1980): 17-36; and Rennie Warburton, “Race and Class in British Columbia: A Comment,” BC Studies 49 (Spring 1981): 79-85.
this has largely passed over the Pacific Northwest. My dissertation examines the class
dimensions of secularism and offers a new lens on class relations in the postwar
Northwest. Labour and working-class historians have been slow to acknowledge the
importance of religion. In the existing historiography, the secularity of the working
classes is typically presumed rather than studied. More recently, scholars have begun to
move beyond an exclusive reliance on church involvement to explore the diverse, non-
institutional religiosity of the working classes. This is important work, but we still
know very little about how and why some working-class people rejected or ignored the
churches and religion. In both the labour and religion historiography, working-class
secularism rarely emerges as a subject of investigation in its own right. My project
addresses this lacuna by exploring the nature of working- and middle-class irreligion in
the Northwest. Due to ingrained class expectations, the secularity of the Northwest was
usually seen as a working-class issue. There was a strong working-class element to this
phenomenon, but Northwest secularism also crossed into the more respectable middle
classes in the region. Wider, middle-class ideals around church involvement did not
seem to hold the same social power in the Northwest as in other regions; nonetheless,
such ideals did make moving away from religion a more significant social departure for
middle-class Northwesterners than for their working-class counterparts. At the same
time, the apparent middle-class pretensions of churchgoers kept some working-class
individuals away from organized religion. Working-class residents were often depicted

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65 See, for example, Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture; and Robert Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street.
as a people unwittingly drawn away from religion by material demands. Material considerations did come into play in decisions around religion: some people stayed away from the churches because they lacked money for the collection plate or ‘proper’ Sunday dress. However, the working classes were not merely ‘unconscious secularists’: many actively and deliberately turned away from religion, and religious institutions. This region’s distinct irreligion was made and sustained by people from all social locations, but class was deeply significant to how this secularism was experienced and imagined.

My study contributes new insights to the historiography of gender and religion in Canada and the US.\textsuperscript{66} The rich, growing scholarship on women and religion in North America has largely passed over the Pacific Northwest. Although there are a few studies of women’s mission work in the region, we continue to know little about the religious lives of ordinary women in BC and Washington.\textsuperscript{67} In addition to bringing a new regional perspective to the literature on women and religion, my study offers a rare look at women who challenged, resisted, or ignored religion. Scholars have given little attention to the


subject of women and secularism. In an essay calling for more recognition of women’s presence in American religious history, Anne Braude states: “In America, women go to church.” Braude correctly points out that women have generally outnumbered men in the churches, and that there is a need for greater recognition of women’s religious involvement in the American (and, I would add, Canadian) historical contexts. At the same time, we know even less about the many women in these countries who stayed away from the churches and religion. Perhaps because they are typically viewed as keepers of the faith, women often seem to slip out of view when discussions turn to the loss or absence of that faith. Certainly, Northwest secularism was (and is) usually attributed to men in the region. As recently as 1999, an article in the Washington Times blamed the unchurched character of this state on the persistence here of the “frontier archetype: the self-made young man who, like Horatio Alger, heads west to make his fortune.” My dissertation argues that although it was construed as a masculine problem, Northwest secularism was produced and sustained by both women and men.

Secularism did not, however, mean the same thing for women as it did for men. The powerfully gendered character of religion in the postwar world ensured that women and men would encounter different sorts of expectations and consequences on their secular journeys. For women, rejecting religion marked a significant departure from norms of feminine piety. As we shall see, Northwest women found ways of being non-religious that accommodated, and occasionally transgressed, such norms. On the other hand, masculine ideals generally worked to reinforce and perpetuate irreligion among

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68 For an exception, see Maureen Fitzgerald, “Losing Their Religion: Women, the State, and the Ascension of Secular Discourse,” in Women and Twentieth Century Protestantism, 280-303.
men in BC and Washington. The literature on religion and masculinity is growing, but scholars have yet to explore the interplay of these issues in the context of the Pacific Northwest. Historians have shown that this region is (and was) gendered masculine.

My study offers an innovative angle on discussions of gender and region; it contends that irreligion was partly created by, and also helped to shape, the masculine meanings of the Pacific Northwest. My work also takes a rare look at the inner worlds of ordinary men who avoided or rejected religion. In so doing, it departs from most studies of secularization, which have focused on the emergence of secular thought among religious and cultural elites. My study offers a fresh perspective on the gender dimensions of religion and region, and gives new insights into the day-to-day irreligion of women and men in the postwar world.

This dissertation contributes to the growing scholarship on religion and family in the US and Canada. Since the Pacific Northwest is often seen as a place of “heroic, loner white guys,” it is not surprising that few historians of this region have made the family, or domestic realm, a central subject of analysis. Regularly taken for granted as

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a chief site for the dissemination of religion, the home often drops out of view in discourse on irreligion. I argue that the family was not simply a passive recipient of secularizing forces, but rather itself helped to reproduce and disseminate secularism into the wider world. I also contend that the ambiguities, ironies, and contestations of this regional secularism were most apparent in the family realm. Northwesterners struggled to reconcile their own secular impulses with the demands of parents, children, and extended family members. As we shall see, a complex mix of motivations - both spiritual and secular - guided decisions about such things as baptisms, church weddings, and the religious education of children. Sometimes, personal secular desires were set aside to meet the needs, and ideals, of family. Some of the deepest contradictions of this culture arose in the realm of parenting, especially for secular women who encountered powerful ideals of motherly piety. By analyzing the creation and negotiation of irreligion within Northwest homes, this dissertation offers an innovative, everyday perspective on secularism, and a new view of family and gender relations and ideals in the postwar world.

My study disentangles some of the class, race, gender, and family implications of Northwest secularism. It begins, however, by presenting a more general picture of how this secularism was constituted and represented. Chapter 1 draws together evidence from a wide range of quantitative materials to illustrate that BC and Washington did, in measurable terms, make up a comparatively irreligious place in the postwar decades. Chapter 2 explores how this region's distinct irreligion was viewed and constructed by

Protestant church leaders and commentators. This chapter demonstrates that representations of the secular Northwest reflected and entrenched ingrained class, gender, race, family, and regional assumptions. Chapters 3 to 5 move beyond official views to explore how ordinary people viewed and negotiated irreligion. These chapters probe the class, gender, and family expectations that framed religious and secular behaviour in the Northwest. Chapter 3 traces the existence of a diffusive, everyday secularism in the postwar Northwest that was characterized by an indifference to organized religion and ambivalence around religious belief. This chapter identifies a strong working-class component to Northwest secularism, but it also shows that irreligion slipped into more respectable middle class-domains. Chapter 4 argues that Northwest secularism was deeply gendered, and that ‘living against’ religion did not mean the same thing for women as it did for men. Chapter 5 turns its attention to the domestic realm in an effort to illuminate how irreligion was produced and challenged within the family. Secularism was partially created in Northwest households, but it was also the family that most frequently motivated people in this region to engage the sacred.

Although class, race, gender, and family are important to understanding this regional phenomenon, none of these categories alone explains why the Pacific Northwest was distinctly secular. It is not possible to pin down a unitary cause of Northwest secularism, for this was a cultural phenomenon created and sustained by multiple, overlapping factors. Chapter 6 suggests that this irreligion was, in part, a product of place. Scholars often overlook the impact of geography on religious identity and practice. This neglect likely has to do with the tendency to see religion as universal,
transcendent, and separable from ordinary, worldly things such as geography.\footnote{For studies that have sought to ‘place’ religion, see, for example, Wilbur Zelinsky, “An Approach to the Religious Geography of the United States: Patterns of Church Membership in 1952,” Annals of the Association of American Geographers 51 (1961): 139-193; James Shortridge, “A New Regionalization of American Religion,” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 16: 2 (1977): 143-153; Richard Wentz, “Region and Religion in America,” Foundations 24: 2 (1981): 148-156; Jerald Brauer, “Regionalism and Religion in America,” Church History 54: 3 (1985): 366-378; Samuel Hill, “Religion and Region in America,” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 480 (1985), 132-141; Belden Lane, “Giving Voice to Place: Three Models for Understanding American Sacred Space,” Religion and American Culture 11:1 (Winter 2001): 53-81; and Rhys Williams, “Religion, Community, and Place: Locating the Transcendent,” Religion and American Culture 12: 2 (June 2002): 249-263.} This study reveals that place was (and is) central to how religion was understood and experienced. People encountered religion from specific geographical as well as social locations, and this mattered to religious behaviour and identity. In this project, then, the Pacific Northwest emerges as more than just a new geographic context for the study of religion. This place is not simply added to an already finished picture of Canadian and American religious history. More than a setting for wider, universal processes, the Pacific Northwest was itself an actor in this secular story. To put it simply, people who lived in this region were less religious because they lived in this region. In suggesting that place shaped human experience, this study echoes, but does not replicate, the thesis of ‘western exceptionalism.’ Proponents of western exceptionalism have been widely criticized for arguing, without adequate comparative evidence, that there was something intrinsic in the North American West that produced a certain kind of people (labour radicals, in particular).\footnote{For the classic statement of the thesis of western exceptionalism in Canada, see David Berclens, “Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier, 1897-1919,” Canadian Historical Review 58: 2 (1977): 154-175. For further discussions on the thesis, see Carlos Schwantes, Radical Heritage; Mark Leier, “W[h]ither Labour History: Regionalism, Class, and the Writing of BC History,” BC Studies 111 (1996): 61-75; and John Douglas Belsaw, “The West We Have Lost: British Columbia’s Demographic Past and an Agenda for Population History,” Western Historical Quarterly 29 (Spring 1998): 25-47.} My study departs from this essentialist argument by situating this region in comparative context and, following the work of cultural geographers, conceptualizing place as constructed, shifting, and contingent, rather than stable or

Chapter 1: Locating Irreligion: The Case of the Pacific Northwest

In 1963, the editor of the United Church Observer remarked upon the dramatic regional variation in Canada’s religious life:

you couldn’t scare up enough self-confessed atheists in the whole of Newfoundland to fill one of those white frame churches that perch so photogenically on the rocks overlooking the sea. And in Prince Edward Island there aren’t enough atheists to break up a good prayer-meeting. But in British Columbia you could pack Vancouver’s football stadium with atheists who are proud to tell the census-taker where they don’t stand.1

A few years later, a writer for a Seattle newspaper matter-of-factly acknowledged that the “state of Washington never has been a land of milk and honey for its churches.”2

Through the postwar decades, secular and religious observers regularly commented on the irreligious character of the Pacific Northwest. In the next chapter we shall see that the idea of ‘the secular Northwest’ was constructed according to particular class, gender, race, and regional assumptions. Although much that was known about secularism in this region was made, not simply discovered, this secularism cannot be dismissed as mere invention. In this chapter, I argue that the Pacific Northwest was, in measurable terms, a uniquely secular region in the postwar years. Residents of BC and Washington were more likely to reject, avoid, or ignore religion than their counterparts in other regions. Although the US-Canada border was not irrelevant, the secularity of the Northwest was primarily a regional rather than national phenomenon. This chapter contends that BC and Washington shared a distinct secularism that crossed national boundaries, and that was characterized mainly by a detachment from conventional forms of religion.

This chapter draws on a range of quantitative materials to examine the place of religion in the postwar Northwest. It presents an array of statistical data to support the

1 United Church Observer, 15 October 1963, 11, 46.
2 Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 2 January 1977, A1, A16.
basic contention that the Pacific Northwest was, in fact, unusually secular through this period. There are, of course, limits to what we can know from statistics. In 1959, a writer for an American Catholic weekly commented on the difficulties involved in measuring religion: “A religious boom is not like one in babies or in business. You can calculate the latter in terms of quantity. It is not always wise to do that with religion.” The writer continued: “what percentage of these people really know what religion is all about? Does it mean for them living a good life, thinking good thoughts, ‘feeling good’ or secure, or a hundred other things?” Many church officials shared this writer’s suspicion that religion statistics, regardless of their purpose, were fundamentally flawed. For the clergy, the chief problem with religion statistics was that, despite what people did or said in the realm of religion, few understood what “real” religion actually meant. As this example suggests, efforts to quantify religion are complicated by the fact that being religious means different things to different people, and across time and space. Despite the normative assessments of church leaders, there exists no fixed or universal definition of “true religion” against which individual levels of religiosity can be reliably measured.

As well as causing anxiety among postwar clergymen, the supple and indeterminate meanings of religion pose methodological challenges for the present-day researcher. It is not possible to precisely calculate the religiosity of a particular person, or group, or place, but this does not mean that religion statistics should be abandoned. Indeed, to categorically reject the quantification of religion is to risk reproducing the assumption that religion is somehow ‘out there,’ separable from everyday life, forever

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1 Register, 24 May 1959, 7.
beyond the reach of empirical study. Church leaders were disturbed by statistics on religion, in part, because they viewed numbers as simply too quotidian to adequately represent something that, in its 'genuine' form, was transcendent and awe-inspiring. The clergy looked with distrust upon numerical increases in church involvement, and even in professed belief, because true piety - or “that great torture of soul,” as one Christian writer described it - was understood to be ultimately beyond measure. This distrust was especially apparent in the 1950s, a time when church membership and attendance increased dramatically in both Canada and the US. Through the decade, Christian commentators anxiously debated about the meanings of this apparent religious revival. They worried that the increase in churchgoing reflected a superficial desire for conformity rather than a “real” spiritual awakening. As the Presbyterian minister Dr. Charles Templeton exclaimed: “I think there is a very real revival of interest in things religious but no significant religious revival.” Templeton’s suspicions, repeatedly echoed on both sides of the border, were grounded in part in the pervasive notion that “real” religion is inherently incalculable. This notion is evident in the following passage from an article in the magazine Christianity and Society: “Statistically, the increased figures are valid enough. But they raise a different question: do people believe more than before, or do they only believe they believe? Or believe they ought to believe?”

5 See Christianity and Crisis, 21 September 1959, 124-127; New Religious Frontier, 28 September 1955, 1; Presbyterian Record, April 1957, 8; United Church of Canada (hereafter UCC), Board of Evangelism and Social Service (hereafter BESS), Annual Report (1960), 69-73; and Marjorie Oliver and Ron Kenyon eds., Signals for the Sixties (Toronto: UCC Board of Information and Stewardship, 1961), 2-3.

6 Presbyterian Record, April 1957, 11; February 1957, 9; Canadian Churchman, 21 March 1957, 123-4; April 1959, 4; United Church Observer, 15 February 1959, 5; UCC, BESS, Annual Report (1961), 5-9; United Presbyterian Church in the United States (hereafter UPC), Synod of Washington, Annual Session, Minutes 12: 3 (1955), 389-391; New Religious Frontier, 28 September 1955, 1; Presbyterian Church in the United States (hereafter PCU), General Assembly, Minutes (1955), 8; and United Lutheran Church in America (hereafter ULC), Biennial Convention, Minutes (1958), 744-745.

7 Christianity and Society, Summer 1956, 8.
dissertation resists the impulse, so prevalent in postwar church circles, to dismiss religion statistics on the basis that they reveal nothing about genuine religiousness. As studies of lived religion have demonstrated, the search for religious purity is futile, as religion “takes life” only within language and through practice, at the messy and mundane level of the everyday. It is with this level that this study is concerned, and quantitative sources on religion offer one way of getting there.

While it does not judge religion statistics according to some nebulous ideal of authentic piety, this study also does not treat such statistics as frozen facts. Religious figures convey particular meanings that, in the North American context, have usually been determined by state, religious, or cultural authorities. Such authorities decide which aspects of religion are worth measuring, and reproduce, in statistical form, normative ideas about what it means to be religious. And so, in the postwar context, we encounter quantitative data on Christian but not occult practices, on prayer but not meditation, on participation in churches but not psychic fairs. Statistics on religion present not only a narrow but also a fixed picture of beliefs and behaviours that are, in fact, fluid and impermanent. As several scholars have demonstrated, conventional measures miss much of the texture and disorder of human experience in the religious realm. Religion statistics are, British historian Callum Brown points out, “discursively active,” not hard facts revealing the religious (or secular) essence of certain groups or places. Like all historical sources, then, they offer an incomplete and selective view of the past.

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9 For an eloquent discussion of the wide range of religious practices and beliefs that are missed by statistical measurements, see the introductory chapter in Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture.
Approached as such, and not as durable truths, religion statistics provide a useful lens on broad, regional and national patterns of religion. In this chapter, they are used to trace the existence of a regionally distinct secularism in the postwar Pacific Northwest.

That statistics on religion are selected, and not simply uncovered, is evident in the different nature of such statistics in Canada and the US. In Canada, every decennial federal census since 1871 has contained a question on religion. The census, though not without problems, contains the most comprehensive statistical data on religion in the Canadian context. The situation is rather different south of the border, where the category of religion is absent from the decennial censuses, and where the issue of religion in the census has been a subject of long-standing, heated debate. Between 1850 and 1936, the US government conducted regular counts of religion, but these were based on figures supplied by religious bodies themselves. In 1957, the US Bureau of Census, considering the inclusion of a question on religion in the 1960 census and seeking to gauge public opinion on the matter, conducted a Current Population Survey (CPS) on Religion. This CPS contains some of the most in-depth data on the demography of American religion in the postwar decades, but it does not account for regional differences (apart from South/non-South). Despite the positive public response to the CPS, the US Bureau of Census decided against the inclusion of a religion question in the 1960 census, on the grounds that it would contravene the separation of church and state.

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Not isolated to the 1960s, debates about the issue of religion in the census have flared up regularly in American religious, political, and academic circles throughout the twentieth century. As a writer for the *National Catholic Reporter* remarked in 1966: "For at least a half a century there has been an argument in the middle years of each decade, as the next census is being prepared, over whether to include any question about religion."\(^{14}\)

In the postwar decades, social scientists and certain religious groups called for the inclusion of such a question, recognizing the usefulness of detailed demographic data on religion for research performed in both academic and denominational settings. In the 1950s and 1960s, other religious bodies, including Jewish and Christian Science groups, along with organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union, argued that a census question on religion would not only violate personal privacy and the constitutional separation of church and state, but serve as a basis for discrimination.\(^{15}\) As this example demonstrates, the creation of religion statistics is hardly a neutral exercise and has, in the US, served as a flashpoint for ongoing arguments around civil liberty and church-state relations. While debates about the relationship between church and state have also regularly erupted in Canada, the issue of religion in the census has not been a contentious issue in this country. In the Canadian context, discussions about church-state separation have focused instead on separate schooling, and other matters pertaining to the rights of Roman Catholics.\(^{16}\)

Quantitative material on religion in these two countries, then, reflects the influence of somewhat different national priorities and ideas about the role of the state.

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\(^{14}\) *National Catholic Reporter*, 27 April 1966, 8.


\(^{16}\) See, for example, *United Church Observer*, 15 February 1960, 7; and *BC Catholic*, 14 June 1951, 5; 9 June 1955, 6.
In practical terms, such differences complicate the study of religion in a cross-border region such as the Pacific Northwest. For the period under consideration, there exists no quantitative source on religion in the American context that is comparable to the Canadian census. Instead, for statistical data on religion in the postwar United States, we are compelled to rely on a range of regional and national studies administered by various private and religious groups. Although not as large in scale as the Canadian census, these studies provide significant insights into the geography of American religion. Despite the absence of a strictly comparable statistical source, the available evidence enables an analysis of broad, regional patterns of religion in these two countries. Using data from the Canadian census and from a wide range of statistical studies and surveys in both countries, this chapter points to a regionally distinct irreligion in the Pacific Northwest.

In both Canada and the US, quantitative materials on religion have focused less on the inner, private dimensions of religion than on rates of identification with, and involvement in, organized religion. This chapter now turns to an examination of three distinct, yet overlapping, measures of religious participation: religious identification, membership, and attendance. All three measures point to markedly low levels of religious involvement and attachment in the Northwest through the postwar decades.

In both Canada and the US, today as in the past, many more people claim a religious identification than actually become involved in the religion of their choice. While data on religious identification cannot be taken as transparent windows on religious involvement, such data are useful for revealing levels of attachment - however tangential - to religious groupings. Statistics on religious identification indicate that levels of religious attachment were especially low in the Pacific Northwest. The census
remains the chief source for examining religious identification in the Canadian context. The census does not measure "church attendance or membership as such, but rather...the number of persons in Canada who indicate that they belong, adhere to or favour a particular religious body."\textsuperscript{17}

Statistics from the Canadian census reveal that throughout the postwar years, British Columbians were significantly more likely to claim that they had "no religion" than residents of other provinces (see table 1). In 1951, 2.2\% of the BC population claimed that they had no religion as compared to 0.4\% of Canadians nation-wide. In 1971, the percentage of the population professing no religion had risen to 13.1\% in BC, but to only 4.3\% in the nation. In 1951, then, British Columbians were over five times more likely than the average Canadian to claim that they had 'no religion,' and between 1971 and 1991 they were approximately 3 times more likely. In both 1951 and 1971, close to 80\% of the population claiming no religion in Canada resided in three provinces: BC, Alberta, and Ontario (see table 2). However, British Columbia contributed a greater proportion of its population to the 'no religion' category than Alberta, and a far greater proportion than Ontario. In 1951, although BC made up only 8.3\% of Canada's population, British Columbians constituted 43\% of all Canadians with no religion. By contrast, in 1951 Ontario made up 33\% of Canada's population and only 23\% of its no religion population. Like BC, Alberta contributed a greater percentage to Canada's 'no religion' population than it did to Canada's total population - in 1951 Alberta made up 6.7\% of Canada's total population, and 12.3\% of its 'no religion' population. In 1971 BC made up 10\% of Canada's population, but 31\% of those with no religion. This is a far greater number than Ontario, which made up 37\% of Canada's no religion group and

36% of its total population. It is also a greater proportion than Alberta, which made up 7.5% of Canada's total population in 1971, and 11.7% of its no religion population.

Census data on rates of 'no religion' highlight the significance of region to patterns of irreligion in postwar Canada. Such rates follow a clear east to west trajectory, reaching their highest levels in BC and the Yukon Territory, and their lowest levels in Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island (see table 3). In 1951, the Yukon sustained slightly higher levels of 'no religion' than British Columbia - the reverse is true for 1971. In 1951, a person living in BC was 73 times more likely to identify themselves as of no religion than a person living in Newfoundland, 20 times more likely than a person in New Brunswick, 7 times more likely than an Ontarian, and almost 3 times more likely than an Albertan. In 1971, British Columbians were 33 times more likely to claim no religion than people in Newfoundland, 7 times more likely than those in New Brunswick, 3 times more likely than Ontarians, and twice as likely as Albertans.

The Canadian census materials point to the existence of a distinct regional geography of religion in this country, and reveal especially low levels of religious affiliation in BC. The statistical evidence south of the border, while fragmentary, also suggests an unusual detachment from organized religion in the West, and particularly the Northwest. Several studies that have examined religious trends in more recent years identify the Pacific Northwest (Washington and Oregon) as the region with the highest percentage of religious 'nones' in the United States. Evidence regarding the regional dimensions of religious identification in the US prior to 1970 is limited. A question on

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religious preference was included in nation-wide surveys administered in 1952 by a private research group, and replicated in 1965 by the *Catholic Digest*. In 1952 the regional variations were not dramatic, but the Pacific region did contribute a greater portion of its population to America's 'no religious preference' population than to its total population (see table 4). More dramatic regional distinctions emerged in the 1965 survey, which found an unusually large proportion of west coast residents claiming 'no religious preference.' In this year, the Pacific states (Washington, Oregon, California, and Hawaii) contributed 12% to America's total population but a striking 21% to its total 'no religious preference' population. Bordering the Pacific states, the Mountain region made up 4% of America's total population, and 7% of the no preference group. The proportion of people claiming no religious preference in 1965 was far lower in all other regions, including New England, which constituted 7% of America's no preference population and 6% of its total population, and the West North Central region, which made up only 5% of the no preference group but 9% of the total US population. The regional variations in religious preference are further confirmed in Gallup reports on religion in America. A Gallup survey of America's religious life in 1970 reported that only 3% of people in the East, Midwest and South claimed to have 'no religious preference,' as compared to 7% in the West (see table 5). In the same year, the West contributed 32% of its population to America's no religious preference population, a far greater proportion than any other region (see table 6). Indeed, in 1970, the West was the only region that contributed more to America's no preference population than to its total population.

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19 These surveys are reprinted in Martin Marty et al., *What Do We Believe? The Stance of Religion in America* (New York: Meredith Press, 1968), 177-346.
Due to the absence of state-level figures on religious identification in America, it is not possible to identify the number of people in postwar Washington who had ‘no religion’ or ‘no religious preference.’ The distinct regional geography of religion in this country is nevertheless apparent in national surveys, which show that residents of the western states, and especially those on the west coast, were unusually indifferent to organized religion. In this regard, people in the Pacific states shared more in common with British Columbians, than with people in other regions of the United States.

Examined together, a 1970 American Gallup report and the 1971 Canadian census point to very similar levels of ‘no religion’ in these two countries: 4.3% in Canada and 4% in the United States (see table 7). By contrast, 13.7% of British Columbians, and 7% of people in the American West, claimed no religion. Based on data from the Catholic Digest surveys, and from postwar studies that consistently placed Washington and Oregon at the bottom in terms of church membership (to be discussed below), it is very likely that levels of ‘no religious preference’ in the Pacific Northwest were, in fact, greater than in the West as a whole. The parallels between BC and the American Pacific Northwest with respect to religious identification continue in the present: in 2001, 16% of Canadians and 14.1% of Americans claimed to have ‘no religion,’ as compared to a striking 35% of British Columbians and 25% of people in the American Northwest.

While the available statistics on religious identification suggest that Northwesterners were especially indifferent to religion, the meanings of such statistics are neither transparent nor fixed. In both countries, statistics on religious identification constituted, as sociologist Bruce Curtis reminds us in a different context, a “science in the making” rather than a “made science.” Curtis argues that, despite common perception,
census data is neither politically neutral nor concrete.\textsuperscript{20} That religion statistics are not hard, disembodied facts, unaffected by the conditions of their making, is evident in the development of the “no religion” category in survey and census questions on religion. As sociologist Norval Glenn explains, ‘no religion’ only gradually came to be included as an explicit response category in American surveys of religious preference.\textsuperscript{21} The Canadian census is also a “science in the making” and has regularly altered its approach to religion. For instance, 1971 was the first year in which the census actually printed the category of ‘no religion’ as a possible response to the religion question. There have always been people who identified themselves as of ‘no religion,’ but prior to 1971 this was not an explicit option.\textsuperscript{22} Interestingly, between 1951 and 1971, the percentage of the Canadian population claiming ‘no religion’ increased from 0.4% to 4.3% (see table 1). This increase, described in the census reports as the “most dramatic, single event occurring among 1971 Census data on religion,” clearly had to do, in part, with the inclusion of ‘no religion’ as a visible rather than implicit option.\textsuperscript{23} The rise of no religion also had to do with the emergence of new census practices. In 1971, the Canadian government introduced self-enumeration, providing respondents with far greater anonymity than door-to-door census-takers. As census analysts at the time speculated, self-enumeration “encouraged people to be more objective in their response” to the religion question.\textsuperscript{24}

Clearly, Canada’s suddenly enlarged ‘no religion’ population in 1971 was a product, in part, of changing census procedures. This example clearly demonstrates the extent to


\textsuperscript{22} Levels of ‘no religion’ were strikingly high in British Columbia at the turn of the twentieth-century. For a discussion on this phenomenon, see Lynne Marks, “Leaving God Behind.”


which religion statistics are made, and not simply discovered. In the quantification of religion, much depends on the kinds of questions, categories, and practices that are used.

When asked whether she had ever identified herself as a Christian, long-time Olympia resident Mary Green replied: “I might have before I realized there were other things, and that you could have none of the above.” As Mary’s comment suggests, the creation of ‘no religion’ (or ‘no religious preference’) as a statistical category reflected and facilitated new possibilities for being non-religious in the postwar world. Of course, no matter how inclusive, statistics are always invested with what Bruce Curtis describes as “normalizing judgement,” in that they seek “to regulate objects and relations by containing them within a specified range of variation.” Religion statistics regulate and contain identities that are, in many cases, impermanent and uncertain. Such statistics rely on neat, often binary, categories that inadequately capture the complicated and shifting ways that religion is experienced and understood in daily life. This inadequacy was revealed in my interviews, as people struggled to give a definite answer to my question: how, in the postwar years, did you define yourself in terms of religion? For many, the answer was neither obvious nor singular. David Becker of Washington described his (public) religious identity as shifting and contextual: “I would say Christian, but only with a certain crowd. If I was out with a crowd of agnostics or a mixture of religions I couldn’t...I wouldn’t be able to defend why I was a Christian, and wouldn’t say I was definitely a Christian.” Patricia Jones of Nanaimo pondered my question: “Well, I don’t know. I don’t think I’d say agnostic. I just...[pause]...I don’t know.”

25 Mary Green, personal interview, 24 March 2004.
David and Patricia, several people resisted my impulse to categorize them religiously. They described religious (and secular) identities that were uncertain, ambiguous, dynamic, and incapable of being wholly captured in a single census or survey response.

Turning from the statistics on religious preference to those on church membership, further complexities emerge. In 1956, a Methodist pastor in Kent, Washington, commented on the results of a local religious census conducted in his town: "with an active membership of 350 we turned up over 1400 Methodists in this area. What a job! What an opportunity!" This pastor's evident surprise at the deep gap between religious membership and identification in his community was echoed in church circles across Canada and the US through the postwar years. In 1967, the Western Canada Lutheran bemoaned the disparity between religious census and membership figures in the West: "Our greatest concern continues to be reaching the unchurched with the Gospel. Only one-sixth of British Columbia 'Lutherans' are on the rolls of congregations." To the ongoing frustration of church leaders, figures on religious preference in both countries far exceeded those on membership. Postwar clergymen, noting the wide discrepancy between membership and preference, complained about the growth of "churchless Christianity" and struggled to reaffirm the importance of church involvement to true piety. Religious leaders across both countries warned people not to confuse religion with "mere kindness," and stressed the importance of regular worship in a religious sanctuary, not under "the dome of the sky, or on the golf links."

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30 Western Canada Lutheran, June 1967, 2.  
32 Vancouver Province, 14 July 1958, 1-2; Colonist, 16 December 1962, 1-2; Canadian Churchman, 20 February 1958, 79-80; and Christianity and Crisis, 25 July 1955, 103-4.
The enduring gap between religious preference and membership across these two countries was especially wide in the Pacific Northwest. Canadian researchers have identified uniquely low levels of religious membership in British Columbia today, and through history.\textsuperscript{33} A 1977 national survey commissioned by \textit{Weekend Magazine} found that only 36.3\% of British Columbians claimed to be members of a religious group, as compared to 58.9\% nation-wide.\textsuperscript{34} Similar regional distinctions are apparent in membership figures provided by religious groups themselves. Figures from two of Canada’s main denominations, the Anglican and United Church, reveal that the discrepancy between the census totals on religion, and the totals listed on parish rolls, was particularly dramatic in British Columbia. In 1951 and 1961, only 54\% and 56\% of the Canadian population who claimed in the census to ‘belong to, adhere to, or favour’ the Anglican denomination, were actually on Anglican parish rolls in Canada (see table 8). In BC, the percentage of people claiming Anglican affiliation in the census who were actually known to the parish clergy was significantly lower than the Canadian average - only 40\% in 1951, and 43\% in 1961. In the United Church, the gap between the census figures on affiliation, and the number of those ‘under pastoral oversight,’ was also much wider in BC than in the rest of Canada. In 1951, only 53\% of the total BC population claiming United Church affiliation in the census was actually under pastoral oversight, as compared to 70\% in the nation (see table 9). In 1961, only 58\% of British Columbians who favoured the United Church were under pastoral oversight, as compared to 72\%.


\textsuperscript{34} Data Laboratories Research Consultants (hereafter DLRC), \textit{Report of a Survey of Canadians’ Participation in Organized Religion} (Montreal, 1977), 9, 13. Also see Reginald Bibby, \textit{Fragmented Gods}, 89.
nationwide. This trend continued in 1971, when only 41% of the BC population claiming United Church affiliation was listed as under pastoral oversight - the lowest of all regions in Canada. As noted earlier, postwar British Columbians were much more likely than other Canadians to indicate, in the census, that they had ‘no religion.’ It seems that even those British Columbians who claimed affiliation with the Anglican or United Church in the census, were far less likely than people in other parts of Canada to become involved in the church of their choice.\textsuperscript{35}

In the American context, figures from church membership studies reveal comparatively low levels of religious membership and adherence in the Pacific Northwest through the postwar era. Unlike the data on religious preference in the US, which focused mainly on broad regions of the country, certain church membership studies offer a rare look at religious patterns at the state and county level. In particular, two church membership studies conducted for the years 1952 and 1971 offer a useful, albeit partial, lens on the geography of American religion in this period.\textsuperscript{36} These studies, which consist of membership statistics collected from the denominations themselves, are not without problems. The two studies are not strictly comparable as they included a different number of religious groups, and were governed by different institutions and

\textsuperscript{35} There is evidence of similar regional discrepancies among Canadian Lutherans. See Western Canada Lutheran, June 1967, 2; and Canadian Lutheran, August 1967, 6.

\textsuperscript{36} The 1952 study was administered by the National Council of Churches of Christ, and the 1971 study was administered by the Glenmary Research Center. See National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America (hereafter NCCC), Churches and Church Membership in the United States: An Enumeration and Analysis by Counties, States, and Regions Ser. A-E (New York: Bureau of Research and Survey, 1956); and Douglas Johnson, et.al, eds., Churches and Church Membership in the United States: An Enumeration by Region, State, and County. 1971 (Washington: Glenmary Research Center, 1974). Similar, county-level church membership studies were also conducted for the years 1980 and 1990; see Bernard Quinn, et.al., eds., Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1980: An Enumeration by Region, State, and County, Based on Data Reported by 111 Church Bodies (Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1982); and Martin Bradley, et.al., eds., Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1990: An Enumeration by Region, State, and County, Based on Data Reported for 133 Church Groupings (Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1992).
procedures. Also, such studies must be approached with caution due to the persistence of inconsistent, multiple definitions of membership across (and even within) religious groups. In addition to the problems of comparison, these studies suffer from the absence of membership figures from African-American churches and certain other religious bodies.\(^{37}\) In the various published accounts and secondary, supplementary analyses of these two studies, the problems of omission were at least partially mitigated by the inclusion of membership estimates from the *Yearbook of American Churches* for some of the missing groups. As most scholars agree, the 1952 and 1971 studies, while incomplete, can be used in conjunction with evidence from many other local and national surveys to sketch the regional distribution of religious membership in the United States.

The 1952 study was conducted by the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC), and includes figures collected, and estimated, from 112 religious bodies between 1952 and 1954. While the figures for Protestant groups in this study represent approximately seventy-five percent of the total membership reported in the 1953 edition of the *Yearbook of American Churches*, Roman Catholic membership numbers in this study approximate the totals in the 1953 *Official Catholic Directory*. Although it does not include county-level figures from Jewish synagogue rolls, this study draws “cultural membership” counts of the wider American Jewish population from the 1955 *American

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Jewish Yearbook. To mitigate the absence of data from African-American denominations, the African-American population was removed from the total population figures in this study. The published reports of this study, then, include statistics that were adjusted to at least partially account for the several omissions and the inconsistencies in the meanings of membership across denominations. With these adjustments, this study points to very striking regional variations in church membership in the United States. Only 45.7% of people in the West are shown to be members of the participating religious bodies, as compared to 59.1% of people in the North Central region, 65.6% in the South, and 66.9% in the Northeast (see table 10). When narrower regional categories are used, an even more dramatic variation in the American religious landscape emerges. The Pacific region (Washington, Oregon, and California) had the lowest membership levels in the country, at only 42.4% compared to a national average of 61.1%. The Mountain region, with the second lowest membership figure in the country at 54.9%, still had over 12% more members than the Pacific region. The distinctiveness of Washington and Oregon are apparent in the state-level data. California had a membership rate of 45.7% compared to only 34.6% in Washington and 32.2% in Oregon (see table 11). In Washington, not a single county reached the national membership average of 54.6%. All 39 counties of the state had average membership rates of less than 50%, with a low of 7.4% in Skamania county, and a high of 44.2% in Lincoln county (see table 12). In 1971, the Pacific Northwest continued to stand out as the region with the fewest church members in the US. Like its earlier counterpart, the 1971 membership

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38 For an in-depth discussion of the procedures used, and religious bodies involved, in this study, consult NCCC, Churches and Church Membership, Series A, No.1 and No.2.
39 NCCC, Churches and Church Membership, Series A, No.3, Table 6.
40 NCCC, Churches and Church Membership, Series C, No.57, Table 127, Part II.
study provides only a partial picture of religious involvement in America. This study, which was conducted by the Glenmary Research Center and sponsored by the NCCC and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, omitted estimates from Jewish synagogue rolls, African-American denominations, and several other religious bodies.\textsuperscript{41} It reported figures from 53 Christian denominations, with membership totals representing approximately 80.8\% of Christian membership in the United States in 1971.\textsuperscript{42} Unlike its earlier counterpart, this study did not remove African-Americans from the total population figures, which means that actual membership levels were surely higher than the published figures, particularly for the South. The assemblers of this study created a ‘total adherents’ category in an effort to adjust for the varied membership practices across denominations; this involved increasing, by a set formula, the membership totals of those religious bodies that (unlike Roman Catholics) excluded children from their membership counts. Despite limitations, the 1971 study points to a distinct regional geography of religion in America that is very consistent with the results of the earlier study. In it, the West is shown to have the lowest church adherence rate at 38.0\%, as compared to 49.4\% in the South, 53.4\% in the North Central region, and 53.7\% in the Northeast (see table 13). Within the broader region of the West, the Pacific states were the least churched, with an average membership rate of only 33.5\%. At the state-level, Washington was at the bottom with a membership count of 32.5\% compared to a national average of 49.6\% (see table 14). In 1971, all but 3 of Washington’s 39 counties fell below the national church membership average (see table 15). Like its 1952 counterpart, the 1971

\textsuperscript{41} For an in-depth assessment of this study, see Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, \textit{The Future of Religion}, 69-75. Stark and Bainbridge found that adjusting the figures to account for the several omissions did little to disrupt the strikingly unchurched character of the west coast.

\textsuperscript{42} Douglas Johnson, et.al., eds., \textit{Churches and Church Membership}, vii-xiii.
membership study very clearly revealed the comparatively unchurched character of the Northwest. Several other scholars have shown that, even when adjusted for certain inconsistencies and omissions, both the 1952 and 1971 studies reveal a distinct “membership trough” in the West, and particularly the Pacific Northwest. 43

Several other national, regional, and local surveys confirm the persistence of unusually low levels of church membership in the American Northwest. Through the postwar years, the Washington and Northern Idaho Council of Churches (WNICC) conducted ongoing research into the religious membership of Washington and the nation. The resulting studies, which span from the 1940s to the 1960s, consistently placed Washington and Oregon at the bottom of the membership scale by a wide margin. For instance, a 1945 survey reported a membership rate of only 21% for Washington State, as compared to 27% in California, 42% in Ohio, and 53% in New York. 44 In 1952, WNICC research revealed a membership rate of 27% for Washington and 59% for the nation; in 1963, it found a rate of 30% for the state and 64% for the nation. 45 Various local studies, including one conducted by sociologists at Whitworth College in Spokane County in 1956, further demonstrated the unusually unchurched character of this region. The

44 UWM, WNICC, Acc. 1567-1, Box 3, File 17, “Percentage of Church Members by States,” 1945.
Whitworth researchers found that only 32% of Spokane’s population were members of any religious body, as compared to 62% of the nation. The 1952 and 1971 membership studies, and the reports produced by the WNICC, are based primarily on figures submitted by religious bodies themselves. Striking regional variances in religious membership are also born out in wider, national polls based on individual rather than institutional responses. The Catholic Digest surveys of 1952 and 1965 found that people in the Pacific region were much less likely than those in other regions to respond in the affirmative when asked if they belonged to any religious group (see table 16). A 1954 Gallup poll similarly pointed to the unchurched character of the American West (see table 17). Strikingly low levels of religious adherence characterized the American Northwest throughout the twentieth century, not just in the postwar era. “In 2000,” note the authors of a recent study of religion in this region, “the Pacific Northwest reached the institutional religious adherence rate of the nation at 1890.”

As we have seen, statistics on religious preference must not be taken as clear windows on actual religious membership. Similarly, figures on religious membership do not necessarily mirror actual attendance levels. Postwar commentators were well aware that on any given Sunday, most church members were not, in fact, present in the pews. As a writer for the United Church Observer matter-of-factly observed in 1951: “The Communion Roll of any given Church carries the names of men and women who are

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47 Surveys also indicate that levels of confidence in organized religion have been lowest in the West. See, for example, Gallup Organization, Religion in America, 20.
seldom seen within the portals of that Church." In Canada, attendance problems were particularly acute in British Columbia’s churches. As one pastor remarked in 1960: “the fact remains that B.C. people give less proportionately, and attend church less proportionately, than the people in the rest of Canada.” A 1960 Canadian Gallup poll reported significant regional differences in regular church and synagogue attendance: only 30.1% of people in BC claimed that they attended regularly, compared to 79.6% of people in Quebec, 58% in the Atlantic region, 49.4% in Ontario, and 44.7% in the Prairie provinces. A 1977 survey found that only 19.1% of BC residents attended religious services once a week, compared to 29.2% nationwide. The comparatively unchurched character of BC is further revealed in several community surveys conducted during this era; such surveys indicated that approximately one out of five people in this province regularly attended worship services in the postwar years. In 1958, a Canadian clergyman pointed out that United Church members in the eastern provinces were far more likely to be active in the church than their counterparts in the West. According to his report, 3% of United Church families in Newfoundland were ‘inactive,’ as compared to 14% in the Maritimes, 18% in Toronto, 25% in Manitoba, 30% in Saskatchewan, 30% in BC, and 31% in Alberta.

Like their Canadian counterparts, American religious leaders regularly complained about the enduring gap between church membership and attendance. As one

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49 United Church Observer, 15 August 1951, 2.
50 United Church Observer, 1 March 1960, 12.
53 Vancouver Province, 11 May 1956, 21; Presbyterian Record, July-August 1956, 14; Times Colonist, 29 December 1962, 2; BC Diocesan Post, September 1969, 2; and Nanaimo Free Press, 16 October 1963, 9.
54 United Church Observer, 1 April 1960, 2.
Methodist official noted in 1953, only about 27% of American church members were present at worship services on any given Sunday. In 1952, a writer for an American Lutheran journal bemoaned this phenomenon:

difficult to explain, but universally experienced, is the gap between membership and attendance. We think of the church as ‘the communion of Christian believers.’ But what happens to that traditional concept when, on the average Sunday, half of the Christian believers are relaxing in easy chairs, reading newspapers, watching television, playing golf, or catching up on their sleep while their brothers worship? Are there two churches: a church at worship, and a church at ease?

In 1965, the Greater Seattle Council of Churches reported on the absence of church members from the pews of this west coast city: “There are approximately 300,000 church members in the Greater Seattle area. If all these people attended church worship services next Sunday morning, then the ministers would agree it was phenomenal (sic), after they recovered from shock.” The persistent gap between church membership and attendance was considered a problem across the US, not just in the Northwest. However, in the Pacific region rates of church attendance fell far below the national average. In 1952, 50% of people in the Pacific region claimed that they had not attended Sunday or Sabbath services during the past 12 weeks, compared to 32% nationwide (see table 18). In 1965, 46% of those in the Pacific region, and 32% of the US population, claimed non-attendance. Gallup polls confirm the persistence of uniquely low attendance levels in the American West through this era (see tables 19 and 20). Such polls also indicate that

58 For secondary analyses which further demonstrate the persistence of strikingly low church attendance rates in the postwar American West (and particularly the Pacific Northwest), see Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 75-78; Mark Shibley, “Religion in Oregon,” 82; and Dean Hoge and David Roozen,
while Canadians were more likely than Americans to attend worship services through most of these years, a dramatic decline in Canadian churchgoing in the late 1960s closed the gap; by 1970 the two countries shared similar levels of attendance (see table 21).

Religious preference, membership, and attendance figures indicate that the postwar Pacific Northwest was a comparatively secular region in terms of public religious affiliation and practice. Taken together, the wide-ranging survey and statistical evidence suggests that a majority of Northwesterners were uninvolved in organized religion, and that a significant minority claimed no religious identification. Of course, as historian Sarah Williams reminds us, we must be careful to avoid the “simplistic identification of religion with institutional church practice.”\(^{59}\) Statistics on religious adherence and involvement should not be taken as reliable measures of the more inner, private aspects of religion in this region. As I learned in my conversations with residents of the Northwest, personal piety and organized religious involvement are not mutually dependent. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of data on regional patterns of religious belief in the postwar decades.\(^{60}\) In Canadian surveys conducted since the Second World War, BC is identified as the least believing province in the country. A recent (2000) Angus Reid survey reported that British Columbians were less likely to believe in a God than residents of other provinces: only 75% of BC residents professed to believe in a God, compared to 84% of their counterparts nationwide.\(^{61}\) Sociologist Reginald Bibby surveyed religious beliefs across Canada in 1985, and found that British Columbians

\(^{59}\) Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture, 2.

\(^{60}\) For a discussion of the available data on religious belief in the American context, see Jackson Carroll et.al., Religion in America, 28-34. In the Canadian context, see Hans Mol, Faith and Fragility: Religion and Identity in Canada (Burlington: Trinity Press, 1985); and Reginald Bibby, Fragmented Gods, 88.

\(^{61}\) Angus Reid Poll, 21 April 2000.
were less apt than other Canadians to believe: he found that while 83% of Canadians claimed to believe in a God, only 73% of BC respondents did so. A 1977 national survey also found BC to have the lowest levels of belief in Canada: 83.5% of British Columbians, and 88% of Canadians, claimed to believe in a supreme being (see table 22). While limited, Canadian surveys on religious belief have consistently identified BC as the least believing province in this country.

The few American surveys of religious belief offer broad regional, rather than state-level, data. Although some surveys point to distinctive levels of unbelief in the American West, the results of these surveys are less consistent than those in Canada. A 1944 Gallup poll indicated that residents of the Pacific region were somewhat less apt than others to believe in a God: 93% of people in this region professed such a belief, as compared to 96% nationwide (table 23). By contrast, in 1968 Gallup reported that residents of the East were slightly less believing than their national counterparts (see table 24). Consistent regional variations in belief are also not readily apparent in the 1952 and 1965 *Catholic Digest* surveys. These surveys, which are among the only tabulations of American religious beliefs in the postwar era, found high rates of belief in a God across the nation (see tables 25 and 26). These surveys indicated that residents of the Pacific states were among the least certain about their beliefs. In 1952, 84% of people in the Pacific region were “absolutely certain” about their belief in a God as compared to 87% nationally; in 1965, those who were “absolutely certain” made up 81% of America’s total population but only 74% of population of the Pacific states. Drawing on a study of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in 1972, sociologists Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge reveal regional variations in religious belief in the

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US. Their research indicates that residents of the Pacific and East South Central regions were relatively, though not dramatically, less believing than their counterparts in other regions: 81% of people in these regions claimed to “believe in the existence of God as I define Him,” compared to 84% nationwide. While some surveys suggest that people in the Pacific region were less likely than other Americans to believe in a God (or to be certain about that belief), the results are certainly not as conclusive as those regarding institutional adherence. Inconsistencies also emerge in American surveys of other dimensions of personal piety. In response to a 1944 Gallup poll, only 63% of people in the Pacific region claimed to believe in life after death, as compared to 76% nationally. This regional discrepancy is not reproduced in a 1968 Gallup poll, which shows rates of belief in life after death to be lowest in the East. Other surveys from the period show that west coast residents were among the most likely to reject the idea of life after death, and the least likely to pray, but the regional contrasts were not deep.

Although a few national surveys suggest that west coast residents were less believing than others, the regional differences are neither as conclusive nor as deep as those pertaining to organized religion. As we have seen, regional data on religious belief in the US are especially inconsistent. Turning to a comparison of belief in Canada and the US, certain distinctions emerge. Survey data suggest that levels of outright unbelief were somewhat greater in Canada than the US, and in BC than in the American West. In a 1972 NORC survey, 6% of American respondents claimed not to believe in a God, as

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65 See Martin Marty et.al., What Do We Believe?, 236-239, 246-247. Drawing on social surveys from the 1970s, Thomas Davenport argues that residents of the Pacific region were the least certain about life after death, and the most unreligious people in America. See his Virtuous Pagans, 82 and 97. Consistent regional variations are not apparent in American surveys of Bible reading and beliefs in Heaven and Hell. See Gallup Opinion Index 44 (February 1969): 16-17, 20; and Gallup Opinion Index 70 (April 1971): 49.
compared to 11% in the Pacific region. North of the border, a national survey conducted in 1977 found that 13.6% of British Columbians, and only 8.7% of Canadians more generally, denied the existence of any God. A 1947 Gallup poll reported little difference between Canada and the United States with respect to belief - 95% of Canadians, and 94% of Americans, claimed to believe in a God. By the mid 1970s, Gallup reported that the level of professed belief in Canada had dropped to 89%, but remained stable in the US at 94%.

Through the postwar decades, to publicly deny the existence of God marked a significant departure from dominant norms in both countries. That the US maintained somewhat lower levels of professed unbelief reflects, in part, the fact that atheism was especially vilified south of the border. In the years following the Second World War, atheism and communism became virtually inseparable in the social imaginary of both countries. In the US more than Canada, however, belief was increasingly bound to national identity in the 1950s, a decade that saw the addition of ‘under God’ to the Pledge of Allegiance, and the creation of ‘In God We Trust’ as the country’s official motto.

Both Canadians and Americans lived in countries where to believe in a God was

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66 Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 79. Recent surveys indicate comparatively high levels of atheism and agnosticism in the American Pacific region. In a recent survey, 15.2% of residents in the Pacific region claimed to be atheists or agnostics, as compared to 10.5% of people across the nation. For a discussion of this survey, and other current trends in atheism, see William Bainbridge, “Atheism,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 1:1 (2005), 20. <http://www.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article>
69 Gallup Organization, *Religion in America*, 10. A 1969 Gallup poll found that Canadians were also less likely than Americans to believe in Heaven or in Hell - 85% of Americans claimed to believe in Heaven, as compared to 72% of Canadians, and 65% of Americans claimed to believe in Hell, as compared to 40% of Canadians. For further details, see Canadian Institute of Public Opinion (hereafter CIPO), *Gallup Report*, 8 January 1969, 2.
normative. However, while the postwar decades saw a (very gradual) softening of the link between belief and social acceptance in Canada, God and nation became even more tightly knit in the US. The cultural emphasis on Christianity in the US partly explains why levels of professed belief in God remained high in the postwar decades in the Pacific states, and throughout America. This is not to suggest that American beliefs were in some way inauthentic, but rather that such beliefs, like all aspects of religion, were bound up with the imperatives and expectations of the wider world.

Although national ideals of piety mattered in the Pacific Northwest, the religious differences between BC and Washington State should not be overstated. My research suggests that these two places shared far more similarities than differences in the religious realm. In past and present, cultural commentators have made much of the persistently high levels of belief in God in the US. While few researchers today would equate churchgoing with religiosity, the association between belief in God and religiosity is regularly taken for granted. As scholars are increasingly recognizing, statistics on church involvement do not by themselves reveal all that religion meant to ordinary people; statistics on religious belief must be approached with the same critical scrutiny. In the postwar era, people who denied the existence of God or called themselves atheists often encountered incredulity. In 1956, the WNICC reported on a religious survey of the town of Kent: “One lone atheist appeared in the census, and that might have been a prank.” In not taking this atheist seriously, the authors revealed just how far public

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atheism fell outside the bounds of convention. In 1965, BC activist Marian Sherman noted that it was difficult to convince people of the sincerity of her atheism: ""Because I'm not a moral degenerate people keep saying to me 'You can't be an atheist.' When I insist that I am, they reply 'You're not. I don't believe you.' It's most annoying."\textsuperscript{75}

Those who called themselves atheists or unbelievers in the postwar era risked not being taken seriously; they also risked social ostracism. In 1963, a writer for the Victoria \textit{Daily Colonist} commented on the social pressures around non-belief in Canada:

it cannot be denied that most Canadians who do not believe in faith of any kind but a man-made code of ethics are often afraid to speak out in public for fear of discrimination or consequences worse than that. I talked to at least 10 people who denied there was a God, but who asked me upon my word of honor not ever to publish their names along with their statements.\textsuperscript{76}

My interviews confirm that many people on both sides of the border kept silent about their unbelief. A Nanaimo man remarked that, even in a place as secular as BC, ""some people would be afraid to say they were atheist, even to the census-taker."\textsuperscript{77} One of my Seattle informants noted that, in the postwar decades, she publicly claimed to believe in a (non-Christian) deity so as not to draw attention to her unbelief: ""I spent no time on it, I just didn't want to deal with the response of being an atheist."\textsuperscript{78} As will be discussed further in Chapter 3, people who identified as atheists or unbelievers in the postwar decades risked much; that many kept silent suggests that levels of atheism and unbelief may have been greater than the numbers and reports indicate. While inhabitants of both countries shared a reluctance to publicly call themselves atheists, this pressure was especially marked in the US. Such pressure is rarely acknowledged in discussions about

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Star Weekly}, 11 September 1965, 7.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Daily Colonist}, 6 January 1963, 10.
\textsuperscript{77} John Hartwich, personal interview, 8 September 2003.
\textsuperscript{78} Joanne Smith, personal interview, 30 March 2004.
statistics on American beliefs. Instead, these statistics are regularly held up without comment as evidence of the overwhelming religiosity of the American people.

Like statistics on church involvement, those on belief in a God should not be taken as transparent windows on religiosity. Survey questions about religious beliefs generally solicit a yes or no answer, revealing little about the importance or role of such beliefs in the lives of respondents. In the few surveys that sought to capture not only whether or not people believed, but also how religion actually figured in individual lives, the regional differences are telling. A 1977 Canadian survey did not point to dramatic differences in belief, but it did find that British Columbians were much less likely to hold “very or somewhat strong religious beliefs” than other Canadians: 62.7% in BC and 73.1% nation-wide (see table 27). As we saw earlier, the Catholic Digest surveys found little regional variations in belief in God in the US. These same surveys, however, found that residents of the Pacific region were much less likely than their counterparts elsewhere to claim that religion was “very important” in their life: 64% in the Pacific region as compared to 75% nationally in 1952, and only 61% in the Pacific states, and 70% nationwide in 1965 (see tables 28 and 29). These surveys, together with the evidence on religious identification, membership, and attendance, suggest that although levels of belief were not markedly or consistently lower in the Pacific Northwest, religion was less significant to the people who lived here. As several scholars have insisted, the Pacific Northwest was not godless; it was also, however, not religious.⁷⁹

In 1992, sociologist Mark Shibley described the distinct nature of religion in the American West: “Folks on the Pacific Coast believe in God but are also less committed

⁷⁹ See, for example, Patricia O’Connell Killen and Mark Silk eds., Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Northwest; and Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, The Future of Religion.
to traditional religious institutions. This privatization of religion in the West is not, however, an aberration in American culture; rather, it is a product of our fundamental national values of pluralism, voluntarism, and individualism." Shibley is not alone in his depiction of west coast irreligion as quintessentially American. Scholarly and popular observers regularly attribute the secularity of this region to the unique individualism of the American frontier. This chapter has shown that Northwest secularity must be understood, not as the product of uniquely American values, but as a cross-border, specifically regional phenomenon. In the realm of religion, BC and Washington shared much. Together, this province and state made up a comparatively secular region in the postwar era. This secularity was characterized, in the first instance, by strikingly low rates of involvement in, and adherence to, institutional forms of religion. This is not a new discovery and has, together with statistics on high levels of belief, provided the basis for the most common interpretation of this region as a place that is "secular but spiritual." The "secular but spiritual" argument is not unfounded. This region was home to rich and varied spiritual practices that flourished outside of the churches and other conventional religious settings, and that slipped through the often-artificial boundaries imposed by statistical measures. At the same time, in their depiction of this region as "secular but spiritual," scholars have tended to disregard and underestimate the secular side of this equation. Departing from the usual interpretation, I contend, in the second instance, that this region was less religious than other regions. People here were not only less attached to organized religion, but to religion in general. As we delve further into this culture, and hear from the people themselves, we shall see that many

80 Mark Shibley, "Religion in Oregon," 86
81 See Mark Shibley, "Secular but Spiritual in the Pacific Northwest," in Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Northwest, 139-168.
Northwesterners 'lived against' religion in complex and diverse ways, ways that deserve consideration in their own right. The available statistics certainly reveal a distinct secularism in the Pacific Northwest, but they do not, on their own, indicate what this secularism meant to the people who created and lived it. Let us turn now to an examination of how this secularism was defined and approached by those who most struggled against it: religious leaders.
Chapter 2: Constructing the Secular Northwest: The View from the Churches

In the decades following World War II, religious commentators in both Canada and the United States expressed ongoing concern about the secularism of the Pacific Northwest. US church officials, within the Northwest and beyond, regularly remarked upon the unusually “unchurched” character of the region. In church papers, the American Northwest was often referred to as “missionary territory” and a place “where most of the people live without God.” Canada’s westernmost province evoked similar comments in church circles north of the border. In 1966, a United Church minister observed: “This is the age of secularism and most people no longer feel any need of the church or obligation to it. This is more true of the province of British Columbia than of any other province of Canada, although this mood will increasingly sweep over the rest of Canada in the next few years.” Religious leaders in BC and across Canada echoed this regional assessment. In Canadian church accounts, BC was often likened to a foreign “mission-field” and described as a province where the “vast majority of the people are lost and unchurched.” Although church officials acknowledged the relative secularity of the Pacific Northwest, they were less certain about the nature, causes, and significance of this secularity. This chapter sets out to unravel the meanings embedded in Protestant writings and discussions on irreligion in postwar BC and Washington State. In analyzing

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3 UCC, Board of Information, Outreach (1966), 78-79.

4 United Church Observer, October 1971, 11; Western Regular Baptist, February 1952, 12; United Church Observer, 1 January 1957, 27; Canadian Lutheran, August 1967, 6; and UCC, British Columbia Conference (hereafter BCC), Minutes (1954), 1318.
how the churches perceived and constructed the secular Northwest, this chapter seeks to illuminate some of the normative assumptions around religion, irreligion, and region in the postwar world.

This chapter draws evidence primarily from a range of Protestant church records, reports, and periodicals at both the regional and national level. Of course, while church accounts provide useful insights into the Pacific Northwest’s religious culture, they should not be taken as a clear window on that culture. In their efforts to explain the secularity of the Northwest, church writers and spokespersons drew on inherited and wider assumptions about who was ‘typically’ irreligious and what it meant to be religious. Such assumptions were, in turn, shaped and mediated by region, class, gender, and race. In popular media of the postwar years, the Northwest was constructed and imagined as the ‘last frontier.’ Not surprisingly, it was to the familiar and enduring images associated with the frontier that church leaders most often turned when looking for answers to the Northwest’s secular character. Irreligion was depicted as an unfortunate but inevitable result of this region’s frontier character - its newness, isolation, ruggedness, mobility, and resource-dependence. Such depictions reflected not only common regional stereotypes, but also ingrained race, class, and gender assumptions. In church discourse, irreligion was described as a uniquely regional phenomenon, something

5 This chapter focuses mainly on the perspectives of the mainline Protestant denominations, but it does include evidence from evangelical groups such as the Baptists. Roman Catholic Church leaders were not unconcerned about secularism in this region, but their assessment of this secularism deserves separate study.

6 Elizabeth Furniss demonstrates the continuing significance of the ‘frontier myth’ to the regional identity of British Columbia in her fascinating study, The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999); also see Allan Pritchard, “The Shape of History in British Columbia Writing,” BC Studies 93 (1992): 63-64. For studies that explore the persistence of the frontier myth in postwar America, see Carlos Schwantes, “The Case of the Missing Century,” and Michael Steiner and David Wrobel, “Many Wests: Discovering a Dynamic Western Regionalism,” in Many Wests, 10-16.
distinct from (although occasionally likened to) the difficulties associated with Christianizing ‘foreign’ immigrant populations. Protestant leaders called upon the Eurocentric category of the frontier to make sense of this ‘godless’ region. Like other frontier characteristics such as individualism and mobility, secularism came to be seen as something made and perpetuated by whites in the region. Discourse on Northwest irreligion drew on unquestioned assumptions about class and gender, as well as race. Protestant commentators in the Northwest and beyond quite matter-of-factly referred to the working classes as anti-religious, or at best, indifferent to the churches. Such writings also took for granted that men were less religious, and less inclined to become involved in churches, than women. Protestant discourse on secularism in the Northwest drew on and reproduced fixed notions about the irreligious character of the working classes, men, and the frontier itself. As we shall see in the following chapters, while these notions were not entirely without basis, they served to divert attention from the broadly diffused nature of this regional secularism.

There has been a stimulating and ongoing debate in Canadian and American historiography about the relevance of the concept of ‘region’ to our understanding of the past. Although this debate is by no means settled, it is clear that region - at least in the imagined sense - has been (and continues to be) significant to the North American social fabric. As historian Gerald Friesen points out, “Canadians did not agree about the notion of region in the closing years of the twentieth century. And yet regional generalizations abounded in their daily conversation and in scholarly discussions.”7 Certainly, regional

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7 Gerald Friesen, “The Evolving Meanings,” 542. For further discussion on the analytic category of ‘region’ in Canada, see Mark Leier, “W[l]ither Labour History,” 61-75; Ian McKay, “A Note on ‘Region’,” 89-101; and Suzanne Morton, “Gender, Place, and Region: Thoughts on the State of Women in Atlantic Canadian History,” Atlantis 25.1 (Fall/Winter 2000): 119-128. In the American context, see
generalizations abounded in Protestant discourse on religion and irreligion in the postwar Northwest. Of course, ‘the Northwest’ to which I refer was internally divided by a political boundary of some significance. As we saw in Chapter 1, nation mattered to religious identity. However, when it came to dialogue around the issue of Northwest secularity, Protestant leaders and commentators on both sides of the border spoke very similar languages and drew on shared cultural givens. As several scholars have argued, the idea of the frontier figured more centrally in the American than the Canadian social imaginary; this difference is, however, only slightly evident in postwar constructions of the secular Northwest. American church leaders were more apt than their Canadian counterparts to use frontier metaphors to explain the problems of church life in the whole of the Northwest, from its large urban centres to its smaller, more isolated communities. Canadian Protestants were somewhat more selective in their appropriation of frontier imagery, focusing their attention - and their anxieties - not on BC’s highly urbanized southwestern tip, but on its isolated resource areas. Despite these subtle differences, in both countries deeply held assumptions about the regional, class, gender, and race meanings of religion helped to determine where the churches would look for evidence of secularism and, in many ways, what they would find.


For studies that address this cross-border region, see Norbert MacDonald, *Distant Neighbours: A Comparative History of Seattle and Vancouver* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); and John Findlay and Kenneth Coates eds., *Parallel Destinies.*

According to American scholars Edward Ayers and Peter Onuf, regional identity is commonly understood as "at heart an inheritance from the past, a moral and intellectual 'heritage' that, if it is to endure, must be preserved from the ravages of modern life."\(^{10}\) Despite the clear intrusion of 'modern life,' the Pacific Northwest of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s continued to be imagined as, at heart, a frontier. In 1956, a Presbyterian report affirmed that the American Far West was a region defined by its past: "History is still repeating itself in the west, or has never stopped writing the first chapters."\(^{11}\) Although many areas of the Pacific Northwest hardly seemed new or rugged or isolated in the latter part of the twentieth century, the image of this region as quintessentially a frontier was widely circulated by cultural commentators well into the postwar decades.\(^{12}\) Following anthropologist Elizabeth Furniss, I conceptualize the frontier, not as a particular place or a specific process, but rather as "an idea imposed on particular places and processes to provide a framework for understanding."\(^{13}\) For Protestant commentators, the frontier provided a malleable, ready-made explanation for the problems - religious and otherwise - of the Pacific Northwest well into the twentieth century.

In the postwar US, church leaders identified the "still strong lingering spirit of the frontier" as a key determinant of irreligion in Washington. In this period, the WNICC reported that the "rugged, frontier individualism of early days persists in the Northwest and has affected, probably adversely, the strength of the Church."\(^{14}\) American Protestant commentators identified a "lingering" frontier spirit not only in the Northwest’s remote

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10 Edward Ayers and Peter Onuf, "Introduction," in *All Over the Map*, 3.
12 Friesen refers to the common regional stereotypes of the "dynamic West" and "conservative East" in "The Evolving Meanings of Region," 534-5. Michael Steiner and David Wrobel discuss the persistence of "frontier heritage" in the regional consciousness of the American West in "Many Wests," 16-17. Also see Carlos Schwantes, "The Case of the Missing Century," 2; and Susan Armitage, "From the Inside Out," 40.
resource areas, but also in its large urban centres such as Seattle. The problems of church work in Seattle were regularly attributed to this city’s apparent frontier characteristics - its newness, relative isolation, and distance from national centres. As one minister observed, “Seattle is the end of the frontier. Consequently, it has the highest number of alcoholics and suicides of any comparable city of its size in the country.”

In American church circles, the frontier idea provided a convenient framework for understanding the problems of the Pacific Northwest, including those of metropolitan centres like Seattle. In their search for the source of BC irreligion, Canadian Protestant observers generally turned to this province’s remote resource communities, rather than to its cities. However, they joined their American counterparts in using the familiar, frontier idea to make sense of the distinct secularism of this region. According to one United Church minister, British Columbia’s religious development was hampered by its position as “Canada’s last frontier province.”

In church discussions on both sides of the border, the Northwest was repeatedly defined as a frontier in the spiritual, as well as the social, geographic, and economic sense.

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16 United Church Observer, 1 February 1967, 27.
17 In the Canadian context see, for example, United Church Observer, 1 July 1951, 3, 16; 15 February 1961, 17; 1 July 1951, 3; UCC, BESS, Annual Report (1971), 7; Western Regular Baptist, March 1956, 3,4; and Canadian Churchman, 15 May 1958, 197-8. Although church leaders depicted BC as rough and radical, they were certain to distinguish Canada’s more ‘civilized’ west from the ‘wild and woolly’ American frontier – see, for example, United Church Observer, 1 October 1958, 3; and Presbyterian Record, July-August 1962, 23. For American references see, for example, UWM, WNICC, Acc. 1567-2, Box 3, File: Writings, “The State of the Church in the Northwest,” nd.; Box 8, File: Christian Witness, “Letter from Rev. Lemuel Petersen to Rev. Dr. Forrest Weir,” 30 January 1962; Olympia Churchman, June 1966, 7; June/July 1959, 7-8; UWM, GSCC, Acc.1358-7, Box 4, File 8: Notebooks, “Some Thoughts and Proposals Toward Developing an Ecumenical System for the Puget Sound Region,” 27 December 1967, 9; and Seattle Times, 15 February 1959, Mag. Sect. 8. For discussions on the issue of comparing frontiers, see Howard Lamar, “Coming into the Mainstream at Last: Comparative Approaches to the History of the American West,” Journal of the West 35: 4 (1996): 3-5; and Patricia Limerick, “Going West and Ending up Global,” Western Historical Quarterly 32: 1 (Spring 2001): 54 Pars.
For Protestant and other cultural observers, the host of geographic traits associated with the frontier offered convenient explanations for the Northwest’s unusual secularity. This region’s geographic isolation, scattered population, and rugged topography drew particular mention. In 1965, a writer for *Seattle Magazine* noted that the “Northwest’s geographic isolation...has much to do with the problems of its churches, because the centers of control and creativity in organized American Protestantism are all some distance away.” Ministers often complained about Washington’s “remoteness from denominational centers” and its distance from the “mainstream of Protestant developments and fellowship.” Similarly, the clergy frequently attributed the problems of church work and the constant shortage of pastors in BC to this province’s isolation from Protestant headquarters. According to one United Church report, the “geographical aspects of the Prince Rupert Presbytery cause unusual and difficult conditions for ministers and their wives and families principally because of the isolation.” Both secular and religious observers often remarked upon the perpetual lack of ministers in BC’s more remote communities. In 1960, an article in the *Fort Nelson News* titled “Wanted: Clergymen!,” began: “Where the hell can I find a Protestant

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18 These characteristics have long been seen as quintessential to the region more generally. See, for example, Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History*, 18; Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest*, 7; and Robert Ficken and Charles LeWarne, *Washington*, 185.
minister?" Such was the enquiry we had the other day from a prospective groom. We advised him that they were pretty scarce in this land of opportunity.\textsuperscript{23}

The problems of church life in the Pacific Northwest were attributed not only to this region's isolation from denominational centres, but to its widely dispersed population. The WNICCC noted that the churches faced unique difficulties in the Northwest because "the population is scattered. This fact tends to reinforce any isolationist, separatist tendencies of an highly individualistic population."\textsuperscript{24} In a separate report, the Council complained that outside "of city and metropolitan areas, the population tends to be thinly scattered. Such sparsely populated areas are difficult, if not impossible, to church adequately."\textsuperscript{25} Similar concerns were expressed in Protestant church circles north of the border. At their annual convention in 1964, the Western Canada Lutheran Synod reported that in the BC interior, "there are many Lutherans and unchurched families widely removed by space from a congregation. Distance and sparse populations make a normal congregational life impossible."\textsuperscript{26} The Northwest was regularly described as a "spiritual vacuum," and seen as existing on a religious as well as a geographic periphery.\textsuperscript{27} In church accounts, the connection between geographic isolation and secularism appeared transparent and predictable. In emphasizing the vast and 'empty' character of the Northwest, church leaders reproduced the racist assumptions

\textsuperscript{24} UWM, WNICC, Acc.1567-2, Box 9, File: Faith and Order, "The State of the Church in the Pacific Northwest," nd.
\textsuperscript{26} Lutheran Church in America (hereafter LCA), Western Canada Synod, Minutes of Annual Convention (May 1964), 27.
\textsuperscript{27} Western Regular Baptist, March 1953, 4-5; Canadian Lutheran, 15 November 1955, 4; Canadian Churchman, 3 September 1953, 272; PCU, General Assembly, Minutes (1955), 73-79; Seattle Magazine, December 1965, 21; and UWM, WNICC, Acc.1567-1, Box 1, File 19: Incoming Letters, M-N, Letter from Gertrude Apel to Norman Vincent Peale, 11 October 1949.
underlining both frontier narratives and the project of colonization itself. While boosters described the Northwest as an ‘empty wilderness’ awaiting social and economic expansion, Protestant leaders depicted the province as a spiritual wasteland in need of Christian development. Both formulations at best ignored, and at worst legitimized the subjugation of, the rich cultural, economic, and spiritual life and history of the Northwest’s aboriginal populations.

The Northwest’s rugged topography, in addition to its isolated and sparse population, was often held accountable for the absence of a ‘normal’ church life in the region. In BC, a Presbyterian official noted that “individual congregations…are isolated by physical barriers,” while an Anglican minister complained that the “lay-out” of the Cariboo region “is not favourable to the development of any but a scattered parochial life.” A 1959 Anglican report affirmed that “the Church’s hold is always precarious” in Northern BC, “which despite modern communications and some development is still a very rough country entailing dangerous journeys along a treacherous coast and arduous trips into a forbidding interior.” In 1953, an American Lutheran journal printed an article titled “Geography, A Problem in the West,” which described the difficulties of ministering “across the mountains and seas” on the west coast of North America.

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28 See Elizabeth Furniss, The Burden of History, 53; John Belshaw, “The West We Have Lost,” 35-6; Cole Harris, The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), xi; Kristofer Allerfeldt, Race, Radicalism, Religion, 32; and Laurie Maffly-Kipp, “Historicizing Religion in the American West,” in Perspectives on American Religion and Culture ed. Peter Williams (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 14. Of course, based, as they were, on ingrained preconceptions rather than actual practices, constructions of the Pacific Northwest as an empty wilderness were subject to constant destabilization. For an eloquent analysis of how cultural encounters often “jarred” ingrained preconceptions, see Elizabeth Vibert, Trader’s Tales.  
30 Anglican Church of Canada (hereafter ACC), General Synod, Journal of Proceedings (1959), 381.  
31 Western Lutheran, 9 February 1953, 4.
ministers in both BC and Washington were warned of the “unbelievable” distances between parishes, and of the “rough” and “rugged” character of the landscape.\textsuperscript{32}

Of course, this region’s “rough” and “forbidding” topography was not simply a product of the Protestant imagination. A difficult and complex terrain \textit{has} confounded easy movement through and around the Pacific Northwest.\textsuperscript{33} The meanings attached to this terrain were, however, neither singular nor fixed. As American historian Thomas Tweed aptly remarks, “mountains and rivers - components of the so-called natural landscape - are culturally constructed and socially contested spaces.”\textsuperscript{34} Church leaders did not invent the Northwest’s natural landscape, but they did invest it with competing religious meanings. The \textit{Canadian Lutheran} hints at these contested meanings in its description of Northern BC: “To one who sees not only with the natural eye, but with eyes enlightened by faith, the setting is most compelling. The great trees, the hills, and the mountains speak of the majesty and power of God. Yet there is no visible evidence that God is known and worshipped here.”\textsuperscript{35} An American Methodist leader observed that “[w]e once called the Pacific Northwest country, ‘God’s great out-of-doors,’ but now it’s all too often a refuge or escape to all those who want to get away from hearing what the God of the ‘great outdoors’ has to say to man.”\textsuperscript{36} In Washington State, low levels of church involvement were often attributed to the prevalence of “nature worship” and to

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\item \textsuperscript{32} See, for example, \textit{Canadian Churchman}, May 1971, 19; June 1969, 19; \textit{United Church Observer}, 15 February 1961, 25; and Episcopal Church, Diocese of Olympia, \textit{Annual Journal} (1953), 45.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Thomas Tweed, “Introduction: Narrating US Religious History,” in \textit{Retelling U.S. Religious History}, 12. For further discussion on the religious meanings invested in western landscapes, see Sandra Frankiel, \textit{California’s Spiritual Frontiers}, 15-16.
\item \textsuperscript{35} \textit{Canadian Lutheran}, 15 November 1955, 5.
\item \textsuperscript{36} MCU, Pacific Northwest Conference, \textit{Annual Journal} (1965), 92. Also see \textit{Seattle Post-Intelligencer}, 2 January 1977, A1, A16.
\end{itemize}}
the fact that people were "so easily drawn toward the mountains, lakes, streams and seashore." North of the border, Lord’s Day Alliance (LDA) officials warned British Columbians: "the fact that you can find God in nature should not deceive you into thinking that you do not need the worship of the Church. Those who habitually excuse themselves from the church on the plea that ‘the...groves were God’s first temples’ are not the ones for whom nature has her true spiritual ministry." The Northwest’s natural landscape was assigned several religious meanings in church accounts. While its rugged and forbidding topography seemed to impede a normal church life, its size and beauty were presumed to embody an inherent spirituality. Protestant leaders construed this region’s landscape as both beautiful and treacherous, as at once inspiring and confounding religious pursuits. This fundamental ambivalence was captured in a cartoon that appeared in the Vancouver Sun during the Archbishop of Canterbury’s visit to British Columbia in 1966. The cartoon, set against a scenic background, showed a local pastor telling the Archbishop: “Our problem in British Columbia, your grace, is the widespread local belief that this IS Heaven.”

While the Northwest’s very physical geography seemed to hamper the development of a regular church life, it was this region’s economic base that proved most concerning to Protestant officials. Such concerns are evident in a United Church Observer article describing the work of Union College, the United Church theological college at the University of British Columbia. In this article, Rev. E.M. Nichols of Union

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38 UCBCA, Lord’s Day Alliance (hereafter LDA), BC-Alta Branch Papers, Box 3, File 9, “Sunday” by Walter Cavert, nd.
39 Vancouver Sun, 28 September 1966, 4.
College remarked on some of the difficulties of ministering effectively in BC: “Other provinces are booming…but on top of a fairly established rural life. In British Columbia the resource bases of the economy are lumbering and mining, not agriculture. This means a rougher, more itinerant kind of people.” Nichols went on to observe that, due to these frontier, resource-based conditions, in “almost all of B.C....the queer ones are the ones who go to church.”

It is not surprising that Nichols attributed BC’s uniquely secular character, in part, to the relative absence of agriculture in this province. In postwar church writings, farm families were repeatedly and nostalgically referred to as “the backbone of Canada’s religious life.” The farmer, observed Anglican Reverend Allan Read, “is unable to work without coming face to face with the deep mysteries of birth, life, growth, death and rebirth, the wonders of seasons, sunlight, rain and many other natural phenomena. These factors help to make the farmer responsive to religious teaching.”

Farming was imagined as an intrinsically spiritual occupation, and as such church leaders presumed that agricultural and religious decline went hand in hand; as Reverend Read remarked: “Soil erosion means soul erosion.” In their efforts to make sense of BC’s religious culture - a culture in which it was considered “queer” to go to church - Protestant leaders called upon inherited notions about the secularity of resource extraction, and the religiosity of agriculture. They also presumed that farming and rural living played little or no role in BC, an ingrained supposition that, according to historian Ruth Sandwell, overlooked the province’s complex social and economic patterns. This

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40 United Church Observer, 1 February 1967, 28.
41 See, for example, United Church Observer, 1 April 1952, 4; Presbyterian Record, February 1951, 62; UCC, BESS, Annual Report (1957), 54-9, 81-2; (1962), 260-1; UCC, Outreach (1962), 5; Church of England in Canada (hereafter CEC), Council for Social Service (hereafter CSS), Bulletin, 1 February 1952, 1-22.
42 CEC, CSS, Bulletin, 1 February 1952, 16.
complexity was not captured in popular images of BC, which tended instead to situate resource extraction at the centre of this province’s identity, economy, and culture.\textsuperscript{44}

Although agriculture and rurality figured more prominently in the regional identity of Washington, the state was (and continues to be) imaginatively associated with resource extraction. According to historians Robert Ficken and Charles LeWarne, cultural commentators have regularly portrayed Washington State “as a backward raw material colony, dependent upon manufacture and export of lumber, pulp, and paper.”\textsuperscript{45} Like their Canadian counterparts, American Protestant officials frequently attributed the lack of churchgoing in Washington to this state’s reliance on resource extraction. In a lecture to a clergy meeting in Spokane in 1975, Episcopalian minister Thomas Jessett traced Washington’s unchurched character back to the nineteenth century:

Washington...was settled primarily by men who were mainly interested in exploiting its natural resources. Lumber, coal, fish and oysters were shipped to the profitable California market. Pope & Talbot, a California conern (sic), still owns large acreages in this state. It is no surprise, therefore, to learn that Washington had only 36 churches seating a mere 4,000 persons and valued at only $4,000.\textsuperscript{46}

For Jessett, the relative lack of churches in Washington was unsurprising given the economic motivations of the men who settled in this state. That the connection between resource work and irreligion required no explanation illustrates the extent to which this connection was taken for granted in the broader culture. Religion, it was widely supposed, was far from the minds of those intent on exploiting the natural resources of

\textsuperscript{44} Ruth Sandwell, ““Peasants on the Coast? A Problematique of Rural British Columbia,” Canadian Papers in Rural History 10 (1996), 275. Sandwell argues that unquestioned assumptions about the absence of agriculture and rural living - and about the absolute centrality of resource extraction - have dominated both popular and academic perspectives of BC.


the Pacific Northwest; this supposition emerged in the era of settlement, and continued to circulate in this region’s postwar imaginary.\textsuperscript{47}

Like their counterparts north of the border, American Protestant commentators reproduced normative assumptions not only about the secularizing effects of resource extraction, but about the inherent spirituality of farming and country life. Described as the “seedsbed of the Church,” rural living was presumed to embody “special spiritual meaning” derived from “its nearness to nature, its slower pace, its opportunities for quiet reflection.”\textsuperscript{48} Interestingly, while church writings suggested that working the land made one more susceptible to the sacred, this did not seem to apply to the seasonal agricultural workers of Washington State. Each year, thousands of migrants travelled from both within and outside of the state to harvest the agricultural crops of Washington; Native Americans, blacks, and Mexicans made up a large proportion of this state’s migrant population. Marginalized by virtue of their race and class, these migrants were the subject of much discussion and concern in Protestant circles. Despite their ‘nearness to nature,’ Washington’s agricultural migrants were referred to as “ riff-raff” and seen as disinterested in, and occasionally hostile to, religion and the churches.\textsuperscript{49} Unlike the small-farm owner, who was believed to be ever conscious of the “gift of God in the earth beneath him,” the seasonal agricultural labourer was understood to be spiritually

\textsuperscript{47} See Norman Knowles, “Christ in the Crowsnest,” for a discussion of how an exclusive focus on church membership has obscured our understanding of the popular religion of miners and loggers in turn-of-the-century Alberta.


impoverished and part of a “menacing rural proletariat.” As this example clearly shows, deeply held assumptions about who was typically religious were not timeless truths, but rather contingent cultural constructions; agricultural labour was considered naturally sacralizing, provided that those performing the labour met certain expectations of class, race, and respectability.

In discussing the problem of secularism in the Northwest, Protestant officials drew on and helped to reproduce what was already known about religion’s place in (or absence from) industrial, resource towns. An article in a 1965 edition of the Western Regular Baptist included the following reference to the town of Kimberley: “The people have a typical mining community’s outlook on life with little room for spiritual or eternal things.” As this comment suggests, spiritual indifference was perceived as a “typical” feature of mining communities. The Baptists were certainly not alone in pointing to the secularity of British Columbia’s mining and logging towns. Reverend Redman, field secretary of the BC-Alberta branch of the LDA, often grumbled about the irreligious character of BC’s resource communities. Redman described Port Alberni as a town “that is not particularly favourable to the Church as a whole, and one in which Sunday is merely a recreation day.” According to Redman, the “industrial nature” of the Kootenays made this an area that required “constant vigilance” on the part of the Alliance. British Columbia’s company towns, with their “pathetically small” church congregations, drew frequent, anxious comments from LDA workers. Like their counterparts north of the line.

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51 Western Regular Baptist, May 1965, 2. Also see Canadian Churchman, December 1965, 10.
border, American Protestants described the secularity of resource-extractive communities and company towns as inevitable. The WNICC attributed the low levels of church involvement in this state, in part, to the individualistic attitude of people living in "lumber towns, mining villages, reclamation projects, new construction centers, and military installations."\(^{53}\) An American Lutheran journal similarly invoked frontier stereotypes to explain this regional secularity: "In the first place the spirit of the west has been one of material gain and conquest. Here are raw materials in abundance to be exploited - timber, mineral deposits, and fish in the ocean. The spirit of the gold rush days has not died."\(^{54}\) As we shall see below, the discourse on Northwest irreligion was classed and gendered: working class men were understood to be especially indifferent to religion and the churches. Although they were particularly concerned with male workers, Protestant commentators depicted the resource frontier more generally as embodying and inspiring materialist, rather than spiritual, endeavours.

On both sides of the border, church writings identified transiency as a key impediment to the development of a stable religious life in the Pacific Northwest. In 1971, the United Church reported that in the Cariboo region of BC, "the people are transient, moving from an expansion in mines, to expansion in pulp mills, to other expansions. New people are not yet established and committed to the churches."\(^{55}\) Protestant ministers complained that the transiency of 'instant' towns such as Kitimat made "it almost impossible to keep a church roll," and worried about the spiritual "apathy

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\(^{54}\) Lutheran, 26 March 1952, 12.

\(^{55}\) UCC, BCC, Minutes (1971), 7. Also see United Church Observer, 1 September 1960, 8-10; 1 February 1965, 18-19.
and indifference" of the mobile population of the Queen Charlottes. In a discussion paper on the state of the church in the Northwest, the WNICC concluded that mobility "has negated the traditional avenues of 'belonging' which characterized the stable community of the past - a framework in which the church was central. Many people on the move don't readily seek community in the church." Ministers in Washington noted matter-of-factly that "[m]oving is hard on religion," and that "when people move, they are often lost to the Church." Mobility was seen as the chief obstacle to the spiritual growth of the agricultural labourer. As one minister claimed, "[m]obility leaves migrants with emptiness of soul as well as emptiness of purse." North of the border, the Western Regular Baptist described Prince Rupert as a place that was "dead spiritually" and where it was "respectable not to go to church." To the author, this irreligion was predictable in a town where a "transient population and a greedy materialism are handicaps that must be accepted." Mobility was understood as an inherent feature of resource extractive communities, and as a fundamental barrier to church growth. As the Canadian Churchman observed, "mining communities are notable for their lack of permanency. People come and go the whole time and the building up of a solid Church life is difficult." Mobility was also seen as intrinsic to life in the North American West. As

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56 *Presbyterian Record*, September 1955, 18-20; and *United Church Observer*, 15 January 1960, 14, 18. Also see *Canadian Lutheran*, 15 November 1955, 4-5.
59 UWM, WNICC, Acc.1567-2, Box 17, File: Lower Yakima Valley, "Witness to the Laboring Migrant," nd.
60 *Western Regular Baptist*, March 1953, 4-5; April-June 1950, 5. Also see *Canadian Churchman*, July-August 1961, 15.
The Lutheran claimed, "[p]рактиcally everyone in the west has gone through the experience of having roots pulled up and old ties broken."\(^{62}\)

The transient nature of the Northwest's population made it difficult to keep a stable church roll, but it also signalled a more fundamental problem with this region's religious life. In short, for Protestant leaders, the problem was not simply \textit{that} people moved, but \textit{why} they moved. Drawing on regional, frontier stereotypes, church officials assumed that people moved to and within the Pacific Northwest, in part, to escape from social ties - including those associated with religion and the church. A United Church report on the Cariboo region of British Columbia observed that this

is basically 'pioneering country' with people moving in to start a 'life,' often a 'new life' after setting an 'old one' aside. Farmers and men from every walk of life, come into this area where there is less competition, more room and less 'social pressure'. They are often slow to associate themselves with the Church or any organization that reminds them of the 'past social pressures' from which they are trying to escape.\(^{63}\)

Postwar observers described mobility as part of the quintessential Northwest lifestyle, a secularizing phenomenon with a deep past. As one Episcopalian rector simply stated: "Grandpa was doing his own thing when he moved to Seattle, and part of that was not being a Methodist if he didn't want to be."\(^{64}\) In cultural and religious media, the Pacific Northwest was imagined as a place of freedom and dynamism - a place without strict social conventions.\(^{65}\) Viewed as the last frontier, the Northwest was presumed to attract, and produce, a particular kind of people - "a rougher, more itinerant kind of people."\(^{66}\) In


\(^{63}\) \textit{UCC, BCC, Minutes}, (1964), 81.

\(^{64}\) \textit{Seattle Post-Intelligencer}, 2 January 1977, A1, A16.

\(^{65}\) On the significance of the concept of 'freedom' to frontier imagery, see Elizabeth Furniss, \textit{The Burden of History}, 92; and, in the American context, Jane Tompkins, \textit{West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

the Canadian context, like the "hardy fisherfolk" of the east coast so eloquently rendered in Ian McKay's *The Quest of the Folk*, the people of BC’s resource frontier were essentialized as a "special kind of Canadian." While McKay’s "Maritimers" were set apart by their "natural simplicity, rootedness, and traditional ways," British Columbians were imagined as transient, rule-defying, and freedom-seeking.\(^6^7\) Regional stereotypes were also, of course, widely circulated south of the border, where the restless and independent westerner was juxtaposed against the rooted, traditional easterner and the "backward-looking" southerner.\(^6^8\) Protestant commentators called often upon these common, regional images in their selective assessments of Northwest secularity. They also constructed mobility as invariably secularizing, overlooking the fact that moving, both within and between nations, could be a fundamentally sacralizing process.\(^6^9\) "Life without roots," remarked one United Church minister, "cannot breed and nurture religion. God's fruit cannot grow on shallow ground."\(^7^0\) Postwar church leaders took the link between mobility and secularity for granted. For them, transiency went hand in hand with secularity, and was key to the enduring irreligion of the Pacific Northwest.

Constructions of the secular Northwest reflected and reproduced deeply held ideas not only about the frontier lifestyle, but also about class, gender, and family. Certainly, class was central to the taken for granted Understandings of who was typically religious, and who was most likely to occupy the church pews on Sunday. Postwar church leaders

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\(^6^8\) Edward Ayers and Peter Onuf, "Preface," in *All Over the Map*, 3; and Edward Ayers, "What We Talk About When We Talk About the South," in *All Over the Map*, 64.

\(^6^9\) For a seminal work on the "theologizing" effects of mobility in the American context, see Timothy Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America," *American Historical Review* 83: 5 (December 1978): 1155-1185.

\(^7^0\) UCC, BESS, *Annual Report* (1955), 28; and (1957), 45.
agonized over the fact that mainline Protestantism seemed to hold little appeal beyond the middle classes. In turn, they widely assumed that the working classes were lost to the church and indifferent to religion.\textsuperscript{71} In Canada, the United Church worried that their congregations were becoming “clubby chubby collection[s] of respectable people,” while the Presbyterians fretted that “the interests of the churches and of the labouring man seem ever more widely to diverge.”\textsuperscript{72} American Protestants shared similar concerns, pointing to the “painful fact that wherever industry spreads, the Church usually does not spread” and complaining that the “workers have been lost to organized Christianity.”\textsuperscript{73} In a 1962 report, United Church minister Robert Christie contemplated the impact of industrialization on Canada’s religious life:

As the occupational pursuits of the majority of Canadian workers begin to fall within the orbit of industry, so does the society which they collectively create. They and it become progressively materialistic, hedonistic and unashamedly pagan. History traces the progression of this coarsening effect in older, highly industrialized countries as surely as it reveals its scattered onset in this young and prosperous land. Always, it seems, this expansion of industry and the creation of a largely industrial society has been paralleled by a recession of the Christian church, institutionally and formally. Industrial workers ‘stay away in droves’ from places of the public worship of God until their early fellowship with the church (if any) is forgotten and the lines of communication are broken down and obliterated.\textsuperscript{74}


\textsuperscript{72} \textit{United Church Observer}, 15 October 1952, 18; UCC, BESS, \textit{Annual Report} (1955), 28; and \textit{Presbyterian Record}, September 1966, 3.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Christianity Today}, 27 August 1965, 14; and \textit{Christianity and Crisis}, 2 March 1959, 21.

\textsuperscript{74} UCC, BESS, \textit{Annual Report} (1962), 67.
Reverend Christie, like many of his fellow Protestants, perceived working-class alienation from the church as an unfortunate yet inevitable consequence of industrialization.

Concerns about working-class secularity were unique neither to the west coast nor to the postwar years.\(^{75}\) Such concerns did, however, take on a certain urgency in the Northwest, a region widely imagined as a workingman’s resource frontier. In BC, the familiar boast “We left God on the other side of the mountains,” was understood to reflect the sentiment of this province’s miners and loggers, not of its middle classes.\(^{76}\) In Washington, Protestant churches were presumed to have their greatest appeal among the “well-to-do middle classes,” not among industrial workers and agricultural migrants.\(^{77}\) Protestant reports of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s described the working classes of the Northwest as resistant to, or at best uninterested in, the churches and Christianity. In British Columbia, LDA officials complained that workers consistently chose work or leisure over worship on Sundays.\(^{78}\) Alliance officials also suspected that BC workers were guided by material rather than spiritual concerns, and were too easily drawn away from the churches by the prospect of higher Sunday wages.\(^{79}\) In an effort to reach the workings classes, Protestant churches on both sides of the border initiated industrial chaplaincy programs in the years following the Second World War, which involved

\(^{75}\) For an analysis of working class religion and secularism in nineteenth-century Canada, see Lynne Marks, Revivals and Roller Rinks. For the American context, see Jama Lazerow, Religion and the Working Class in Antebellum America (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); and Teresa Anne Murphy, Ten Hours’ Labor.

\(^{76}\) Western Regular Baptist, March 1954, 11. Also see Lynne Marks, “Leaving God Behind.”


\(^{78}\) UBCB, LDA Papers, Box 1, File 5, Letter from Rev. R.A. Redman to Mr. McGrath, 1 December 1954.

ministers taking jobs in the mines, mills, and factories of the region.\textsuperscript{80} Michael Boulger, a United Church minister who worked at a Vancouver Island copper mine in 1966, reflected on his experience: "Ours is a middle-class church. Outside our respectable, clean-shaven fellowship live a multitude of people who have not heard even the slightest echo of the precious gospel message. These miners are members of this crowd of spiritual outcasts."\textsuperscript{81} Boulger, like the other industrial chaplains who worked in the mines, mills, and factories of the Northwest in the postwar decades, found that the church was a hard sell among these "spiritual outcasts." Class expectations underlined Protestant approaches to the 'problem' of Northwest secularity. Church leaders, convinced of the naturally irreligious character of the working classes, were preoccupied with the spiritual life of those who worked in the mines, mills, and factories of the region.

Class did not work alone, but rather entwined with gender, race, and family to shape religious expectations. The following chapters will explore such categories in relation to the actual religious and irreligious sensibilities and practices of average Northwesterners. Class, race, gender, and family must be approached not only as demographic categories, but also as part of the wider web of meanings through which ordinary people made sense of themselves and each other. Protestant commentators drew on and also helped to establish and entrench the normative class, race, gender, and family meanings of religion. In 1966, a BC Presbyterian minister commented upon the class dimensions of church involvement:

\textsuperscript{80} UPC, Synod of Washington, Annual Session, \textit{Minutes} (1957), 560; (1951), 216; PCU, Board of National Missions, \textit{Annual Report} (1956), 114; and \textit{United Church Observer}, 1 February 1965, 18-19, 36-37. For a discussion on the purpose of industrial chaplains, see UCC, BESS, \textit{Annual Report} (1951), 20-23.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{United Church Observer}, 1 February 1968, 20-23. Also see \textit{United Church Observer}, 1 October 1968, 18-19; \textit{Canadian Lutheran}, 15 November 1955, 4-5; and UCBCA, UBC Branch, Student Christian Movement of Canada Papers (hereafter SCM), Box 1: Student Christian Movement, File 9: Work Camps, "The Broken Wall," July 1946.
It is a well-known fact that most of our strong and active urban congregations are in middle class communities, or draw their strength from the middle class constituency. In urban industrial working class areas where the Protestant churches are composed largely of working people, there are invariably far fewer and smaller congregations than in middle class communities of comparable size. In these congregations the male heads of families are often conspicuous by their absence.  

As this passage suggests, postwar observers considered class a significant but not the sole determinant of religious behaviour; gender was also important. Church leaders in the postwar decades complained often about the absence of men from the churches. In 1955, the Canadian Churchman asked: “Why are there so many more women than men in church on Sunday? Why don’t the men come?” In the American context, it was widely acknowledged that women were the “heart of the church,” and that only an “unusual congregation” would have “as many men as women in attendance.” On both sides of the border, ministers playfully referred to the evening service as “ladies’ night,” and readily admitted that women consistently outnumbered men in church organizations and in the Sunday morning pews.

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82 Presbyterian Record, September 1966, 12-14.
84 Canadian Churchman, 3 June 1955, 255.
86 See, for example, Canadian Churchman, May 1960, 4; Presbyterian Record, May 1957, 8-9; April 1966, 20-22; United Church Observer, 15 April 1957, 19-20; 15 October 1962, 18-19; Forth, October 1952, 10; and UWM, GSCC, Acc.1358-7, Box 7, File 14: Newsletters-Others, “The Congregational Way,” May 1959, 15.
Protestant observers were anxious about the spiritual lives of men generally, but they expressed special concern for single men without families.\footnote{Church leaders in the nineteenth-century were also deeply concerned about the spiritual lives of single men without families. See, for example, Lynne Marks, \textit{Revivals and Roller Rinks}.} Church leaders in the postwar era, as in other times, valorized the traditional, nuclear family as “the bulwark of the Christian faith.”\footnote{\textit{Daily Christian Advocate}, 26 April 1956, 16.} The family setting was considered particularly essential for nurturing male piety, as men were considered far less religiously inclined than women. Ministers feared that to question a single man about his absence from church would be to summon the quizzical response: “Church? I’m single! Why should I go to church?”\footnote{\textit{United Church Observer}, 1 December 1968, 13.} The religious lives of married men generated somewhat less anxiety among church officials, who expected wives to use their “quiet but powerful influence” to bring their husbands to church.\footnote{\textit{Canadian Churchman}, 18 November 1954, 394. UWM, WNCC, 1567-1, Box 8, File 15: General Correspondence, Letter from Mrs. Ralph Jones to Rev. Stanley, 12 January 1955; and UWM, WNCC, 1567-2, Box 17, File: United Church Men, National Council, “Speaker’s Manual: 22nd Annual Observance of Men and Missions Day,” 12 October 1952, 11.} A cartoon that appeared in the \textit{Presbyterian Record} captured the common perception that married men went to church, only when compelled to do so by their wives. The cartoon, which showed two men playing a game of golf, was underlined with the caption: “I almost went to church today, but my wife took sick.”\footnote{\textit{Presbyterian Record}, September 1967, 6.} Despite their hopes for married men, ministers acknowledged that the Christian church remained women’s preserve. In both BC and the American Northwest, Protestant leaders regularly bemoaned men’s “lack [of] serious interest in the life of the church,” and observed, with chagrin, that many “a man has his religion, such as it is, in his wife’s name.”\footnote{UWM, WNCC, Acc.1567-1, Box 3, File 20: Reports, 1954-1960, “Report of the Laymen’s Group at Seabeck,” nd.; and \textit{United Church Observer}, 15 October 1962, 19.}
In their assessments of Northwest irreligion, church commentators called upon inherited notions about who was typically religious, and who was not. This does not mean that these assessments were somehow untrue or irrelevant to lived experience. Following the growing interdisciplinary literature on cultural representation, I explore the dialogue around Northwest secularism for what it reveals, not about some objective truth, but rather about the normative assumptions around religion and region in the postwar world.\(^{93}\) In discussing the ‘godless’ Northwest, Protestant commentators drew on what they saw and experienced but also what they already knew about the region and its people. Such discussions not only reflected but also helped to make and entrench social norms and possibilities in the realm of religion; the ways in which Northwest secularism was imagined, then, mattered in everyday life. As we shall see in the following chapters, class, gender, race, family, and regional expectations shaped, although they did not determine, the ways in which ordinary Northwesterners encountered, engaged, and rejected religion.

In the postwar decades, as in earlier times, men, the working classes, and single individuals were understood to be intrinsically less pious than women, the middle classes, and those living in families. Given this class, gender, and family framework, it is not surprising that single working class men bore most of the blame for Northwest irreligion. Working class ‘alienation’ from the church was a gendered issue, commonly defined and understood as a problem of the “working man.”\(^{94}\) While the secularity of the working classes in the Northwest more generally caused concern, the spiritual lives (or lack thereof) of male workers generated particular anxiety. Reverend Wayne Mackenzie

\(^{93}\) See, for example, Elizabeth Vibert, *Trader’s Tales*.

\(^{94}\) See, for example, *Canadian Churchman*, 15 November 1954, 5; 1 September 1960, 17-18; and *United Church Observer*, 1 February 1968.
reflected on the difficulties he encountered in BC’s logging camps: “The single men in the camps won’t come out to services…We announced a round table discussion in one camp and the only people who showed up were the cook and his wife. We planned services in another, but only five women and one man came, so we had a discussion.”

Mackenzie, along with many of his contemporaries, acknowledged that Christian churches remained the province of women, and occasionally families, in the resource areas of the Pacific Northwest. The WNICC regularly pointed out that one of the chief obstacles in the ministry to agricultural labourers was that so many of them were “single men with few roots anywhere.” In 1968, the *United Church Observer* described the mining community of Tasu as a place made up mainly of men who had “stranded a wife, or burned a draft card.” Church services in Tasu attracted the community’s few families, but held little appeal to the single miners who had all but “repudiated” religion.

Focusing on the spiritual lives of the Northwest’s working classes, Protestant leaders confirmed their assumptions about who was typically irreligious. In the postwar world it was widely assumed that Christianity was a religion of women, families, and the middle classes. It is not surprising, then, that single working-class men figured so centrally in approaches to the ‘godless’ Northwest.

Like their nineteenth-century counterparts, postwar church leaders were bothered, not only by the absence of men from the church pews, but also by the feminized nature of Christianity itself. The *Canadian Churchman* complained that men “consciously or

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95 *United Church Observer*, 1 September 1960, 10.
97 *United Church Observer*, 1 October 1968, 18-19.
unconsciously think that the Christian faith is for sissies and old ladies” while the
Presbyterian Record reluctantly acknowledged that “the church presents a female image
in the average Canadian’s mind.” An American Episcopalian journal noted the
“overemphasis on feminine values” in the Christian churches, and called for a “more
manly interpretation of the personality of Jesus.” Christianity’s feminine image was
often called upon to explain why the church held such little appeal in the ‘manly’ Pacific
Northwest. In the postwar era, as in earlier times, cultural commentators rendered the
Northwest masculine, highlighting the tough and rugged character of this region’s
geography and its inhabitants. The churches also helped to masculinize the region; as
one Anglican minister observed: “This is a land that does not tolerate weaklings.”

For Protestant leaders, the masculine character of this region made the feminized
nature of the church both more obvious and more problematic. In 1966, a United Church
student minister reflected on his encounter with lumber workers and construction crews
in the British Columbia interior: “The role of the minister... has to be reinterpreted to suit
the area. It is a typical attitude of the men on this field that the ministry is made up of
human beings who belong to a different sex - half way between man and weakling. This
criticism is aimed at anyone who studies - teachers, doctors, and ministers alike.” On
both sides of the border, ministers felt compelled to reinvent themselves and their
profession to find acceptance within the Northwest’s masculine frontier culture.

According to anthropologist Elizabeth Furniss, BC’s regional, frontier identity has been

Banner (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974): 137-157; and Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood:
99 Canadian Churchman, May 1960, 4; and Presbyterian Record, April 1966, 20; May 1957, 8.
100 Living Church, 29 January 1950, 14-15.
101 Canadian Churchman, January 1961, 16.
102 UCC, Outreach (1966), 85-86.
characterized by “anti-intellectualism, the value of manual over mental labour, and the general suspicion of and hostility toward academics, bureaucrats, and professionals.”

Sensing that they, too, engendered suspicion and hostility in the frontier Northwest, Protestant ministers, missionaries, and church workers set out to redefine themselves and their work as rough, manly, and adventurous. This masculine re-imagining is evident in a 1968 *United Church Observer* article titled “A Man’s Man in a Man’s Town.” The article reflected upon the work of one United Church reverend in the community of Terrace, British Columbia: “When he sees a job to be done, he does it - like pounding a hammer, or driving a bulldozer, or becoming a minister.” In bringing together manual and spiritual labour, this author seeks to masculinize, and thereby legitimize, the work of the minister.

In 1962, the Greater Seattle Council of Churches printed the following profile of a Northwest Methodist lay leader: “If he had been born in another era, it would be easy to picture him on horseback, with a rifle in one hand, a Bible in the other...and his eyes on the far horizon.” In the postwar era, Protestant leaders in the Northwest regularly reproduced narratives and images of a frontier past - a past in which, they anxiously pointed out, preachers were just as “robust” and “rugged” as other manly pioneers. One such narrative, penned by an American Presbyterian minister, described the missionary work of “husky, two-fisted Frank Higgins...Higgins preached his first sermon to the lumberjacks in 1895. Much to his surprise, they who seemed to be so profane and

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103 Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History*, 84.
104 In “Christ in the Crownsnest,” Norman Knowles argues that church leaders in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Alberta masculinized their work and message in an effort to appeal to miners and loggers in the Crownsnest region, 64.
107 *Western Lutheran*, 27 September 1954, 1; and *Daily Christian Advocate*, 25 April 1956, 16.
godless welcomed his preaching." masculine metaphors also figured centrally in a Christian frontier narrative that appeared in a 1954 edition of the Canadian Churchman.

The story related the “Christian adventure” of Father Pat, an Anglican missionary in British Columbia who, while on his way to visit an ailing prospector, encountered a rough and angry group of miners who would not let him pass: “Quicker than lightning, he jerked one of the miners off his horse, struck a blow at another, and having cleared the trail, drove quickly on his errand.” This story invests the Christian missionary with the rugged individualism and physical strength typical of more common frontier heroes such as the “virile sheriff” or “itinerant gunslinger.” In redefining mission work as manly, this narrative and others like it sought to resolve the gender tensions inherent in, and generated by, Christianity’s (tenuous) place in the frontier Northwest.

Protestant discourse on the secular Northwest reflected and reproduced deep assumptions not only about gender, class, and family, but also about race. In 1945, the Department of Minority Relations of the WNICC reported on church work in the state: “Outside of the white American group who constitute our chief problem, the Japanese, Negro, and Mexican groups are the major groups for consideration.” As this excerpt implies, the churches usually identified whites as the ‘chief problem’ in the region.

White Northwesterners drew particular attention, in part, because in rejecting religion, they contravened dominant expectations of respectable whiteness. That white people bore most of the blame for Northwest irreligion also had to do with the fact that whites

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108 Clifford Merrill Drury, Presbyterian Panorama, 248.
made up more than 90% of this region’s population. While it remained predominately white, the Northwest became more diverse during the postwar decades; this region’s Asian population experienced particular growth during this era, as did the African-American population of Washington State. Although rarely ascribed responsibility for the distinct irreligion of this region, people of colour and immigrant populations nevertheless elicited much anxious discussion in church circles. In the years following the war, Protestants encountered and contributed to the emerging idioms of racial inclusion and equality that found eventual expression in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In 1964, the Canadian Presbyterian Record reported on efforts to nurture “a new appreciation of the worth and dignity of people of all races and ethnic groups, regardless of colour or accent.” South of the border, Methodist leaders urged church members to accept all persons “regardless of race, color or national origin,” and Presbyterian ministers distributed a booklet titled “Everyone Welcome” to encourage racial inclusion in their congregations.

In 1962, a woman wrote to the United Church Observer to protest the racial biases evident in this church’s children’s literature: “I am suddenly struck by their underlying assumption that all Canadian United Church children have fair faces and British names. The only reference to modern children of other races is in stories about

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113 For overviews of the racial and ethnic demography of British Columbia and Washington in the postwar decades, see Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West, 305-316; and Carlos Schwantes, The Pacific Northwest, 450-451.

114 Presbyterian Record, September 1964, 4.

Africa (from which my child deduced that all Negroes must belong in Africa!). As this comment suggests, racial prejudices and stereotypes persisted in the churches despite the growing rhetoric of ethnic diversity and acceptance. Several scholars have noted an uneasy tension between older and emerging perspectives on race in the churches and other dominant institutions of postwar era. According to Mariana Valverde, Canada’s Anglo-white social reform community embraced the newer discourse on racial equality but continued to harbour ingrained assumptions of white dominance; informed by competing perspectives on race, reformers endeavoured in this period to at once “respect and regulate” Aboriginals, Asians, and other groups. My research also points to ambiguous views on race among postwar Protestants. The gap between the rhetoric of racial inclusion and the reality of race relations was wide in the Pacific Northwest, a region that was often imagined as especially tolerant and accepting of difference. In 1969, the United Church reported on the “multi-racial worshippers” in the BC town of Steveston: “Many of the frontier areas of Canada lead in demonstrating that people of different races and religious backgrounds can be unified in their worship of God and care for each other.” This commentator joined in the broader idealization of race relations in the Northwest. The Bishop of the Diocese of Olympia echoed this regional invention:

We are, and I rejoice to say it, blessedly free from racial tension or racial discrimination in our congregations and, in large measure, in our society as a whole. I am thankful that this is so, and that we are spared the anguish and division which so many communities, both in the South and North, are now facing.

116 United Church Observer, 1 June 1962, 2.
118 United Church Observer, 1 March 1969, 3.
119 Episcopal Church, Diocese of Olympia, Annual Journal (1956), 40.
The Seattle Council of Churches noted that discrimination in this city was “not as open as in the South or in some places in the North.”\textsuperscript{120} Although widely disseminated, such regional constructions of race did not go unchallenged. In 1966, a writer for the Catholic Northwest Progress concluded that Northwesterners “salve their misguided consciences with the theory of racial relativity: ‘Well, at least they’re not as bad off here as they are in the South,’” but “are simply less frank and less vehement in their racial prejudices.”\textsuperscript{121}

The limits of racial tolerance in Washington became starkly apparent in the years during and following World War II. In the 1940s, thousands of blacks moved to the American Northwest seeking work in the defence factories of the region, causing the African-American population of Washington to increase by more than 300%.\textsuperscript{122} African-Americans continued to make up a far smaller proportion of Washington than the nation. Nonetheless, as historian Quintard Taylor argues, the dramatic growth of the African-American population in the region “made black-white relations the focal point of far more discussion and anxiety than ever before.”\textsuperscript{123} Protestants joined in the discussion, much of which centred on the enduring issue of segregation. The racial harmony of the imagined Northwest did not mesh with the actual discrimination encountered by African-Americans in housing, schooling, and various other realms. A Seattle interfaith group noted the persistence of prejudice in their city: “Seattle has many fairylands with beauty


\textsuperscript{121} Catholic Northwest Progress, 11 March 1966, 4.

\textsuperscript{122} Quintard Taylor, “‘There was no better place to go,’” 206-207; Quintard Taylor, In Search of the Racial Frontier; and Carlos Schwantes, The Pacific Northwest, 450. Despite such increases, African-Americans still made up a far smaller proportion of Washington State than of the nation. By 1970s, African-Americans made up 11.1% of the American population, and only 2.1% of Washington’s population. 1970 Census of Population, Vol.1, Part 1, Sections 1 and 2.

\textsuperscript{123} Quintard Taylor, “‘There was no better place to go,’” 210-211. Also see Dorothy Johansen and Charles Gates, Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest 2nd Edition (Seattle: Diocese of Olympia Press, 1967), 560.
beyond description, with lake and mountain views, winding avenues, cultivated gardens, etc. But when the question is asked very definitely the answer is given ‘No’, Negroes may not live here.” In 1967, a writer for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* observed the “de facto segregation” of the city’s churches: “the most compelling evidence indicates that coldness pervades the hearts of the congregation when the subject of open housing is broached.” Protestant leaders regularly spoke out against racial segregation, but racism persisted within the churches themselves. The complex approaches of the churches to black-white relations in postwar Washington defy easy summation. It is evident, however, that the growing African-American community was not assigned responsibility for the secular Northwest. The contested nature of black-white relations was constructed as a national, urban issue, rather than one particular to the Northwest.

Asian immigration to both Washington and BC increased after the war: persons of Asian origin made up 1.2% of Washington’s population by 1970, and 3.5% of BC’s population by 1971. In the postwar years, the growing Japanese and Chinese communities on both sides of the border drew particular attention from the churches. For these communities, the war’s end ushered in a period of adjustment. With the repeal of Chinese exclusion legislation in Washington and BC immediately after the war, the

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126 ULC, Biennial Convention, Minutes (1960), 823; and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 13 September 1967, 1.

children and wives of citizens were permitted to emigrate. As Chinese communities in
the region adjusted to new family circumstances, Japanese Northwesterners who had
been interned during the war began the difficult process of re-integration. The
Protestant churches worked to counter anti-Asian prejudice following the war, but they
were also complicit in entrenching what cultural geographer Kay Anderson calls the
"we/they distinctions" that continued to inform Northwest culture. In Protestant
dialogue, Chinese Northwesterners were alternately praised for their good citizenship and
condemned for their resistance to Christianity. "For most Chinese," observed one
commentator, "there is nothing beyond the sky, the trees, and their being." The
Japanese were understood to be somewhat more receptive to Christianity; nevertheless,
Protestant discussions on the Japanese reaffirmed the we/they distinction in the
Northwest. Often, Japanese and Chinese populations were conflated, as in a 1963
article in the Canadian Churchman that referred to both as "cultures still so bound to
pagan beliefs as to make Christianity a novelty." Protestant discourse on the growing
Japanese and Chinese populations in the Northwest fluctuated between acceptance and
exclusion, revealing ambiguous perspectives on race. The resistance of these populations

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129 Kay Anderson, Vancouver’s Chinatown, 239; and Carlos Schwantes, The Pacific Northwest, 159.

130 United Church Observer, 1 February 1958, 13; also see Canadian Churchman, 5 April 1951, 108-110.

131 Anglican Provincial Synod of British Columbia and Yukon Archives (hereafter APSA), Provincial Board of Missions to Orientals, Box 1, Series 4, PSA 4/6, File: Board Minutes, 1956-1965, "Minutes of a Meeting of the Provincial Board of Missions to Orientals," Vancouver, 25 September 1963, 3. Also see Norman Knowles, "Religious Affiliation.”

to Christianity was defined as an international rather than regionally unique phenomenon; while they drew much anxious discussion in the churches, Japanese and Chinese Northwesterners did not bear the blame for this region’s distinct irreligion.

Although people of colour were certainly the focus of mission efforts in the Northwest, their resistance to Christianity tended to be essentialized as an issue of race rather than region. In her study of Canadian Protestant mission work among Aboriginals at the turn of the twentieth century, historian Myra Rutherford argues that “even when aboriginal peoples imitated [missionary] behaviours and rituals, their attempts were criticized. Inevitably, they were still viewed as inferior somehow.” Drawing on the work of postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, Rutherford concludes that deep-seated racial perceptions ensured that even those Aboriginals who accepted Christianity were seen as “almost the same, but not quite.” Such ingrained notions of racial difference lingered in the postwar churches, tempered but not supplanted by the growing emphasis on racial inclusion and respect. Protestant commentators often described Japanese people as “great imitators” and questioned their sincerity as Christians. They also regularly depicted Aboriginals as innately superstitious. As one American Presbyterian minister wrote: “Superstitions die slowly, and sometimes paganism among the American Indians fights back.”

Taken for granted assumptions of racial difference were not confined to the churches - the wider media also reproduced the idea that some groups, by virtue of their

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134 *Western Regular Baptist, November* 1952, 7-8; May 1956, 13. Also see APSA, Provincial Board of Missions to Orientals, Box 1, Series 4, PSA 4/6, Minutes 1956-1965, “Minutes,” 25 September 1963; and *Canadian Churchman*, March 1964, 8, 12.
135 Clifford Merrill Drury, *Presbyterian Panorama*, 298; also see Lee Irwin, “Native Voices,” 25. Aboriginals were often depicted as bearing an innate spiritual connection with nature. For discussions on this phenomenon see, for example, Ron Strickland ed., *Whistelpunks and Geoducks*, 295; Mark Shibley, “Secular but Spiritual,” 142, 161; and Lance Laird, “Religions of the Pacific Rim,” 107.
race, might become “almost the same, but not quite.” In 1966, an article on the Chinese community in the Prince George Progress posited that, “despite years of close contact with the western way of life,” the “inner recesses of their minds...still hold true to the Chinese dogmas born from teachings that were old long before Christianity was born.”

In the postwar Protestant imaginary, race defined and delimited religious potential. The irreligion (or superstition) of many racialized ‘others’ tended to be viewed as innate, essential, and separate from the specifically regional invention of Northwest secularism.

It is not just that people of colour were ignored in the discourse on Northwest secularism: in fact, this secularism was actively constructed as a white issue. Protestant and other cultural observers bemoaned Northwest irreligion, but they also saw this irreligion as a product of this region’s quintessential identity. Regions, cultural geographers remind us, are imaginatively constituted, in part, by race. As the historian John Findlay notes, the “American Northwest has been heavily white, and the prevailing constructions of regional consciousness there have been the product of American whites, and for the most part, males.”

Like the American Northwest, BC has long been construed as a “white man’s province.” As many scholars have shown, Aboriginals, Asians, and blacks were (and are) regularly ignored, excluded, or depicted as passive objects in the dominant images of the Pacific Northwest. The relative exclusion of people of colour as actors in the regional imaginary of the Northwest was a process that required, as Catherine Hall aptly puts it in a different context, “the active silencing of the

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136 Prince George Progress, 16 November 1966, 1.
137 See, for example, Kate Berry and Martha Henderson, “Introduction: Envisioning the Nexus Between Geography and Ethnic and Racial Identity,” in Geographical Identities of Ethnic America: Race, Space, and Place, ed. Kate Berry and Martha Henderson (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2002), 6.
138 John Findlay, “A Fishy Proposition,” 46; and Laurie Mercier, “Reworking Race, Class, and Gender,” 61.
139 Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West, 132-148; and Pat Roy, A White Man’s Province.
disruptive relations” of ethnicity and race.\textsuperscript{140} As noted earlier, the idea of this region as an untouched, religious wilderness was in fact contingent on the “active silencing” of aboriginal spiritual traditions and histories. Through such silencing, the Northwest has come to be seen as a place of whiteness. This region’s story is most often told as a frontier narrative, a European invention with white males as the central actors.\textsuperscript{141} Perhaps not surprisingly, white males also emerged as the central actors in the story of Northwest secularism.

Although not deemed responsible for creating the secular Northwest, people of colour and certain “foreign” populations occasionally figured as metaphors for irreligion in church writings. In a 1961 address to his diocese, the Episcopalian Bishop of Olympia expressed alarm at the low levels of church involvement in Washington:

This is not Communist China, this is not darkest Africa-this is the sovereign State of Washington and the Christian nation of America! In spite of the many spires and steeplesthat dot our skylines the fact remains that less than 50% of the population of this jurisdiction know the first thing about God in any terms at all relative to modern life.\textsuperscript{142}

This telling passage demonstrates the significance of race to the commonsense meanings of religion in the postwar era. That “Communist China” and “darkest Africa” meant “heathenism” was taken for granted by the Bishop, and required no elaboration. As Judith Weisenfeld argues in her discussion of African-American religious history:

whether or not African Americans were physically present at the “center” of the story at any given time or place, white Americans have often made black bodies

\textsuperscript{140} Catherine Hall, \textit{White, Male, and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History} (New York: Routledge, 1992), 205-254.
\textsuperscript{141} See, for example, Michael Steiner and David Wrobel, “Many Wests,” 16. Steiner and Wrobel aptly note that the image of a benign frontier would appear absurd to many groups outside of the racial and ethnic mainstream, including Asians and Aboriginals. Divisions of race and ethnicity ensured that there never would be a single, homogenous regional identity in the Northwest. For further discussions on this phenomenon, see John Findlay, “A Fishy Proposition,” 37-70; and Laurie Mercier, “Reworking Race, Class, and Gender,” 61.
\textsuperscript{142} Episcopal Church, Diocese of Olympia, \textit{Annual Journal} (1961), 48.
and ‘blackness’ present as a trope and put them to various uses. For white Protestant cultures, black Americans have always been available to represent ‘heathenism,’ unbridled sexuality, aggression, and a host of other imagined dangers to the Christian West.\textsuperscript{143}

In constructing the problem of secularity in this region, church leaders invoked well-understood racial tropes and likened the Northwest to ‘foreign’ mission areas. In 1952, a Canadian Presbyterian leader reported on the unchurched character of BC: “one need not leave Canada to be a missionary; here is a field of service no less important and seldom less difficult than British Guiana or India.”\textsuperscript{144} In Protestant discussions, people of colour and foreign populations appeared not as secularizing agents in this region, but rather as metaphors for what this region might (without Christian intervention) ultimately become. In appropriating racial categories in this way, the churches actively, and not accidentally, made Northwest secularity a white problem. This secularity, although cause for great concern, was also understood to be a chief characteristic of the Northwest’s frontier culture - a culture that was, in the dominant imaginary, made by and for whites.\textsuperscript{145}

This chapter has pointed to the wider race, gender, family, class, and regional assumptions that underscored Protestant discourse on the ‘problem’ of Northwest secularism. To make sense of this problem, the churches regularly appealed to the myths, metaphors and images associated with that most resilient and recognizable of western regional constructs - the frontier. Religion was inevitably weak, so the explanation went, in a region as new and rugged, as isolated and resource-dependent as the Northwest.

When it came to dialogue around this issue, people of colour were referred to largely as


\textsuperscript{144} PCA, Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly (1952), 16, 17.

\textsuperscript{145} See Michael Steiner and David Wrobel, “Many Wests,” 16. For a fine discussion on the construction, and affirmation, of ethnic identities through religious discourse, see Catherine Hall, White, Male, and Middle Class, 205-254.
metaphors for irreligion, rather than as secularizing agents in their own right. Regional stereotypes intersected with gender, race, and class to determine, in the Protestant and wider postwar imaginary, commonsense ideas about who was likely to be religious, and who was not. The powerful and enduring stereotype of the rough, transient, and irreligious miner or logger captured the attention of postwar church leaders, causing them to miss much. As we shall see in the following chapters, the churches rendered invisible or irrelevant some important aspects of this region’s secular culture, a culture that was clearly not the product of white, working-class men alone. As we step outside of the churches, we will also encounter far broader ideas of what it meant to be religious – ideas that, to the dismay of Protestant leaders, fundamentally challenged the importance of church involvement to true piety.

This chapter has focused more on how the secularity of the Pacific Northwest was represented, than on the ways in which it was materially and demographically constituted. As we saw in the first chapter, this does not mean that this secularity was mere fabrication - measurable levels of religiosity and church involvement were much lower in the Pacific Northwest than in other regions through the postwar years. In an effort to historicize postwar interpretations of the secular Northwest, this chapter has highlighted the ways in which such interpretations were contingent on the shifting meanings of race, gender, region, and class. The constructed nature of these interpretations does not mean that they say nothing about what was going on in the ‘real’ world. Indeed, it is a central contention of this study that to understand the nature and meanings of Northwest secularism, we must unravel how this secularism was perceived and imagined. As we shall see in the following chapters, Protestant leaders were not
alone in their rather narrow assessment of irreligion in the Pacific Northwest. Church officials may have been more preoccupied than most with the religious life of this region, but the wider cultural media also shared in reproducing taken for granted ideas about such things as the frontier character of the Northwest, the irreverence of the working classes, the spiritual aspects of nature, and the innate piety of women. As we shall see, many such normative ideas about religion and region were also widely accepted as commonsense by ordinary people. Of course, no matter how dominant such ideas were, they never completely determined how religion was made sense of, and practiced, at the level of everyday life. Let us now move beyond the churches to explore how religion was lived, defined, and challenged by people in this region themselves.
Chapter 3: A Popular Secularism: Irreligion in Everyday Life

This chapter moves beyond official views and begins to explore how ordinary Northwest residents lived with and against religion. Neither the narrow assessments of church leaders nor the discrete categories of statisticians fully capture the disorderly secularism of this region’s everyday infidels. For this project, I interviewed an economics professor who considered himself to be both unbelieving and spiritual, a middle-class homemaker who drifted away from the church but remained deeply Christian, an agnostic railway worker who saw organized religion as a tool of capitalist oppression but occasionally attended worship services with his Catholic wife, and a nurse who, while a committed atheist, turned to prayer in times of crisis. As these stories suggest, Northwesterners engaged and rejected religion in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways. Nonetheless, everyday irreligion in the region conformed to some loosely structured boundaries. In the postwar decades, a majority of Northwest residents did not join, attend, or otherwise actively participate in organized religion. Although their perspectives on religious institutions ranged from indifference to hostility, residents shared in making non-involvement in such institutions a normal, accepted part of life in the region. While they quite comfortably eschewed organized religion, Northwesterners knew that to reject religious belief entirely was to risk social ostracism, even in this relatively secular place. Most residents did not call themselves atheists, but this was also not a region of overwhelming religious devotion. The Northwest contained dedicated atheists and believers, but also a significant (and typically overlooked) group who were deeply ambivalent about religious belief.
This chapter traces certain common parameters of Northwest irreligion, but it also begins to unravel the different ways in which this irreligion was experienced. Before the unravelling proceeds, it is important to reaffirm that class, race, gender, and other categories of identity are lived at once rather than discretely. While recognizing that people behave in ways that reflect the intermingling of all aspects of their identity, this dissertation disentangles class, race, gender, and family in order to bring into sharper analytic view the expectations bound to each of these categories. This chapter gives particular attention to the interplay between class and irreligion. The relationship between class and religion has stirred intense scholarly debate on both sides of the border. At the centre of such debates are questions about the place of religion in the lives of the working classes, particularly in the nineteenth century. Scholars are increasingly challenging the idea, so prevalent in early studies, that religion was either irrelevant or oppressive to the working classes. Researchers are beginning to uncover the rich textures of working-class religion in varied contexts. They have shown that to fully capture the nuances of popular religion, we must extend our analyses beyond an exclusive focus on organized forms of religion. Current research on working-class religiosity offers an invaluable corrective to earlier studies, which overlooked religion, or depicted it as invariably antithetical to working class interests. Many studies implicitly represented the working classes as secular by ignoring the place of religion in their lives;

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3 See, for example, Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture; Robert Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street; and Norman Knowles, “Christ in the Crowsnest.”
working class irreligion was assumed rather than investigated in its own right. At the same time, we know far more about the role of religion in the construction of middle-
class identity than about the nature and meanings of middle-class secularism, particularly in the twentieth century.\(^5\)

This study seeks to remedy this lacuna by probing the intersections between class and irreligion in the postwar Northwest. My analysis of the class dimensions of irreligion draws insights from the literature on popular and lived religion. Recently, the concept of “popular religion” has come under increasing criticism for implying a fixed, impermeable division between elite and working-class, clergy and lay religion. Historian Sarah Williams echoes other scholars in pointing to the importance of “releasing the notion of popular religion from too close an association with ideas of class.”\(^6\) Although she focuses on a working-class community, Williams conceptualizes popular religion broadly as a cultural rather than exclusively class-based phenomenon. She identifies in the London borough of Southwark “a symbolic or popular cultural community bound by a common set of beliefs, values, and norms.” This cultural community was not singularly determined by class, and embodied both church and non-church based forms of religion.\(^7\)

By defining popular religion in cultural rather than class terms, Williams allows for the possibility of cross-class religious meanings and practices, and for the co-existence of official and lay forms of spiritual expression. While she uses the term ‘popular religion,’ other scholars have adopted the newer analytic concept of ‘lived religion,’ which is meant

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\(^5\) Most studies of secularization have focused on certain elite groups among the middle and upper-middle classes. We continue to know little about how ordinary middle class individuals negotiated and understood secularism at the level of the everyday. For studies of secularization see, for example, David Marshall, Secularizing the Faith; and T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace.

\(^6\) Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture, 13.

\(^7\) Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture, 13.
to capture the hybrid, shifting character of religion in all spaces of human experience. Recognizing that “theological practice cannot be gridded in any simple way along the axis of ‘elite’ and ‘popular’,,” practitioners of lived religion seek to move beyond entrenched dualisms based on class and other categories.\(^8\)

The present study is informed by these recent approaches to popular and lived religion, but takes secularity, rather than religiosity, as its starting point. Scholars have shed increasing light on the cultural meanings of religion, and on the place of the sacred in social relations, but we know little about what it meant to be secular at the level of the everyday. This chapter contends that Northwest secularism was shaped, though not determined, by class. As we shall see, specific material and cultural conditions nurtured working-class irreligion in the postwar Northwest. There was a significant working-class component to the Northwest’s popular secularism, but this secularism was not produced and sustained by the working classes alone. Although constrained by wider middle-class religious ideals, the Northwest’s middle classes were nevertheless very much a part of this region’s popular secularism. Subject to competing class expectations but common regional norms, working- and middle-class Northwesterners disengaged from religion in both separate and shared ways. Regardless of social class, Northwest residents were not, as often depicted, unwitting secularists. When we take people’s own perceptions seriously, we learn that secularity was more than simply a default category, more than an identity passively assumed in religion’s absence. Ordinary Northwesterners were creatively and often deliberately secular, finding ways of living against religion that accommodated the sometimes contradictory expectations of society, family, and self.

Despite the single-minded focus of the clergy on male resource workers, Northwest irreligion was not exclusively isolated to any group or area in the region. Church leaders correctly observed that the Northwest’s working classes were especially secular. However, they failed to recognize (or anxiously tried to ignore) the extent to which irreligion permeated the more ‘respectable’ elements of Northwest society. This was a secularism of single miners and loggers in resource towns, but also of women, families, and middle class people across the region. Northwest residents, regardless of social location, were less religious than their national counterparts. That Northwest irreligion was (and remains) a cultural rather than exclusively demographic phenomenon is well established in the existing literature.\(^9\) As the editors of a recent study note, American Northwesterners with no religious preference are, by all accounts, “demographically conventional.” According to the authors, “not to identify with established religion is an ordinary rather than a countercultural practice in the Northwest.”\(^10\)

Irreligion does seem to have been a rather ordinary part of Northwest life in the postwar era. The available quantitative evidence suggests that a distinct irreligion cut across lines of class, gender, race, and ethnicity in the region. The racial and ethnic makeup of BC differed in some notable ways from the nation. The province contained more citizens of British, Asian, and Scandinavian origin, and fewer of Italian and French descent, than did Canada as a whole (see table 30). The number of persons claiming ‘no religion’ in the census was highest among British, Asian, and Scandinavian groups, and

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lowest among Italian and French populations. We might suspect, then, that a distinct racial and ethnic demography caused BC secularism. Race and ethnicity influenced religious behaviour, but these categories do not explain the peculiar secularity of Canada's west coast province. The ethnic and racial distribution of BC's non-religious population was very similar to that of the nation (see table 30). Generally, groups that were over-represented in Canada's non-religious population, such as those of Asian origin, were also over-represented in BC's non-religious population. Conversely, groups such as the French, Italians, and First Nations were under-represented among the non-religious in both BC and Canada. Irreligion was less of a British phenomenon in BC than nationally: the British were over-represented in Canada's non-religious population, whereas in BC the reverse was the case. Despite slight variances, it is clear that BC secularism was not caused by a distinct ethnic demography. All ethnic and racial groups in the province were uniquely non-religious (see table 31).  

11 In BC, persons of British origin were 2.3 times more likely than their counterparts elsewhere to select no religion on the census form, those of Scandinavian origin 1.6 times as likely, and those of Asian origin 1.7 times as likely. Even ethnic groups with the highest rates of religious affiliation nationally more readily eschewed their religious identities in British Columbia: the French in this province were a striking 10.2 times more likely to claim that they had no religion than their national counterparts, and Italians were 4 times more likely.

A paucity of data makes it difficult to discern, in anything but a very general way, the racial and ethnic demography of religion in the postwar US. The 1970 US census indicates that Washington contained proportionately more people of Swedish, Danish,
British, Chinese, and Japanese backgrounds, and fewer of Italian, Mexican, and Polish
descent than nationwide (see table 32). Apart from these slight regional variances, the
ethnic distribution of Washington’s foreign-born population, which made up only 4.6%
of the state’s total population, mirrored that of the nation. American surveys from the
postwar era provide a general view of religious affiliation by race. Washington’s
population was whiter than the nation as a whole: in 1970, the nation was 87.5% white
and the state 95.4% white (see table 32). The chief difference here was that African-
Americans made up only 2.1% of Washington’s population as compared to 11.1% of the
nation. Several studies have confirmed that a distinct racial make-up did not determine
Washington’s secularity. For instance, sociologist Kevin Welch found that controlling
for race did little to disturb what he calls the west coast “membership trough.”12 A series
of Gallup polls conducted in 1970 revealed that the racial breakdown of the ‘no formal
religion’ population mirrored the wider population in both region and nation (see table
33).13 Further surveys indicated that whites and people of colour in the West rejected
formal religion in greater numbers than their counterparts elsewhere: nationally, 4% of
whites and 3% of “non-whites” claimed no formal religion, as compared to 7% of both
groups in the West (see table 5). The crude categories of ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ clearly
do not capture the complexities of race in postwar America. Nevertheless, these figures
suggest that western secularism cannot be reduced to, or explained away by, a distinct
racial demography.

12 Kevin Welch, “Church Membership,” 26; Thomas Davenport, Virtuous Pagans, 79; and Wade Clark
Roof and William McKinney, American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future (New
13 This series was based on interviews with a representative sample of Americans, rather than on figures
from the United States Census. As such, the population figures differ slightly from those discussed above.
Race and ethnicity did not determine the secular Northwest, but they clearly influenced religious discourse and practice in this region and beyond. In the literature on ethnicity and religion, much debate has centred on whether or not certain immigrant groups preserved or abandoned their religious traditions in the North American context.\textsuperscript{14} Increasingly, scholars are revealing the relationship between ethnicity and religion to be multi-dimensional. Ethnic groups retained aspects of their spiritual heritage and shed others, reacted to the dominant religious culture and actively shaped it, creatively refashioned the sacred and used it to make sense of themselves and the world around them.\textsuperscript{15} Our knowledge of the interplay between ethnic and religious identity is deepening, but we continue to know little about how ethnicity figured in the creation of secular cultures. In what ways did ethnic groups with strong traditions of secularism and atheism act upon, and respond to, the dominant culture in North America? Did such groups abandon or retain their irreligious identities? Did they secularize their social surroundings, or was the reverse the case? The limited evidence suggests a mutual interaction between ethnicity and secularism in the Northwest context. This region’s distinct irreligion was more than a demographic effect, but persons originating from countries with comparatively secular traditions, such as the Scandinavians, were over-represented here. The relative prevalence of such groups may have helped to create an environment of social acceptance around irreligion in the Pacific Northwest. Certain ethnic groups likely reinforced and nurtured the Northwest’s secular social world, but this world exerted powerful influences of its own. As we saw in the Canadian context,

\textsuperscript{14} For two competing points of view on the effects of migration on religiosity, see Timothy Smith, “Religion and Ethnicity in America,” and John Bukowczyk, “The Transforming Power of the Machine.”
persons with roots in France, Italy, and other conventionally religious countries were unusually apt to shed their religious affiliation in BC. While French and Italian Canadians may have felt culturally compelled on the west coast to abandon religion, it is also possible that those with secular leanings were particularly attracted to this region. In either case, it is clear that very considerable regional forces were at work here, as even the most (typically) devout of ethnic groups were found within the secular fray.

The available survey statistics suggest that race did not determine the secularism of the American West, but such statistics provide little insight into the religious behaviour of specific groups within Washington State. In the Canadian context, census figures partially illuminate the religious affiliation of BC’s Asian and aboriginal populations. In both BC and Canada, persons of Asian origin were over-represented among those with no religion, and Aboriginals were under-represented (see table 30). As this was both a national and regional pattern, it conveys little about the distinct religious culture of Canada’s westernmost province. This evidence does, however, point to the significance of race to postwar religion more generally. The importance of race to social identity and experience in the Pacific Northwest was made clear in the oral narratives; my informants regularly alerted me to the deep divisions of race in the postwar world. An Olympia man reflected on what it was like to grow up with atheist parents: “we knew that there was this gulf between us that we just didn’t speak about. But it wasn’t like being black.”16 As this remark suggests, race outweighed religion as a marker of difference in Olympia, as in other Northwest communities.

This study draws on the recollections of primarily white individuals, statistics grounded in European categories, and written materials produced by those in positions of

16 Brian and Shirley Clark, personal interview, 22 March 2004.
power. Such sources reveal something of how aboriginal and non-European populations were represented by the dominant culture, but less about the actual religious and irreligious lives of these populations. Several scholars have pointed out that the European concept of religion, as reproduced in North American quantitative and printed materials, is fundamentally alien to aboriginal and Asian worldviews.\textsuperscript{17} In many Asian and aboriginal cultures, religion is understood as inseparable from the whole of life, rather than something that is ‘practiced’ in discrete circumstances. As one American native leader explained, religion is “an integral part of the Indian way of life and culture which cannot be separated from the whole.”\textsuperscript{18} In many aboriginal spiritual traditions and Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism, priority is not given to regular worship in public settings.\textsuperscript{19} Aboriginal and Asian conceptions of religion defy any easy summary, but it is evident that such conceptions departed from dominant, Christian views of religion. The racist histories of Canada and the US ensure further distance between how whites and racialized ‘others’ understood the sacred. In the postwar Northwest, a long history of anti-Asian racism (in which the churches were complicit) ensured that many Asians here would see Christianity as irrevocably a “white man’s religion.”\textsuperscript{20} Also, as Judith Weisenfeld contends, given the American experience of slavery, “the meaning


\textsuperscript{18} As cited in John Wunder, “Pacific Northwest Indians and the Bill of Rights,” in Terra Pacifica, 179; also see Lance Laird, “Religions of the Pacific Rim,” 111.


\textsuperscript{20} Asian Family Affair, May 1976, 9; and Presbyterian Record, February 1962, 8-9.
of Christianity for blacks and whites could not be anything but disparate."\textsuperscript{21} Recognizing such disparate meanings, the present study focuses on irreligion among the Northwest’s dominant white culture. Although irreligion crossed the boundaries of race, it awaits future researchers to explore what this irreligion meant, or did not mean, to Aboriginals, Asians, blacks, and certain other non-European groups in the region.

Turning to the relationship between class and irreligion, the demographic evidence is fragmentary but suggestive. The ‘no religion’ population of Canada spanned all occupations, but was slightly over-represented in certain professional fields such as engineering, social sciences, and teaching (see table 34). Although the published census reports do not cross-tabulate religion with occupation at the provincial level, there was nothing obviously exceptional about BC’s occupational distribution that might explain this province’s secularity. British Columbians were employed in all fields, including those that were characteristically secular such as the natural sciences, in approximately the same proportion as nationwide (see table 35). BC dedicated less of its labour force to farming (3.0% in BC, 5.9% in Canada), and more to forestry and logging (2.1% in BC, 0.8% in Canada), than did the nation as a whole. Apart from these discrepancies, however, BC’s occupational distribution generally reflected that of the nation. The data on income point to an intriguing regional variance: irreligion was more evenly dispersed across all income groups in BC than elsewhere in the nation. In 1971, people with ‘no religion’ in BC and Canada were in the second highest income bracket of all religious groups (see table 36). Although BC partly reflected the national pattern, non-religious residents of this province were less concentrated in the upper income category than their counterparts in other regions (see table 37). The income results are complicated by

\textsuperscript{21} Judith Weisenfeld, "On Jordan’s Stormy Banks," 418.
gender: of all people claiming no religion across Canada, BC males were the only group
to report a lower than average annual income. Although they do not fully account for the
striking irreligion of BC, the income statistics suggest that the clergy’s focus on working
class men was not entirely misplaced. As we shall see below, Northwest secularism
crossed class lines, but drew particular strength from this region’s deep-rooted (and
mainly male) working-class culture.

Quantitative sources south of the border also suggest that while western
secularism was not bound to a single class, it was less prevalent among the elite,
professional classes. In the postwar decades, Washington’s occupational structure was
remarkably similar to that of the nation (see table 32). Unfortunately, surveys from the
era do not provide insights into class and religion at the state-level. Such surveys indicate
that people with no formal religion in the American West were distributed across all
fields in approximately the same proportion as the wider population (see table 33).
Those with no formal religion in the West were, however, less concentrated in business
and the professions than elsewhere. Professionals in the American West rejected formal
religion more than those in the South and Midwest, but slightly less than those in the
East. Other surveys indicate that irreligion was especially concentrated among

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22 Class is not, of course, defined solely by income, but also by occupation, education, and a range of
cultural factors.  
23 Sociologists have long debated and discussed the relationship between class and religious involvement in
the United States. See, for example, Michael Welch, “Religious Non-Affiliation and Worldly Success,”
Differentials”; and Norval Glenn and Ruth Hyland, “Religious Preference and Worldly Success: Some
24 National surveys conducted by the Catholic Digest in the postwar decades revealed that occupation was
not a significant predictor of church involvement. See Martin Marty et.al., What Do We Believe?, 276-77.
Also see Thomas Davenport, Virtuous Pagans, 89.
professional groups in the East (see table 5).\textsuperscript{25} Gallup surveys show that manual labourers, farmers, and clerical and sales workers in the West were far more detached from formal religion than their regional counterparts (see table 33). Such surveys also reveal that those without formal religion in the West had slightly lower incomes than their counterparts in other regions. At the same time, people across all income categories in the American West were less committed to formal religion than their national counterparts (see table 5). Sociologists have confirmed that neither income nor occupation accounts for the irreligion of the Pacific states.\textsuperscript{26} In the American West, secularism was a cross-class phenomenon that appeared to be less tied to the professional classes than in the East and other regions.

The limited quantitative evidence suggests that the Northwest’s popular secularism embodied both cross-class and class-based elements. Further evidence reveals that Northwest irreligion was not, as the clergy so often supposed, concentrated in mining and mill towns; rather, this irreligion extended into communities of all sizes and economies across the region. In both Canada and the United States, secularism was more common in urban than rural areas. Canadian census figures reveal that those who claimed to have no religion were more urbanized than the general population (see table 38). In 1961, 30.4\% of Canadians lived in rural areas, as compared to only 21.5\% of the ‘no religion’ population. By 1971, the no religion group was still more urbanized than the general population: 23.8\% of Canada’s population lived in rural areas, as compared to 19.3\% of the no religion population. While religious detachment was more characteristic of urban than rural areas, this does little to explain the distinct secularity of BC. In 1971,

\textsuperscript{25} Gallup Opinion Index 44 (1969), 33; and 70 (1971), 59.
\textsuperscript{26} Kevin Welch, “Church Membership,” 60-61; and Dean Hoge and David Roozen, “Research on Factors,” 47-48.
urban and rural residents of BC were both far more likely to claim no religion than their counterparts elsewhere: 3.5% of rural Canadians claimed no religion as compared to a striking 12.9% of rural British Columbians (see table 39). Urban centres in BC were also more secular than such centres in other provinces; in 1971, 13.2% of urbanites in BC, and only 4.6% or urbanites nationally, preferred no religion. BC’s two largest census metropolitan areas, Vancouver and Victoria, contained very large populations of religious ‘nones’: 15.1% in Vancouver and 10.8% in Victoria preferred no religion, as compared to 8.1% in Calgary, 6.1% in Toronto, 3.0% in Halifax, and only 2.1% in Montreal (see table 40). The widely dispersed nature of secularism is further revealed in a comparison of communities across the province (see table 41). All thirty-seven towns, cities, and municipal subdivisions with populations of 10,000 and over in British Columbia contained proportionately larger ‘no religion’ groups than the nation. Preoccupied with BC’s ‘godless’ resource frontier, Canadian church leaders failed to recognize that irreligion was in fact more prevalent in Vancouver than Port Moody, Victoria than Powell River, and Oak Bay than Kitimat. Despite the clergy’s anxious predictions, an unusual secularity reached beyond this province’s mining and logging towns and into its decidedly middle-class communities.

US surveys do not offer a view of religion at the state-level, but such surveys do point to the geographically dispersed rather than localized character of irreligion in the American West. Americans with no religion, like those in Canada, were more urbanized than the general population (see table 33). In 1970, urban dwellers in the West and across the nation were more likely to eschew formal religion than their rural counterparts. At the same time, regardless of whether they lived in small or large communities, or in
urban or rural districts, inhabitants of the American West were less attached to formal religion than residents of other regions (see table 5). Approximately 5% of those in the nation’s largest cities rejected formal religion, as compared to 9% of those in western cities. Regional discrepancies emerged across all urban and rural centres: nationally, only 2% of residents in small towns and rural areas claimed no formal religion, as compared to 5% in the West. The irreligion of the American West, then, was not solely a product of urban demography. While American surveys reveal the dispersed character of irreligion in the broad region of the West, the 1952 and 1971 church membership studies offer insights into the geography of religion at the state-level. In 1952, church membership levels in all of Washington’s 39 counties were much lower than the American average (see table 12). By 1971, all but 3 counties in this state had distinctly low rates of membership (see table 15). The churches fared somewhat better in the eastern part of the state. In both 1952 and 1971, those counties with the most church members were concentrated in Eastern Washington. My informants acknowledged the existence of cultural, and often religious, differences between Eastern and Western Washington. Having lived in Spokane, Seattle, and Olympia, Alice Miller found Eastern Washington to be far more socially and religiously conservative than the Western part of the state: “east of the Cascade Mountains,” she remarked, “it’s a different state over there.” Alice’s comment reminds us that the ‘Pacific Northwest’ is an historically constructed region marked by fluid borders and internal diversity. Despite such diversity, residents of Eastern and Western Washington shared much in the religious realm; staying

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27 Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 69-75. Using data from the 1952 and 1971 church membership studies, Stark and Bainbridge analyze church involvement in census metropolitan areas and reveal an “unchurched belt” along the Pacific Coast of Canada and the U.S.

28 Alice Miller, personal interview, 23 March 2004.
away from the churches was the norm for most Washingtonians, regardless of which side of the Cascades they called home.

Northwest secularism was not exclusively the product of this region’s particular class, race, ethnic, or (as we shall see in the following chapter) gender demography. By focusing on the usual suspects - working-class men - church leaders missed the more diffusive nature of irreligion in this region. Certainly, this irreligion was partly nurtured and sustained by working-class males in the logging camps and resource communities of this region; however, it was also made in unexpected spaces, such as middle class neighbourhoods, by ‘everyday infidels’ from all social locations. What norms and behaviours made up this everyday secularism? A wide analytic net is needed to capture the contours of this regional irreligion, and its place in Northwest life. We must approach this phenomenon attuned to the “ambivalence and ironies” that so often characterize human experience in the realm of religion. Unlike other regional religious cultures, such as the Catholic culture in Quebec or evangelicalism in the American South, Northwest secularism lacked a theological or institutional centre. Nonetheless, this secularism conformed to certain commonly accepted, if not formalized, practices, discourses, and boundaries. Inhabitants of this region, from the ardently atheistic to the deeply spiritual, understood religion as something that took two very different forms: organized and personal. The Northwest’s popular secularism was defined, in part, by a widely shared detachment from organized religion. In a place where non-attendance was normal, people went extended periods without ever encountering or, indeed, considering the churches. Personal religion evoked greater tensions and ambiguities than organized religion. Public admissions of atheism were known to cross the boundary of social

29 Robert Orsi, “Everyday Miracles,” 11
acceptance in this region and beyond. Many Northwesterners carved out secular identities that balanced on, but did not cross, this boundary. Although residents from varying social locations reproduced the norms and habits of this regional secularism, the cultural and material circumstances of class occasionally motivated and delimited secular practice. This chapter now turns to an examination of how organized religion figured in the everyday secularism of the Pacific Northwest.

Scholars have debated about the meanings of the revival of churchgoing in North America following World War II, but most agree that church involvement was central to middle-class ideals in this era. My research suggests the importance of accounting for regional distinctions, as the normative association between church involvement and middle-class respectability did not seem to obtain in the postwar Northwest. The author of an article in Seattle Magazine puzzled about the widespread indifference to the churches in his city: “The most surprising aspect of low church membership here is that it seems to contradict Seattle’s definition of itself - a city of staid, self-satisfied middle-class virtues.” The churches, the author noted, were considered irrelevant by Seattle’s “decision-makers” and “movers and shakers.”

To the confusion of this observer, churchgoing did not confer social acceptance among Seattle’s middle classes. Another writer concluded that churchgoing sometimes acted as a “social disadvantage” in Washington; according to this author, “Some professional people say privately that religion is a career burden here.”

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a public commitment to organized religion was not requisite to acceptance in the province. In 1962, a Victoria reporter remarked that Canadians - "at least here on the west coast - can get along in society without putting [their] religious affiliation on a platter for everyone to see." Northwest churches were understood to hold little appeal among the working classes. Although the churches were seen as middle-class institutions, church involvement was not as central to middle-class respectability in this region as it was elsewhere. That this culture assigned relatively little importance to churchgoing is revealed in the low levels of institutional involvement, as well as in wider discourses on the church in the Northwest. In a regional setting where there was "no social stigma...attached to non-attendance," people of all social classes could avoid the churches without fear of social exclusion. Commentators on both sides of the border noted the absence of "cultural Christians" and observed that "[c]asual, social churchgoing of the type seen elsewhere...isn't a major part of Northwest living." Ministers who came to this region from elsewhere were surprised to come across towns where local residents avoided or disdained the churches without risk of social consequence.

My informants widely affirmed that church involvement was irrelevant to social acceptance in the postwar Northwest, regardless of social class. Long-time Olympia resident Richard Petersen, who worked as an engineer in the postwar era, commented that church involvement "may have made a difference in some communities, but certainly not

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33 Colonist, 20 December 1962, 6.
35 Seattle Times, 8 May 1974, B9; Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 3 January 1977, A1, A20; United Church Observer, 1 February 1967, 28; Vancouver Province, 11 May 1956, 21; and Colonist, 20 December 1962, 6.
36 Western Regular Baptist, March 1953, 4-5; and United Church Observer, 1 February 1967, 28.
William Harris of Washington likewise recalled the insignificance of the church in his community:

First of all, I can tell you that growing up in my family, and all of my friends, nobody that I know went to church. Nobody in my neighbourhood, none of my parents’ friends. None of my childhood friends that I hung around with. Nobody went to church that I’m aware of... There was absolutely no religion in my neighbourhood, or among my friends, or among my family acquaintances... Maybe there was social pressure the other way.\textsuperscript{38}

Echoing William, many interviewees pointed to the invisibility of the churches in their Northwest neighbourhoods. The oral interviews suggest that this invisibility was regionally specific. As Seattle resident Charles Moore remarked: “I haven’t really been cognizant of the church since we moved out here. Just never have been. But back East I was.”\textsuperscript{39} Although often overlooked, place matters to religious practice and experience. As sociologist Rhys Williams writes: “everyday, lived religion - religion as the myriad cultural expressions of people as they move, grow, marry, die, and try to make sense of it all - depends crucially on place to constitute what it is.”\textsuperscript{40} Stories about the unimportance of churchgoing were very clearly grounded in a sense of place. Reflecting upon her childhood in Montana, Sandra remarked: “We didn’t go to church, and I’m sure it cost us. We were weirdos in Montana.” When she moved to Seattle, Sandra discovered that non-attendance at church, while culturally subversive in Montana, was normative in her new city: “there’s such a large number of people to whom [churchgoing] makes no difference. I never had any sense of that anyhow... I think it’s very easy to ignore religion living in Seattle.”\textsuperscript{41} It was easy to ignore organized religion not only in Seattle, but also in Port

\textsuperscript{37} Richard Petersen, personal interview, 22 March 2004.  
\textsuperscript{38} William Harris, personal interview, 23 March 2004.  
\textsuperscript{39} Charles Moore, personal interview, 30 October 2003.  
\textsuperscript{40} Rhys Williams, “Religion, Community, and Place,” 250-251.  
\textsuperscript{41} Sandra Johnson, personal interview, 27 March 2004.
Angeles, Olympia, Nanaimo, and other regional centres. In the 1960s, John Hartwich left Ottawa for Nanaimo, and was struck by his new town’s indifference toward organized religion. When asked whether the church was important to social life and status in the postwar decades, John replied: “In Ottawa yes, in Nanaimo not that I know of.”

Sharon Davis similarly recalled her “amazement” at the lack of churchgoing in BC, after moving to Victoria from Edmonton in the 1940s: “I was quite surprised when I got here, because people, where I had come from in Edmonton, the people that we knew were - other than my grandmother - most of them belonged to some religion, and went to church. So, when we came out here it was quite surprising that so many people didn’t go to church.”

Deborah reflected upon the irrelevance of the church in her postwar Seattle neighbourhood:

I knew the people that lived here, I mean in this neighbourhood, most of whom are still here, and none of us went to church. There was a Mormon couple who lived across the way for a few years, but other than that, no-one in this block that I knew went to church. And I had met many of [daughter’s] friends parents, but I was never friendly with them. I was the first single woman who owned a house in this development, and that was at a time when, you know, people wouldn’t associate with a single parent. And, so, I wasn’t invited to people’s homes or anything like that.

Deborah identified single motherhood, rather than irreligion, as the basis for her marginalization in the postwar decades. Isolated as a divorced, single parent among married couples, she suffered little social reproval for being part of the approximately 70% of Northwest residents who did not attend worship services each week. Like Deborah, Frank Williams insisted that his social exclusion in postwar Seattle had nothing

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42 Hartwich interview.
43 Sharon Davis, personal interview, 22 September 2003.
44 Deborah and Steven Sanders, personal interview, 29 March 2004.
to do with his detachment from church: "No, I don't think there was any feeling about that. I felt I may have been left out for other reasons, I may have been ignored for other reasons, it may have been my evident financial status, rather than for anything I'd say about religion." Joanne also recalled feeling 'othered' in her Seattle neighbourhood for class rather than religious reasons: "everybody had cashmere sweaters, and they, you know, dressed to the hilt. And we couldn't afford it." A range of factors, including class and single parenting, proved to be more significant to the politics of exclusion in Northwest communities than churchgoing.

In 1980, a journalist reported that "organized religion does not have the kind of reflexive backing in Washington and the Far West that it does elsewhere. The 'non-adherers' apparently do not feel social constraints here to pretend otherwise and are openly indifferent." Although it addresses a later period, this comment nicely captures the nature of religious detachment in the Northwest. People who lived here knew that staying away from the churches fulfilled rather than contravened social expectations. Decisions regarding personal church involvement inspired little uncertainty or anxiety among my informants, regardless of their social location. Comfortably indifferent to organized religion in Seattle, Joanne speculated about how her relationship with the church may have differed, had she lived elsewhere: "If I had lived in a place where the church was the dominant thing...I can't believe I would've become religious. I might've been involved in a social aspect of the church, but I don't believe I ever would've intellectually embraced it." Edna Simpson, who moved from Oklahoma to Washington

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45 Frank Williams, personal interview, 28 March 2004.
46 Smith interview.
48 Smith interview.
in the 1940s, recalled the deep apathy around churchgoing in this state: "I don’t think anybody really thought about it. Go or not go, whatever you wanted to do." This wider indifference to the churches underscored Edna’s own decision to stay home on Sundays: “I was reinforced in my not going to church because nobody around me did.” Edna admitted that had she stayed in Oklahoma, where there was “more pressure to conform,” she might not have become an avid churchgoer, but she “would’ve probably made more of an effort to pretend.” Edna and Joanne echoed many of their contemporaries in attributing their detachment from the church (although not their inner secular feelings) in part, to regionally specific social conditions. In choosing to avoid the churches these women drew on, and also helped to reinforce and perpetuate, the popular secularism of the postwar Northwest.

Northwest habits of indifference to organized religion, while more analytically elusive than customs pertaining to faith and worship, were no less significant to the people in this region. Charles assured me that in Seattle, his friends and neighbours “couldn’t have cared less” about his relationship (or lack thereof) with the church; likewise, Edward recalled that the church “never seemed to come up at all” among his friends and neighbours in Nanaimo. My informants took for granted that by ignoring the churches they risked neither isolation nor discrimination. They shared with one another in situating, through their language and behaviour, religious indifference at the centre of the Northwest’s secular life. They spoke a common rather than idiosyncratic language of religious detachment, echoing each other in describing organized religion as

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50 Moore interview; and Edward Lewis, personal interview, 26 August 2003.
“unimportant,” “irrelevant,” “unnecessary,” and a “non-event.” Many would recognize themselves in the following remark made by a Vancouver woman: “going to church just never even occurred to me.” Such quotidian expressions of disinterest conveyed the taken for granted secularism of this region.

Like popular religion, the Northwest’s everyday secularism is not reducible to any single behaviour, idea, habit, or convention. According to Robert Orsi, religion “comes into being in an ongoing, dynamic relationship with the realities of everyday life.” Religious beliefs, he contends, are generally “quiescent,” activated in discrete times in response to particular circumstances. The irreligion of ordinary Northwesterners was also partial, unpredictable, and brought to life in certain moments. Most people here did not adhere to any formal doctrine of secularism. This does not mean, however, that being secular was simply a default position, an identity people unwittingly assumed in religion’s absence. Although they ignored organized religion much of the time, many Northwesterners were deeply critical of the churches. The criticisms of organized religion that filled the oral narratives echoed those reproduced in the wider postwar media, especially in the 1960s. Such criticisms were not isolated to the Northwest, but they were voiced fervently in this comparatively secular region. Many of my informants conveyed deep feelings of resentment towards organized religion, as discussions about

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51 Ruth McCallum, personal interview, 21 October 2003; Helen Griffith, personal interview, 25 March 2004; Muriel Thompson, personal interview, 21 October 2003; Smith interview; Green interview; Lewis interview; Hartwich interview; Robert Taylor, 17 October 2003; and George Thompson, 21 October 2003.
52 Muriel Thompson interview.
54 Reginald Bibby, Fragmented Gods, 135. Bibby suggests that while many Canadians were indifferent to organized religion in the 1970s and 1980s, they were not anti-church. My findings point to a significant strand of anti-church sentiment in the British Columbia context, and suggest the need to account for regional discrepancies in perspectives on organized religion.
the churches slipped from indifference into hostility and revealed the existence of a more active, wilful secularism.

Drawing on dominant discourses and their own personal histories with the churches, my informants complained that organized religion inspired, and embodied, elitism, greed, egotism, and various other evils. In their recollections, Northwest women and men reproduced many widely held attitudes toward organized religion. Born in 1919, Mary Green moved from Montana to Olympia in 1942. While her social life as a teenager was bound up with Protestant church groups, Mary fell away from the church as an adult. According to Mary, the churches were “over-organized, and over-hypocritical, and the women in the Ladies’ Aid even, they couldn’t decide whether they’re going to have cream chicken or cream tuna. I mean it’s… Religion had nothing to do with it! Ladies’ Aid didn’t even mean religion!” While Mary’s relationship with the church through the postwar years was largely one of detachment, she was not simply an accidental secularist. Mary’s detachment, like that of many of her contemporaries, was underscored and sustained by a deep resentment towards organized religion. Although it was expressed in personal and emotional terms, Mary’s resentment was part of a wider postwar antagonism towards the churches.

As scholars continue to unveil the common myths, symbols, and “languages of belief” that have constituted popular religious cultures across time and place, the shared

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55 Muriel Thompson interview; Smith interview; Simpson interview; Griffith interview; McCallum interview; Miller interview; Donna Tremblay, personal interview, 29 August and 19 November 2003; Linda Sato, personal interview, 14 October 2003; Williams interview; Sanders interview; Philip Hawthorne, personal interview, 22 October 2003; Jean and Donald Stewart, personal interview, 23 June 2003; and Henry Davidson, personal interview, 27 August 2003. For American studies of the unchurched, see, for example, J. Russell Hale, The Unchurched; and Everett Perry et.al., “Toward a Typology of Unchurched Protestants,” Review of Religious Research 21 (1980): 388-404.  
56 Green interview.
discourses of popular secularism have gone largely unnoticed.\textsuperscript{57} Northwest secularism was not a formal system of meaning, but it did embody certain common norms, practices, and idioms. In charging the churches with being “over-hypocritical,” Mary conveyed the most popular idiom of this everyday irreligion. Criticisms of religious hypocrisy appeared in most, though not all, of the narratives. Such criticisms were certainly not isolated to the Northwest, but they did find widespread voice in this region of religious detachment. While my informants as a whole may have been more fervent in their criticisms than most, their complaints were widely echoed in the cultural media of the time. In 1986, an article in Seattle’s weekly paper reflected on the disenchantment with the churches that emerged during the 1960s: “Post-war babies now grown up left the church armed with criticisms, not the least of which was that ministers didn’t practice what they preached and gave sermons that didn’t relate to real life, and congregants practiced Sunday hypocrisy.”\textsuperscript{58} In the 1960s and early 1970s, newspapers in BC and Washington reported on the growing disdain for the apparent hypocrisy of organized religion; as one writer reported: “Young people are turning from the seemingly hypocritical teachings of the established churches.”\textsuperscript{59} The “mounting tide of criticism” towards organized religion drew frequent comment from the churches themselves.\textsuperscript{60} An Anglican priest became the focus of controversy in 1968 when, after declaring that the “really loving, sensitive and concerned people are outside the church,” he left his Vancouver church to “seek Christ of the streets.”\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{57} Sarah Williams, \textit{Religious Belief and Popular Culture}, 12.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Weekly}, 17 September 1986, 33.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Seattle Post-Intelligencer}, 6 February 1971, 4; also see \textit{Colonist}, 29 December 1962, 1-2.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Canadian Churchman}, April 1968, 24.
Denunciations of religious hypocrisy filled the oral testimonies, taking on a personal and occasionally emotional tone in some narratives. Nancy MacEwan, the daughter of missionary parents, explained why she left the church as an adult:

A real issue for me became - and I'll just spell it out real clear - the hypocrisy, okay, that I saw amongst people who call themselves Christians, and conducted what one could call, I guess, a life of religious commitment where there was attending church on a regular basis, being a very involved member in the church, etcetera, etcetera. And, it's very, very sad to say, but I even saw it in my own family. The lack of consistency. I have trouble with people who say one thing, and do another. I just, to this day, I have difficulty digesting it.  

Nancy left the church, in part, because of racism and intolerance that she encountered within her Christian family. Like Nancy, Susan experienced deep hurts around religion within her own family, which caused her to abandon the Mormon faith of her childhood. Susan complained that people "think if they go to church on Sundays, it doesn't matter what they do during the week [laughs]. You know, they can be S.O.B.'s and thieves, as long as they go to church on Sundays."  

Anne Carlson related the painful personal encounters that sparked her disassociation from the church:

[After] I left home I could see that people who were supposedly religious were not as Christian as a lot of people that I was acquainted with. I mean, Christianity, what do you call that? My interpretation of a Christian is somebody that is kind, and good, and I didn't see that at all. [Sister] and I lived in foster-type homes for a while, they weren't foster homes but, because my father was in the services, they were friends of his, friends of friends. They weren't friends, believe me, they weren't friends. They weren't friends at all. They were supposedly good people, they took us in because we had nowhere else to go, my father was worried about us, but it turned out that there was abuse, it was not good at all. Not bad, but bad enough for a young kid, I feel bad for the different ones that you read about... god, must be awful for them. And all the while we went to church. All the while, all those people, you always went to church with everybody. It kind of soured me...[trails off].  

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63 Susan Young, personal interview, 30 October 2003.
64 Anne Carlson, personal interview, 16 September 2003.
Anne rejected the church for personal reasons, but she was not alone in identifying a disconnect between the ideals of Christian goodness and the behaviour of churchgoers.

While some people framed their discussions of religious hypocrisy in very personal terms, most of my informants - including those who had never entered a church - voiced more general complaints, directing much of their antipathy towards people in the pews. They described the churchgoers in their communities as “mean and grovelling,” “unkind,” and “the crookedest people in town.”\(^{65}\) Nanaimo resident Patrick O’Connor, who worked as a bartender through the postwar decades, reflected on his impression of church people: “I think even at a young age I realized that these people were not interested in helping people as much as they were interested in their own self-betterment.”\(^{66}\) Many attributed their own detachment from the church, in part, to the hypocrisy of congregants. Larry Allen, a poet and construction worker in Seattle, reflected on why he turned away from the church: “the more I began to look around me, I saw that there weren’t too many people living the Christian life - there was a lot of hypocrisy.”\(^{67}\) Margaret grew disenchanted with the church, in part, because of the hypocrisy of those in attendance: “So often people that would sit there, pious as could be on a Sunday, weren’t so pious during the week... There they are sitting on Sunday like butter wouldn’t melt in their mouth, and then in the rest of the week just not being too - what we felt - was Christian.”\(^{68}\) Deborah’s experiences with religious hypocrisy in a small eastern Washington town caused her to abandon religion altogether: “living in that small town and seeing the hypocrites that were lined up at the church door on Sunday,

\(^{65}\) Tremblay interview; and Thomas Brown, personal interview, 11 November 2003.
\(^{66}\) Patrick O’Connor, personal interview, 3 September 2003.
\(^{67}\) Larry Allen, personal interview, 28 March 2004.
\(^{68}\) Margaret Ferguson, personal interview, 10 September 2003.
and were out with somebody else’s wife on Saturday night, or were mistreating their employees. My experiences were more negative than positive, with the people who lived in the town.  

Historian Sarah Williams points to the ingrained idea in nineteenth-century working-class London that the “non-church attender could in fact live more closely to an ideal of true Christianity than a regular attender.”

According to Williams, regular churchgoers were frequently charged with hypocrisy, their behaviour judged according to a far higher standard than that of people who stayed away from the churches. Similar ideas informed denunciations of religious hypocrisy in the postwar Pacific Northwest; as one University of Victoria professor observed in 1962, people were “much more contemptuous of non-religious churchgoers than of agnostics or atheists.”

Regardless of their social class or religious identity, my informants were indeed contemptuous of churchgoers whose behaviour did not conform to well-understood standards of ‘true religion.’ To them, it was better to reject organized religion altogether than to be superficially or insincerely religious. Churchgoing was understood to be entirely separable from ‘true religion,’ an ideal premised on the golden rule or, more simply, goodness. Such ideas incited anxiety among church leaders, who struggled to affirm the importance of regular churchgoing to true religion.

Much to the dismay of church officials, a 1969 survey of Victoria, BC, found that most residents of this city believed

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69 Sanders interview.
70 Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture, 113-115. For further studies which probe and reveal the disjuncture between official and popular understandings of religion, see Jeffrey Cox, The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870-1930 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Hugh McLeod, Piety and Poverty; and Robert Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street.
71 Daily Colonist, 29 December 1962, 1.
72 Reginald Bibby, Fragmented Gods, 83.
73 Vancouver Province, 14 July 1958, 1-2; Colonist, 16 December 1962, 1, 2; and Canadian Churchman, 20 February 1958, 79-80.
that a “truly religious person” should be more concerned with “good works” than church attendance or prayer. Such results confirmed the clergy’s longstanding suspicions that most people were “seriously mistaken” about what it meant to be truly religious.74

Despite the efforts of church leaders to define for the people what it meant to be truly religious, ordinary Northwesterners continued to make up their own minds about how, or indeed whether, to be religious. The oral, printed, and statistical evidence suggests that church involvement was not central to the meanings of religiosity in this region. As one of my informants pointed out, “God lives with us everyday, he’s not in a building.”75 Sociologist Nancy Ammerman argues that “Golden Rule Christians” are (and have been) pervasive in America; these are people who ascribe to ideals of Christian goodness but not to a firm doctrine, and who place less importance on churchgoing than on “care for relationships, doing good deeds, and looking for opportunities to provide care and comfort for people in need.”76 My research suggests that Golden Rule Christianity was indeed prevalent in the Northwest. One of my informants insisted that leaving the church had made her a “better Christian than ever.” She explained: “I don’t want to talk the talk, I just want to walk the walk, and let my life exemplify my convictions.”77 This woman joined many others in defining good works rather than churchgoing as the mark of a true Christian. According to Ammerman, Golden Rule Christians are not secular, as they “have not given up on transcendence.”78 The golden rule ideal was not the exclusive preserve of Christians or religious people in the Northwest. Although many people outside of the churches loosely adhered to a particular

74 BC Diocesan Post, September 1969, 2.
75 Young interview.
77 MacEwan interview.
religion such as Christianity, a significant minority ascribed to an ideal of goodness that was decidedly non-transcendent. Like Ammerman’s ‘golden rule Christians,’ these people emphasized the importance of caring for others and living a good life. Donald Stewart, a Nanaimo atheist, reflected on what it meant to live a good life:

This idea that you have to be a Christian in order to be good does not appeal to me at all. I remember, I wrote a thing when I was younger, a creed for myself. I can’t remember where it is. I know that the creed by which I live is like the ten commandments, but I don’t think the religious aspect has ever had any effect on me.\(^{79}\)

Henry Davidson, also an atheist, affirmed that “treating other people the way you expect them to treat you, that’s all you have to know.”\(^{80}\) Henry and Donald were not alone in their insistence that living a good life had little to do with transcendence. Whether they were golden rule Christians or atheists, all of my informants would have confirmed one woman’s assertion that “you didn’t have to go to church on Sunday to do good.”\(^{81}\)

The Northwest’s everyday secularism crossed the boundaries of class. Working- and middle-class residents joined together in criticizing and staying away from religious institutions, and in disassociating the church from ideals of goodness. However, hostility towards the churches was especially widespread among this region’s working classes. In 1961, Canada’s Maclean’s magazine reported that the church is “holding its farmer and small shopkeeper, as well as its professional and successful and even rich business members… [but] it is losing labor.”\(^{82}\) Concerns about the “indifference and suspicion of labor toward the church” echoed through the cultural and religious media of both nations.

\(^{79}\) Stewart interview.
\(^{80}\) Davidson interview.
\(^{81}\) Ferguson interview.
\(^{82}\) Maclean’s, 25 February 1961, 48; also see PCU, Board of National Missions, Annual Report (1952), 19; and Daily Christian Advocate, 27 April 1960, 22.
in the postwar decades. In the Northwest, such concerns were not entirely without basis. Class did not determine religious participation here to the same extent that it might have in regions where churchgoing was more central to status and respectability. However, class conditions and expectations intersected with regional norms of irreligion to nurture and sustain working-class irreligion in the region.

In his commentary on the 1851 Religious Census in England and Wales, Horace Mann described the working classes as “unconscious secularists - engrossed by the demands, the trials or the pleasures of the passing hour, and ignorant or careless of the future.” This image of the working classes as “unconscious secularists” is echoed in mid twentieth-century church writings on the Pacific Northwest. One clergyman of the era complained that BC’s lumber workers were “careless about regarding [Sunday] in any sense as a day for worship and indeed rest. They work on their homes, their cars, and other personal concerns.” In recent years, scholars have challenged the notion that the working classes were “unconscious secularists.” Focusing mainly on the nineteenth century, they have uncovered thriving working-class religious cultures that existed outside of the churches, beyond the purview of religious statistics. The present study also seeks to undermine the image of the working classes as “unconscious secularists.” However, rather than illuminating a hidden religiosity, as other researchers have done, this study reveals the existence of a wilful, deliberate secularism among the Northwest’s working classes. Material circumstances influenced, but did not dictate, working-class

84 As cited in Hugh McLeod, Piety and Poverty, 131.
85 UCBCA, LDA Papers, Box 1, File 5, Letter from Rev. R.A. Redman to Mr. McGrath, 1 December 1954.
detachment from the churches in the postwar Northwest. Such circumstances intersected with more concerted, deeply held objections to organized religion to define working-class secularism in the region.

For some, the everyday realities of work limited, in a very basic way, the possibilities for church involvement. Bill Wilson contended that as a miner in BC and Brazil, he had little time for church: “Nobody went to church. How the hell could they go to church when they were over the mountain or something, and they worked everyday. We all worked everyday! We had a big crew of men...I worked 12 hours a day, everyday. I never gave church a thought. We were always too tired.”87 Like Bill, Larry Allen recalled that he rarely attended church because “shift-work had no respect for Sundays.”88 Anne Carlson, whose husband was a firefighter, and Sylvia Henderson, whose husband worked in a pulp mill, voiced similar sentiments. Anne remarked: “Well, my husband worked shift work so, you know, that tells you something all by itself. So, Sunday didn’t make that much difference one way or the other.” Sylvia likewise recalled: “whatever we did depended on what shift he was on.”89 Such comments reveal that the material conditions of work could at least partially limit religious practice. In BC, LDA officials complained that in the lumber fields: “love of time and one-half seems to predominate. Rare cases of men known to request Sunday off.”90 The clergy’s suspicions that resource workers regularly chose work over church on Sundays were not without basis. Their assumption, however, that the working classes were simply drawn away from the churches by work - that had they no material demands,

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87 Beverly and Bill Wilson, personal interview, 4 September 2003.
88 Allen interview.
89 Carlson interview; and Sylvia Henderson, personal interview, 24 June 2003.
they would be filling the pews - underplays the purposeful nature of working-class secularism in the region. Seattle longshoreman Frank Williams explained that he had always sought out Sunday work: “Yes, no problem. I was always at work on Sunday. And you get paid extra, so I probably worked on Sundays more often than any other day of the week [laughs]… Except for one or two religious people, I don’t think that anybody would feel obligated not to work on Sunday.” For Frank, an atheist since childhood, Sunday work was the result rather than the cause of his very conscious secularism. Material conditions, such as the requirements of shift-work and Sunday labour, could clearly delimit religious practice; working-class secularism in this region is not, however, reducible to such conditions. The everyday irreligion of the Northwest’s working classes took shape on ideological as well as material terrain, a product of both economic circumstances and a conscious disdain for the churches.

The enduring idea that the churches were fundamentally middle-class institutions kept some working-class people away. Susan recalled that as a child growing up in the mining communities of Washington and Northern Idaho, the shiny images of well-dressed church families seemed distant and unreal:

Sunday morning was, you have to get up and prepare a meal for the day, put something together, figure out how you were going to get your meals, you know, whatever. So, it wasn’t about church. And survival, I think with that class of people, was the main concern. And, I know that we saw pictures of people going to church, and they got all dressed up on Sunday, and all of that, you know, and it was the smiling happy family kind of thing. Well, we never knew that, because we lived in a place that wasn’t like that…It wasn’t reality at all. It was, you know, gee someday I might get to do that. And someday I might get to go to Oz too [laughs]. What little we had went for the basic necessities. There wasn’t money for new shoes. There wasn’t money for dresses to go to church, or anything like that.  

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91 Williams interview.
92 Young interview.
Susan’s religious detachment, albeit conscious and purposeful, developed in response to her economic circumstances. Susan became disenchanted with organized religion in childhood, as she witnessed the class-based disconnect between church families and her own. Others abandoned organized religion as adults, as they found themselves unable to reconcile the economic needs of their families with those of the church. Several of my working-class informants were unable to manage the financial demands of churchgoing, particularly at the stage of life when they were starting their careers and families. Margaret and Sylvia left the church, in part, due to financial struggles they encountered while beginning their families. Margaret and her husband left their Vancouver church because they were “struggling financially” and found that “the church [was] never... satisfied with what they were getting.”

Sylvia Henderson, whose husband worked at a Nanaimo pulp mill through the postwar years, recalled the difficulties of fulfilling the economic requirements of both family and church:

I used to get letters with envelopes in to put my donation in, but no way [laughs]. Make your pledge for the year, and I thought no, I’m not doing it. And another thing too, in the ‘60s, although my husband was making fair wages, but raising four children, we didn’t have the extra money to put in as a...you know, so much a month...When they started sending the envelopes to fill out for the year, you know, I thought well, what’s more important the family or the church? And at that time the family was.

For Sylvia, as for most others, family survival came before the needs of the church. For many, family economic priorities, particularly at that critical intersection of life when careers were beginning and babies were being born, could push church involvement to the wayside. Although this was mainly a working-class issue, the financial demands of church involvement also kept some middle-class people away. David attributed his early

93 Ferguson interview.
94 Henderson interview.
departure from an Olympia church to financial reasons: "I started in church, the first year or two I was out here. This is a secret I've never told anybody [laughs]. Because I was a doctor they were asking me for money right away...The practice did develop, but I wasn't making as much money as they thought I was. They wanted me to give a lot more money than I was prepared to give." As David's story suggests, even some middle-class families struggled with the material demands of church involvement. These personal stories reveal that secular behaviour in the Northwest was, at times, fundamentally tied to the economic realm.

Criticisms of organized religion often centred on economic concerns. Interviewees from all social classes complained about the apparent financial excesses of organized religion. They referred to the clergy as "money-grubbers," the churches as "big money-making businesses," and organized religion itself as "a cover for greed and business." Complaints about the monetary obsessions of the churches and "the wealth of priests and ministers" echoed through the oral narratives. Most interviewees, regardless of social class, would concur with Anne's simple assertion: "Most of the churches are rich. I don't like any of them." This common criticism was at least partly grounded in widely held assumptions about the meanings of 'true religion.' As Robert Orsi suggests, because religion - 'real' religion - has typically been understood as something disconnected from, and untainted by, "material things," it is often upsetting to people when "money makes an appearance in the space of the sacred." The idea that money necessarily taints 'true religion' subtly shaped my informants' criticisms of organized

95 Becker interview.
96 Muriel Thompson interview.
97 Carlson interview.
religion. Recalling the many financial ventures of a priest he had known in BC, Patrick questioned whether such a man could be considered truly religious: “was he really a religious person, was he a man of God or whatever? Or was he just a businessman?” In the postwar Northwest, even those with very secular sensibilities maintained clear ideas about what constituted ‘true religion’; such ideas underscored working- and middle-class irreligion in the region.

Much of this irreligion crossed class lines, but working-class antipathy towards religion, particularly in its organized form, was especially marked in the region. Despite the views of cultural commentators, working-class Northwesterners were not unwittingly drawn away from religion and the church by material demands. Their irreligion was influenced by material circumstances, but also by this region’s very strong tradition of working-class secularism and socialism. Several of my informants articulated specifically class-based critiques of organized religion. Long-time socialist Gary Nelson described the church as “an arm of the capitalist establishment.” Gary reflected on the reasons for his disassociation from organized religion: “As I became more aware politically, and so on, I became more aware of the fact that organized religion, as Marx said, is a tool of the ruling class, which it is. Still is, to a great extent.” Like Gary, a significant portion of this region’s working classes viewed the churches as instruments of the ruling classes and employers. Edward Lewis of Nanaimo, also a socialist, argued with a minister about the class privilege embedded in the churches:

I said, why is it that the best Christians are the ones that have the most money, and who have donated to the church? He said, well now, I don’t think that’s quite right. And I said, well, let me put it this way, and I named a few names, they’re

99 O’Connor interview.
100 Gary Nelson, personal interview, 19 November 2003; and Hartwich interview. Also see Nanaimo Free Press, 24 August 1960, 4.
pillars of the church, aren’t they? Well, yes. One’s a lawyer, the other’s an industrialist, one had donated the organ.\footnote{101}

Economic criticisms of organized religion were not limited to committed socialists; many working-class Northwesterners, regardless of their politics, voiced similar criticisms. Although she did not ascribe to socialism, Anne (the wife of a Victoria fireman) articulated a class-critique of the churches: “all the money that the church has, and all the poor people that go grovelling, and it’s the people in the church, that work for the church, that make the church all that money. And the poorest of the poor don’t get much, I’ll tell you that.”\footnote{102} One of my Seattle informants was influenced by her union-leader father’s deep disdain for the churches:

he figured at that time that religion was just a way to bilk the poor of their money, and he never changed his opinion on the subject [laughs]. He did remember the old hymns, some of them. ‘At the Cross’, which was one, ‘where I first saw the light, and the burdens of my heart rolled away, rolled away, rolled away’. He would sing ‘and the nickels and the dimes rolled away, rolled away, rolled away’ [laughs].\footnote{103}

Working-class hostility towards organized religion echoed through many of the oral testimonies. Although he later became a university professor, Charles’s early economic experiences planted the seed for his eventual rejection of religion: “I lived on the wrong side of the tracks, so there was a lot of, relatively speaking, poverty...I can remember, and this is as a kid, well how come these people have a big car, and all the great things, and my father, who’s a wonderful man, can’t find a job? So, what’s all this stuff that god takes care of you? So, I really questioned that.”\footnote{104} A consciousness of poverty and class privilege prompted Charles not only to leave the church but, eventually, to adopt atheism.

\footnote{101}{Lewis interview.}\footnote{102}{Carlson interview.}\footnote{103}{Miller interview.}\footnote{104}{Moore interview.}
Although most working-class Northwesterners maintained some religious beliefs, there was a comparatively strong tradition of working-class atheism in this region. Contrary to popular assumption, the Northwest’s working classes were active rather than unconscious secularists.

The Northwest’s distinct secularism crossed class lines, but the material and imaginative conditions of this region made working-class irreligion especially prevalent. In the 1930s, the American Postmaster General made the now-famous reference to the “forty-seven states and the ‘Soviet of Washington.’” As this comment implies, Washington has been home to a relatively well-developed socialist movement in the American context. Socialism has historically drawn even wider appeal in BC, once disparagingly referred to as “Canada’s Communist Fortress.”

In the postwar decades, uniquely high rates of unionization also distinguished BC and Washington from their respective nations; in the 1950s, approximately 40% of non-farm workers in BC and Washington were unionized. Although scholars no longer depict the Northwest’s working classes as exceptionally radical, few would debate the existence of a strong working-class culture and consciousness in this region. Of course, as several studies have shown, a well-developed working-class culture does not preclude religion.

However, the oral, printed, and quantitative evidence suggests that secularism was a

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106 George Taft, “Socialism in North America,” 305-6; Carlos Schwantes, A Radical Heritage, x; Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West, 364; and UCC, BESS, Annual Report (1968), 166.

107 See, for example, David Bercuson, “Labour Radicalism”; and Carlos Schwantes, Radical Heritage.

108 For studies that demonstrate how Christianity was embedded within, and used by, labour and working class groups see, for example, Jama Lazerow, Religion and the Working Class in Antebellum America; and Teresa Murphy, Ten Hours’ Labor.
significant strand in the fabric of this region’s working-class culture. Such evidence also indicates that middle-class ideals of religiosity held comparatively little influence here. The reasons for this are complex, but part of the answer rests in how this region has been imagined. Historian Laurie Mercier notes that when she informs her students in Washington that “more communications workers than loggers have lost jobs in recent decades, they argue that loggers and their communities deserve special assistance because, unlike other workers, they represent ‘a way of life’ symbolic of the rugged Northwest.”

Mercier’s observation, which is confirmed by several other researchers, hints at the extent to which working-class values and ideals have permeated and defined this regional culture. As we shall see further in Chapter 6, ordinary people and cultural commentators also located the Northwest’s quintessential identity in the (male) wageworkers frontier. The values associated with the lifestyle of a particular segment of the working classes - ruggedness, individualism, and, indeed, irreligion - seemed to resonate in Northwest culture more than in other regions. Such values have nudged middle-class religious ideals and expectations out of this culture’s dominant centre.

While perspectives on organized religion in the postwar Northwest were complex, even greater contradictions came into play in the realm of personal religion and belief. Discussions about personal beliefs could be highly idiosyncratic, but some clear patterns do emerge. While staying away from the churches educes few social consequences in


110 One of my Nanaimo informants admitted that because working class lifestyles were so valorized and normative in the region, he had always felt uncomfortable admitting that he had attended University.
the postwar Northwest, there was far more at stake in decisions about what, and especially if, to believe. While there is evidence to suggest that atheism was at least somewhat more accepted in the Pacific Northwest than in other regions, and in Canada than the US, it is clear that professions of atheism crossed the boundary of social acceptance across both nations. This boundary marked the well understood, though not always respected, parameter of everyday secularism in the Northwest. In public discourse in this region and beyond, atheists were defined as unreliable and deviant; those who admitted to their atheism risked being denied the right to act as witnesses in court, to adopt children, or even to become citizens. Within this context, it is not surprising that atheism was a boundary that many approached, but few crossed.

My informants were well aware that atheism carried with it significant social consequences. Port Angeles resident Karen Morrison recalled that, while she refused to hide her atheism in the postwar years, she did “learn that you can’t just be as blatant with atheism as you can be with Catholicism or something.” She went on to complain: “In our culture, we get nagged at. You must believe, you must believe, you must believe, or else you’re lost, or you’re not going to be saved, or some of these things.” Gary Nelson, also of Port Angeles, acknowledged that calling yourself an atheist in the postwar years “wouldn’t get you any brownie points with the establishment.”

111 For discussions on the varying levels of tolerance to atheism in the United States as compared to Canada, and in the western regions as compared to the eastern regions, see *Progressive World*, March 1952, 177-8; and August 1958, 7. Although both countries saw a rise in anti-atheist/anti-communist rhetoric in the postwar era, such rhetoric was particularly forceful in the American context. In the U.S., such rhetoric coincided with the addition of the phrase ‘Under God’ to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954, and the establishment of “In God We Trust” as the official national motto in 1956. See James Shortridge, “Patterns of Religion,” 433.
114 Nelson interview.
understood that to identify as an atheist was to risk social exclusion; as one Washington man remarked: “I mean, you didn’t go out in the world and announce yourself as an atheist if you wanted to mingle with people, and work with people, because atheists, in many circles, are pariahs.”115 Several BC interviewees confirmed that people in this province would have been “afraid” to publicly identify as atheists in the postwar decades. Although the social constraints around atheism transcended the border, such constraints were particularly evident in the American context. The anti-communist hysteria of this era crossed the border, but had a more profound effect in Washington than BC.116 Atheism was especially vilified south of the border, in part, because of its association with communism. As Seattle resident Alice Miller remarked: “in those days, all communists were atheists, therefore all atheists were communists.”117 Unlike staying away from the churches, atheism was clearly a marker of social difference in the postwar Northwest. This was a marker that most, though certainly not all, chose to avoid; even many committed unbelievers refused to publicly call themselves atheists.

Recently, historian Laurie Maffly-Kipp remarked that few studies “see material discrepancies as having some direct bearing on religious faith or practice.” According to Maffly-Kipp, further research is needed on the ways in which “economic systems impinge on our religious choices, communities, and options.”118 Although it is not possible to chart, in any fixed or stable way, the relationship between class and religious belief in the postwar era, it is clear that material circumstances had a direct bearing on the

115 Brown interview.
117 Miller interview.
118 Laurie Maffly-Kipp et.al, “American Religion and Class,” 9, 15
possibilities for public atheism through these years. That this was a national rather than specifically regional phenomenon is evident in the following excerpt from a letter written by an Edmonton man to BC atheist activist Marian Sherman:

Your views as noted in the ‘Star’ are a striking example of the power of money. Please don’t condemn me for this remark, I am merely making the observation that money is the key to an open mind. Thank you, Madam, for using your financial freedom to be honest. I, along with several millions, have the same thoughts but our living depends so much on how we express ourselves in the presence of our superiors. We live a life of almost continual lies.\(^\text{119}\)

Sherman attributed her vocal atheism, in part, to her financial independence: “One reason why I have remained aggressive and what many people think is too outspoken through the years is that I don’t have to fear public opinion: I am financially secure and I have no job to lose.”\(^\text{120}\) Many who did, indeed, have a ‘job to lose,’ in the Northwest and beyond, well knew to keep their atheism hidden. As one BC atheist confessed in a letter to Sherman: “I must admit that my husband would likely be out of work, should I make myn (sic) believe (sic) too much known around town.”\(^\text{121}\)

Class made a difference to the social expectations and consequences of atheism. Middle-class religious ideals may have compelled few to attend church in the Northwest, but such ideals exerted considerable force in the realm of religious belief. The qualitative evidence suggests that certain elements of the middle classes, in this region and beyond, faced particular pressures to reject atheism. Deborah, a public school teacher in Washington in the postwar era, reflected on why she was a ‘hidden atheist’ in the 1950s:

you couldn’t be a communist safely in the 50s, and you couldn’t be an atheist as a public school teacher, safely, either. I think it would have been very possible that


\(^{120}\) Star Weekly, 11 September 1965, 6.

\(^{121}\) BCA, MNS, MS-0409, Box 2, File: Correspondence re: ‘What Makes an Atheist Tick’, Letter to Sherman, 14 September 1965.
if you announced you were an atheist, particularly east of the mountains, your next evaluation would have found fault in your teaching or in your evaluation of student performance or something, and then put on probation and fired. I wasn’t courageous enough at the time to risk anything like that [laughs]. But by the mid 60s, I would have been. But again, I didn’t go around announcing it.  

As Deborah’s story suggests, atheist school teachers were considered especially abhorrent in the postwar years. In a letter to Marian Sherman, a Los Angeles math teacher also admitted that he kept his atheism hidden: “Your being able to speak out with out (sic) fear of losing your means of making a living was especially appreciated. There have been times when I have had to ‘hold my tongue’ for fear of losing my job. I have been a coward. But I had a family to think of. So you see I enjoy your acts vicariously.”  

Public school teachers encountered similar constraints north of the border. In 1962, a Victoria reporter interviewed a woman in the city about the atheism she shared with her husband; this woman, who was married to a public school teacher, “thought it wiser to remain anonymous for fear of possible unpleasant consequences.” The woman noted that when a local minister discovered that she and her husband were atheists, “His jaw literally fell open. He said he couldn’t believe it. ‘Your husband is a teacher,’ he said. ‘He is teaching young children. I have to report this.’” On both sides of the border, atheist teachers drew particular concern because, like parents, they were responsible for turning children into well-adjusted citizens. Canadian historian Mona Gleason argues that teachers were the focus of much concern in the postwar era because they were seen as central to reproducing the “ideals, values, and priorities of a particular Canada: white, middle class, heterosexual, and patriarchal” - and, I would add,

122 Sanders interview.
124 Colonist, 16 December 1962, 1-2; 6 January 1963, 10; and 29 December 1962, 1.
Christian. As one BC writer noted in 1962, people worried that atheist teachers might “unconsciously sow a grain of doubt in religious faith in the receptive minds of their pupils.” Although atheist teachers in the Northwest faced considerable pressure to keep their unbelief hidden, such pressures may have been somewhat tempered in this religiously uninvolved region. Sociologists Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge note that residents of the Pacific region were, in fact, more accepting of atheist high school teachers than their counterparts in other regions.

While unbelieving school teachers were judged especially harshly, atheism carried risks for most sections of the middle class. In a 1964 article titled “No Jobs for Atheists,” the *Progressive World* complained that the House of Representatives had made it legal “to refuse to hire and employ any person because of such person’s atheistic practices and beliefs.” According to Alice, a Seattle informant, American civil servants have felt compelled to keep silent about their atheism: “there’s kind of an unwritten law in this country, no atheists need apply for a government job. Now, they have government jobs, there’s no question about it, but you do keep your mouth shut.” The oral evidence suggests that working-class Northwesterners were at least somewhat less compelled to ‘keep their mouth shut’ when it came to atheism. Henry Davidson regularly discussed his atheist views with his colleagues at a Nanaimo pulp mill, most who were not professed atheists. Frank, a longshoreman in Seattle, was also comfortable discussing his atheism at work. Frank suspected that most of his colleagues were at least

126 *Colonist*, 28 December 1962, 1.
129 Miller interview.
nominally Christian, but admitted, “if you were to poll longshoremen, you’d probably find a higher percentage of atheists than you would among the general population.”

Henry, Frank, and other working-class Northwesterners were subject to wider social constraints around atheism. However, they did seem to be less at risk of losing their jobs than people in certain middle-class professions.

Certainly, some middle-class Northwesterners openly defied convention and publicly ascribed to atheism. Those seeking a more organized outlet for their atheism could join one of the many Secular Humanist organizations in the area. In these years, the American Humanist Association worried that it was projecting the image of a “very small, select and aloof intellectual club.” Canadian Humanists expressed similar concerns: “Humanism becomes meaningless if it is held to be an elitist philosophy or understandable only by the university graduate.” Despite efforts to broaden their appeal, Humanist associations in the Northwest and beyond drew support mainly from the middle and upper middle classes. University professors were particularly attracted to such organizations. While certain elements of the middle classes faced intense social pressures against atheism, others - such as university professors - were freer to challenge middle-class norms of religiosity. In 1951, an American Episcopalian journal remarked: “Many of our clergy are doing an heroic job in the face of the almost insurmountable barriers of hostility and indifference toward religion in the part of faculty and administration.”

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130 Davidson interview; and Williams interview.
133 Forth, September 1951, 13.
“Are Our Universities Irreligious?,” and “Is the Church Losing Out on Campus?” One church paper affirmed that university administrators and professors were “as ignorant about religion as children.” Charles Moore, who worked as a professor at the University of Washington, summed up the feelings of his colleagues toward religion and the church: “University people didn’t give a crap, they really didn’t.”

Alice, once a member of the Seattle Humanist Association, reflected on the financial situation of American Humanists:

I think the reason why they’re as wealthy as they are - probably the 6000 members today of the American Humanist Association on the national level, the ones that join the national organization - I would vouch that education, income, and age, they’re in the upper categories of any institution remotely similar to it. We once counted the number of Ph.D.s and there are more than there are members. And that sort of thing. Most of them are retired. And those that aren’t are making 6 or more figures.

A 1962 survey of the American Humanist Association confirmed the primarily upper-middle-class character of this group. The survey found that close to 80% of Humanist members were professionals, mainly in the fields of science, business, education, and medicine. Regardless of their religious or irreligious identities, the working classes were certainly not drawn to organized secularism. Secular Humanism appeared to hold particular appeal among upper-middle-class professionals; the role of Humanist groups as spaces of middle-class culture deserves further study. Perhaps part of the appeal of such groups lay in their use of the more socially tolerable identity of ‘Humanist,’ as opposed to the more controversial ‘atheist.’ Humanist groups did not appear to be any more or less

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134 Canadian Churchman, 2 April 1953, 112; and Presbyterian Record, February 1963, 4.
135 Living Church, 25 June 1950, 13.
136 Moore interview.
137 Miller interview.
138 UWM, Stuart Carter Dodd Papers (hereafter SCD), Acc.1686-71-12, Box 3, File: Humanist Association Correspondence, 1963, “Who Are These Humanists,” Edwin Wilson, Exec. Director, AHA.
popular in this region, than in others. This is not surprising, as secularism was somewhat less tied to elite, professional groups in the Northwest than elsewhere. The Victoria Humanist Fellowship, one of the main such groups in the Canadian context, recorded a membership of 20 in 1959, and 39 a decade later.\footnote{BCA, MNS, Box 1, File: Victoria Humanist Fellowship: Notes, Minutes, Correspondence, ca.1957-1964, Executive Minutes Book, 26 July 1959; Box 3, File: File: Victoria Humanist Fellowship: Correspondence, Minutes, 1969, “VHF: List of Members in the Victoria Area.”} While not representative of the Northwest’s everyday irreligion, Secular Humanism constituted one of the main organized outlets for middle-class atheism in the region.

Given the silence around atheism, the number of unbelievers in this region was likely higher than the available figures suggest; nonetheless, the fact remains that the majority of Northwesterners were neither professed Humanists nor atheists. What part, then, did religious belief play in the lives of people in this region? Should these people be characterized as “secular but spiritual,” as some scholars have argued?\footnote{Mark Shibley, “Secular but Spiritual.”} Certainly, the oral narratives reveal that even the most ardent of atheists encountered, and sometimes engaged, the sacred in the context of their personal lives. For these highly secular people, such encounters often occurred in times of crisis, particularly those relating to illness and death.\footnote{See Robert Orsi, “Everyday Miracles,” 9.} Edward, an unbeliever who had never prayed, felt compelled to do so for his dying wife: “there was one bit of funny thing happened before [wife] died. She wanted me to pray for her. And I said, ‘well, I think you know how I feel about this’. And she said ‘yes, but would you do that for me?’ And so, I did.”\footnote{Lewis interview.} For many of my informants, extended periods of detachment from the sacred were punctuated by moments of prayer for ailing family members. For Robert Taylor, prayer was
something broached only in relation to family crises: “Obviously when my mother was ill, I said silent prayers for her. Same with my brother, when he died in ’49.”

Likewise, Sylvia’s efforts to come to terms with family illnesses had spurred sporadic prayers through her life: “My husband was very ill, and you wonder why is this happening and what am I supposed to do. And when my mother was ill, it was a very painful cancer, and then she got shingles on top of it, and for her last 2 years she was in pain every day, and I prayed for her to die.” Some, though certainly not all, of my informants drew intermittently on prayer in times of crisis. James admitted that, while he considered himself to be non-spiritual, he reflexively fell back on prayer in certain moments: “when there’s danger on the road, for example. If we get into a car accident, the first thing we say is ‘oh good Lord.’ Or God save me from this, or save me from that. We all utter those same words, even though we’re not religious.”

Religious, sporadic moments of prayer, usually tied to crises, punctuate many of the life narratives in this study. Such moments remind us that the boundary between sacred and secular was often blurred in ordinary human experience.

Religion in the Northwest is only partly explained by the “secular but spiritual” interpretation. Certainly, there were many people in this region who rejected organized religion but were spiritual, religious, or believing. My research points, however, to the presence of another group in this region that was at least as significant as the ‘secular but spiritual.’ These were the ‘secular but ambivalent’ - people who clearly rejected

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143 Taylor interview.
144 Henderson interview.
organized religion but were highly ambivalent about personal religion. This ambivalence is reflected in the following excerpt from my conversation with Beverly:

Interviewer: Would you consider yourself to be spiritual at all?
Beverly: No, I don’t think I would consider myself spiritual in any way.
Interviewer: Would you consider yourself an atheist?
Beverly: Well, no, I wouldn’t probably say I was an atheist but I’m just... I’m not religious, you know.
Interviewer: Do you believe there’s a god?
Beverly: Well, I suppose I do, but at the same time I can’t see that there is... [trails off].

Such mixed reflections on personal religious beliefs echoed through many of the narratives. Unwilling to call themselves atheists, yet ambivalent about their religious beliefs and disinterested in the spiritual, people such as Beverly have slipped through the theoretical cracks in studies of this region’s religious culture. We must widen our framework to capture not only the atheistic and the spiritual, but also the many who were neither. Such a framework would make room for people like Donna Tremblay who claimed: “I’m not exactly an atheist. I don’t believe in organized religions. But, I don’t know, sometimes I think there’s something, and sometimes not.” It would make room for the many people who carved out secular identities that balanced on, but did not transcend, the social boundary of atheism. Although they defy easy categorization, people who were ‘secular but ambivalent’ represent the complex, indeterminate character of popular, everyday secularism in the postwar Northwest.

Northwest secularism was far more broadly dispersed than church leaders suspected. Although it had a strong working class component, this secularism was not

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146 A number of scholars have identified ambivalence and ambiguity as key characteristics of popular religious cultures. See, for example, David Hall, Worlds of Wonder, 3-4; and Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 290-295.
147 Wilson interview.
148 Tremblay interview.
exclusively anchored to any group or place within this region. Northwest irreligion was loosely bound by certain well-understood practices, norms, and parameters. It was characterized, on the one hand, by a generalized indifference and antagonism towards organized religion, and on the other, by deep ambivalences and contestations around personal religion. This broad conceptual framework captures the contours of this secular culture, but it also makes room for the inevitable muddiness that characterizes human experience in the realm of religion. It makes room, not only for the multiple ways of being secular in this region, but also for those occasional encounters, compelled and otherwise, with the sacred. Within this wider framework, Northwest irreligion was lived and experienced differently according to class, race, and other categories of social identity. As we shall see in the following chapter, gender, like class and race, could define and delimit secular possibilities. At the same time, people from all social locations created, and helped to define, the boundaries of this secularism. This was a secularism not bound to any coherent doctrine or institution, but rather one made by ordinary people in relation to the ongoing, complicated, and mundane experiences of their everyday lives.
Chapter 4: Ungodly Women, Impious Men: Gender, Religion, and Region

Born in 1892, Dr. Marian Sherman gave many years of service to the Anglican Church, working as a medical missionary in India and then as an active member of St. George’s Anglican Church in Victoria, British Columbia. Marian’s days as a dedicated churchwoman and “soft-spoken Anglican” came to an end one “lovely bright morning” in 1946.1 As she gazed out the window of her Victoria home and prayed quietly to herself, Marian was suddenly “struck” by the thought that “there really was no personal God.”2 Enthusiastic about her newfound atheism, Marian actively encouraged those around her - family members, neighbours, other church members, and even Anglican clergymen - to question their established beliefs. Marian’s “wrong-way conversion” was not warmly received - the vicar of St. George’s instructed her to stay away from the church, the church’s Women’s Association demanded her resignation as president, and her family members whispered “about psychiatrists and long rest cures.”3 Despite such opposition, Marian remained an ardent unbeliever and went on to become, in the words of one journalist, the “No.1 atheist in the west” until her death in 1975.4

In 1965, the Star Weekly introduced a feature on Marian’s life as the “unusual story of one militant non-believer.”5 Marian was unusually militant, but she was not alone in her unbelief or in her disdain for organized religion, especially in the relatively secular Pacific Northwest. While Marian was not uniquely secular, particularly within

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3 Star Weekly, 11 September 1965, 6; and BCA, MNS, MS-0409, Box 1, File: Correspondence, Clippings ca. 1947-1949, untitled note, no date.
this regional context, she did contravene normative ideas about who was typically
irreligious, in the Northwest and beyond. The responses to Marian’s irreverent
behaviour, both at the time of her ‘deconversion’\(^6\) and in later years, had much to do with
gender. Gender assumptions are apparent in the 1965 *Star Weekly* article, which
observed that Marian “looks like someone’s sweet gray-haired grandmother - which she
is, though she certainly doesn’t sound like one.”\(^7\) In the postwar social imaginary,
militant atheism was largely the province of rebellious young men, not ‘sweet gray-
haired grandmothers.’

Marian Sherman’s story, and the response to it, provides a useful point of
departure to explore the gender dimensions of secularism in the postwar Northwest.
Marian was perceived as unusual, in part, because of deep-rooted gender assumptions
about the inherent piety of women. Such assumptions also help to explain why women
were rarely taken seriously as agents of secularism in the postwar world. This chapter
explores how gender shaped the construction, and the lived experience, of secularism in
the Northwest and beyond. The secularity of the Pacific Northwest cannot be attributed
to a peculiar demography of gender in this region, as males consistently outnumbered
females in the non-religious population of both region and nation. At the same time, in
the Northwest, both women and men were more apt to be secular, or religiously
indifferent, than their counterparts elsewhere. While both women and men produced and
sustained this regional secular culture, gender influenced how secularism was
approached, defined, and practiced by individuals in official and everyday domains.

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\(^6\) Karen Morrison, a self-described ‘militant atheist’ in Port Angeles, Washington, introduced me to the
(invented) term ‘deconversion’ during our personal interview.
\(^7\) *Star Weekly*, 11 September 1965, 7.
The postwar years have drawn increasing attention from historians of gender, but the gender dimensions of religion in this era have been largely overlooked. To date, scholarship that addresses gender and religion in the Pacific Northwest has centred mainly on women’s Christian mission work in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There is a growing body of excellent work on the religious lives of ordinary women, but so far this literature has passed over the Pacific Northwest. While we have much to learn about virtually all aspects of women’s history in the Pacific Northwest, research has been especially scarce on the experiences of average women, and on the second half of the twentieth century. Women rarely figure in the extensive studies of secularization on both sides of the border, which focus mainly on the secularizing influence of male cultural and religious leaders. Although men are clearly present in the historiography of secularization and of the Pacific Northwest, the ways in which gender framed and defined men’s experiences within these contexts has been neglected. We know little about the intersections between masculinity and secularity in the postwar world, and still less about what it meant for ordinary men to reject or ignore religion.

This chapter explores the interplay of gender and region in the construction and practice of secularism in the postwar Northwest. It probes everyday understandings of religion as a lens on broader gender ideals and relations in the postwar era. Women and men shared in creating the unique secularism of this region, but their experience of this

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8 For studies on gender in the postwar era, see Joy Parr ed., A Diversity of Women; and Joanne Meyerowitz ed., Not June Cleaver. For an important exception, see the articles on postwar Canada in Nancy Christie ed., Households of Faith. For studies of women missionaries in the Northwest, see Myra Rutherdale, Women and the White Man’s God; and Julie Roy Jeffrey, Converting the West.

9 For two excellent historical studies of women’s religious subjectivities see Robert Orsi, Thank You, St. Jude; and R. Marie Griffith, God’s Daughters.

secularism was distinctly gendered. Normative assumptions about female religiosity and male impiety were reproduced in official and everyday circles. Such assumptions framed, although they did not determine, how secularism was lived in the postwar world. In the Pacific Northwest, masculine and regional norms of religious indifference were mutually reinforcing, making this a place where male secularity was prevalent and, in many ways, expected. By contrast, Northwest women encountered contradictory regional and gender norms: part of a regional culture that was strikingly secular in terms of religious practice, these women were also subject to wider expectations of feminine piety. While a small number of Northwest women, like Marian Sherman, boldly defied gender conventions and became outspoken atheists, many more subtly challenged such conventions through their religious indifference and avoidance of the churches. As this chapter will reveal, both women and men in the Northwest carved out complex secular identities in relation to wider gender ideals, regional norms, and personal impulses.

Scholars and cultural observers have long recognized the significance of gender to religious practice. In North America, women are (and have historically been) more likely to claim religious beliefs, and to engage in religious practices, than men. This gender gap has remained remarkably consistent across time and space, and was certainly evident in the postwar Pacific Northwest. While this fascinating phenomenon has rightfully captured the attention of researchers, it has also served to draw focus away from those women who had little to do with religion and/or religious institutions. Despite the impression given by postwar church leaders, Northwest women did not sit passively by in the pews while men alone produced this region’s secular culture.

Although men greatly outnumbered women in the nineteenth-century West, by
the post-WWII decades this gender imbalance had largely disappeared in both
Washington and British Columbia. The relative secularity of the postwar Northwest,
then, cannot be attributed to a preponderance of men in this region. In the absence of
census or other cross-tabulated data on religion in postwar America, it is not possible to
precisely calculate the sex-ratio of the religiously affiliated in Washington State. At the
national level, it is clear that despite wider fluctuations in rates of religious activity, the
gender gap in religious participation has remained remarkably stable in America.
Survey statistics indicate that women have consistently outnumbered men in the church
pews. According to the American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO), 44% of women
and 34% of men attended church in 1950, 55% of women and 45% of men in 1959, 51%
of women and 41% of men in 1963, and 48% of women and 39% of men in 1968. A
similar gender gap is evident in surveys of other religious practices, including church
membership, prayer, Bible reading, and the importance placed on religion in daily life.
Men were also (somewhat) less likely than women to profess belief: in 1968, Gallup
reported that 2% of men, and 1% of women, claimed not to believe in a God. The
available American statistics point to a persistent gender gap in all religious activities,

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12 See Census of Canada, Vol.1, Part 3, Bulletin 3, Table 10 (1971); and 1970 Census of Population,
14 Greeley notes that “intensive analysis of the relationship between religion and other variables became
practical only with the institution of the annual NORC General Social Survey.”
15 See Norval Glenn, “The Trend,” 304; George Gallup and Jim Castelli, The People’s Religion, 50-51; and
Jackson Carroll et.al., Religion in America, 21.
16 George Gallup, The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 902, 1585, 1856, and 2173. The statistics also indicate
that both women and men were responsible for the dramatic rise in church attendance that occurred during
the 1950s.
17 Gallup Organization, Religion in America, 22, 45; Gallup Opinion Index 70 (1971), 49, 52; and Martin
Marty, What Do We Believe?, 184, 230, 236, and 276.
18 Gallup Opinion Index 44 (1969), 15. Also see, Martin Marty, What Do We Believe?, 216.
and across different age groups and education levels. The resilience of this gender gap suggests, on the one hand, that sex differences do not account for shifting levels of religious practice, and on the other, that both women and men have directed religious (and secular) change in America.

Men were not solely responsible for shaping the secularity of Washington State. Indeed, in many cases, those counties with the lowest proportion of women also had the highest rates of church membership. A 1945 WNICC survey in King County found that women made up approximately 60% of church members in this sub-region. Given that many men were away in the armed forces in 1945, it is likely that the difference between male and female membership rates lessened over time. However, with such strikingly low levels of religious involvement in Washington State, even if women continued to make up 60% of total church members in this district through the postwar era, they were still much less likely to join churches than women in other regions. National polls on religious preference also point to the significance of both women and men to secularism in the American West. An analysis of 10 Gallup surveys conducted in 1970 revealed little variation in the sex-ratio of the ‘no formal religion’ population across the US (see table 42). The no formal religion population was made up of 70% males and 30% females in the West, and 69% males and 31% females in the US. The same analysis also found that both women and men in the West were twice as likely as their counterparts elsewhere to profess no formal religion. In 1970, 4% of women in the West claimed ‘no

18 Samuel Mueller and Angela Lane, “Tabulations,” 84; and Gallup Opinion Index 70 (1971), 63-65, 76, and 79-81.
formal religion,' compared to 2% nationwide, and 10% of men in the West claimed 'no
formal religion,' as compared to 5% in the US (see table 5). Clearly, men alone did not
determine the secularity of the American West.

In the Canadian context, males have consistently outnumbered females in the
census 'no religion' population in Canada and BC through the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{21}
National surveys also reveal a persistent gender division in other areas of religion in
Canada, including church membership and attendance, belief, and private prayer.\textsuperscript{22}
While women were (and are) more religious than men in Canada, both women and men
in BC were (and are) more secular than their counterparts in other provinces. The
Canadian census reveals uniquely high levels of no religion among both females and
males in BC. In 1951, 3% of males in British Columbia claimed that they had 'no
religion' as compared to 0.6% nationwide, and 1.3% of females in BC claimed 'no
religion' as compared to only 0.3% nationally (see table 43). In other words, while males
in both BC and Canada were approximately twice as likely as females to say they had 'no
religion,' women in BC were still over four times more likely to claim 'no religion' than
their counterparts elsewhere in Canada. In 1971, 15.4% of males in BC said they had 'no
religion' as compared to 11.0% of females; at the same time, both males and females in
BC were approximately three times more likely to say they had 'no religion' than their
counterparts nationwide (see table 44).

Clearly, the relative secularity of postwar BC cannot be treated as an exclusively
male phenomenon. The Canadian census indicates that the sex-ratio of the 'no religion'

\textsuperscript{21} Census of Canada, 1901-1991. Also see J.E. Veevers and D.F. Cousineau, "The Heathen Canadians,"
204.
\textsuperscript{22} DLRC, Report of a Survey, 14, 15; CIPO, Gallup Report, 15 January 1969, 1; Hans Mol, "Major
Correlates," 244-245; and Bruce Mitchell, "The Geography of Irreligion," 97.
population was remarkably similar in both BC and Canada through the postwar era. In 1951, the no religion group was 29.2% female and 70.8% male in BC, 31.6% female and 68.4% male in Ontario, and 30.8% female and 69.3% male nation-wide (see table 45). By 1971, females made up 41% of the ‘no religion’ population in BC, 39% in Ontario, and 40% in Canada (see table 46). Interestingly, the gender gap in Canada’s ‘no religion’ population narrowed over this period; in all parts of the country, the female proportion of the no religion group, which was approximately 30% in 1951, increased to about 40% in 1971. In 1951, males in BC were 2.3 times more likely than females to claim that they had no religion, and by 1971 they were only 1.4 times as likely. The national pattern is similar: in 1951, males in Canada were 2 times more apt to claim they had no religion than females, and by 1971 they were about 1.5 times as likely. Over the postwar decades, the female non-religious population grew at a greater rate than its male counterpart, lessening the gender imbalance among (professedly) secular Canadians. Although this phenomenon does not explain the unique secularity of BC, it does underscore the significance of women to secularism in postwar Canada.

The 1971 census reveals that males consistently outnumbered females in the ‘no religion’ population across all age and ethnic groups in Canada (see tables 47-50). Scholars have demonstrated the significance of age to religious affiliation and participation. Generally, the proportion of the population claiming ‘no religion’ tends to be smaller among older age groups. In 1971, males and females between the ages of 20 and 34 in Canada were the most likely to claim no religion, whereas those over 70 years of age were the least likely (see tables 47 and 48). In every age group, British Columbians were far more likely than their counterparts in other provinces to claim that
they had no religion. Even those over 70 years of age in BC were approximately three times more likely than their national counterparts to select 'no religion' on the enumeration form: 10.4% of BC males in the 70+ age group claimed no religion, as compared to 3.6% nation-wide; 3.9% of BC females aged 70 and over claimed no religion, as compared to 1.2% nationally. "Sweet, gray-haired grandmothers" certainly did not dominate BC's non-religious population. However, grandmothers in British Columbia - like women and men of all age groups in this province - were far more secular than their counterparts in other provinces.

The 1971 census indicates that females were less prevalent than males in the 'no religion' population of all ethnic groups in Canada (see tables 49 and 50). Males of most ethnicities in both BC and Canada were approximately 1.5 times more likely to claim that they had no religion than female counterparts. Interestingly, the gender gap is relatively narrow in the 'Asian Groups' and 'Indian and Eskimo' categories: 38.6% of Asian males in BC claimed to have no religion, compared to 36% of females, and 4.4% of aboriginal males in BC claimed no religion, compared to 4.1% of females. In the absence of perspectives from people within these groups themselves, it is difficult to determine the nature and meanings of this distinct gender pattern. Perhaps this difference hints at the existence within these groups of unique meanings of gender and religion. Certainly, this phenomenon underscores the fact that we should not take the norms and practices discussed in this chapter, which are drawn largely from white, Anglo-Celtic writings and narratives, to represent those of all ethnic groups in the postwar Northwest. Apart from certain variances, all ethnic groups sustained BC's distinct secularity (see tables 49 and 50). BC men and women of all ethnicities were far more likely to profess no religion
than their counterparts elsewhere in the nation. For instance, a female in British Columbia who claimed to be of French origin was 10.5 times more likely to claim no religion than her counterparts nationally, while a male who claimed to be of French origin was 8.8 times more likely to select ‘no religion’ than his counterparts nationwide.\footnote{The statistics on ethnic origins in the Census of Canada should not be confused with those on mother-tongue. Those who claimed to be of “French origins” were descendents of French Europeans – they were not necessarily Francophones.} Likewise, a BC female of British origin was 2.4 times more likely to profess no religion than other British Canadian females, while a BC male of the same ethnicity was 2.3 times more apt to claim no religion than his counterparts across Canada.

The available statistical evidence indicates that on both sides of the border, secularism was fashioned by both women and men. Contemporary observers, like present-day scholars, overlooked the part played by women in secularizing this region. As we have seen, postwar religious and cultural commentators repeatedly attributed the relative secularity of the Northwest to this region’s frontier characteristics. Given that white women appear mainly as the bearers of civilized, pious society in (past and present) frontier discourse, it is not surprising that they have rarely been seen as secularizing agents in their own right.\footnote{On the construction of white women as the bearers of civilized, pious society in the west see, for example, Peggy Pascoe, \textit{Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). In Canada, see Adele Perry, \textit{On the Edge of Empire}.} The gendered meanings of religion ensured that men would bear most of the blame for Northwest irreligion. Through the postwar decades, Christian leaders nervously contemplated questions such as: “How often do men pray?,” “Is Christianity a Man’s Religion?,” and “Does the church present a female image?”\footnote{UWM, WNICC, Box 17, File: United Church Men, “Speakers Manual: 22\textsuperscript{nd} Annual Observance of Men and Missions Day,” 12 October 1952; and \textit{Presbyterian Record}, May 1957, 8-9; April 1966, 20-22.} Anxious assertions of Christianity’s masculine character were common in this era.
“Being a Christian,” observed the guest editor of the Nanaimo Free Press in 1960, “is no sissy thing fit only for old women and little children, for tea meetings and Sunday school. It is a battle from day to day against fearful foes.”26 In their efforts to redefine religious practice as manly, church and cultural observers betrayed, and paradoxically reaffirmed, the feminized connotations of Christianity in the postwar social imaginary.27

As in earlier years, in the postwar decades Christian leaders, both in the Northwest and nationwide, poured a great deal of energy into the “task of interesting more men in the church.”28 In 1950, an American Congregationalist minister observed that a “few churches are noteworthy because they do have more men or as many men at church on Sunday morning as women. These churches excite the envy of visiting ministers.”29 This telling comment reflects the persistent tendency on the part of Christian leaders to privilege men’s participation in the churches.30 The mark of a thriving, envy-inspiring church, according to this minister, was a membership made up largely of men. In both Canada and America, church leaders remained preoccupied with men’s relative absence from the churches. Ongoing discussions about the “unfortunate” and “sad but true” fact of women’s predominance in the churches at once devalued women’s religious participation and blinded contemporary observers to those women who abjured religious practice.31 While it appears that women’s involvement in the

27 The feminization of Christianity has been well documented, particularly in the context of nineteenth-century America. For a seminal work, see Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Knopf, 1977). For a discussion on the gender meanings of religion in twentieth-century Canada, see Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, A Full-Orbed Christianity, 96-98.
29 UWM, WNICC, Acc.1567-02, Box 17, File: Laymen’s Committee, Advance, July 1950, 18.
30 Ann Braude, “Women’s History is American Religious History,” 104.
churches was simply ignored, it is perhaps more accurate to argue that it was so deeply
taken for granted as to escape notice. Assumptions about women's innate piety and
proclivity for churchgoing, and about men's inherent indifference to religion, formed part
of the wider field of gender expectations in the postwar world. Women and men in BC
and Washington staked out secular identities in relation to, and occasionally against, such
gender expectations.

Ordinary people in the Pacific Northwest, like cultural and church officials,
viewed religion through the lens of gender. The forty-four interviewees in this study
have varying family histories, personal identities, and secular pasts. For all their
differences, however, my informants reproduced remarkably shared perspectives on the
gender dimensions of religious belief and practice. In discussing the relationship of men
and women to religion in the postwar world, most interviewees referred matter-of-factly
to female religiosity and male impiety. Beverly Wilson echoed her contemporaries when
she remarked that women "are more religious than men, I think. In most places the
women will go to church while the men don't go." 32 Brian Clark recalled that growing
up in Olympia, girls "were much more openly, usually, Christian"; James Anderson of
Vancouver likewise reflected that "girls were much more religious than the boys were." 33
Sharon, a long-time unbeliever, matter-of-factly stated that women were (and are)
"definitely more religious than men." 34 Women were understood to possess a greater
capacity than men for spiritual understanding. As Richard observed: "I think women
have an easier time with spirituality...I think it's easier for them to adapt to the

32 Wilson interview.
33 Clark interview; and Anderson interview.
34 Davis interview.
mystery.”

My informants took for granted that churchgoing was a female activity: “Going to church,” affirmed one interviewee, “seemed to be a woman’s thing.” In the postwar era, spiritual practice was constructed as fundamentally a “woman’s thing.”

In pointing to womanly piety, the individuals in this study drew upon deeply ingrained gender understandings of religion. Those who had never stepped foot in a church themselves nonetheless knew the pews to be filled mainly with women; those who had rarely discussed prayer or belief with their friends or colleagues nevertheless knew spirituality to be a female domain. Gendered views of religion did not centre exclusively on women. Essentialist ideas regarding male religious indifference regularly surfaced in the oral narratives. When asked to explain why he felt men were less religious than women, Charles Moore, a retired university professor in Seattle, responded: “I think a lot of men who are non-cerebral haven’t really thought about it. A lot of them are non-religious because they probably find it non-macho, and they would never, ever admit that they had help from the local minister, or the priest.”

Donald, who worked as a real estate agent through the postwar era, invoked a similar explanation for male secularity: “I don’t think men would necessarily take the same approach as women. A man isn’t going to talk over his personal problems with a priest very well. You know, he might, but he’s more likely to talk it over with a chum in a bar, or something [laughs].”

Charles and Donald called upon the masculine ideal of independence to explain men’s avoidance of the churches. Donald’s wife Jean likewise hinted at men’s discomfort with the dependent

35 Petersen interview.
36 Ferguson interview.
37 Moore interview.
38 Stewart interview.
elements of religion: "priests always say, you know, you have to give yourself to God. And I think men, maybe, have a more difficult time with that."  

According to my informants, men were repelled by the dependent elements of religion, but they were also drawn towards a range of manly (and secular) business and leisure activities that left little time for the sacred. James recalled that during his childhood, boys were less religiously involved than girls because they were "mostly interested in outdoor activities, in sports and things like that, you know."  

Margaret echoed others when she placed the blame for male secularity on paid work: "I think maybe men if they're out in the business world, aren't quite as tuned into some of the things as women are." In these narratives, comments about the religious (and secular) sensibilities of men usually opened into wider discussions about masculine expectations in the postwar world. For instance, Brian's insights regarding male religious indifference flowed into a discussion about pervasive gender norms in the postwar era: "I think there might very well have been much more pressure on [girls] to conform. Guys were freer to be, you know, guys - boys will be boys. A bit of hell-raising was encouraged, a bit of running about or running amok was not at all considered bad. And the girls were to be nice girls."  

Like Brian, several interviewees described a postwar gender culture that required greater conformity, religious and otherwise, from women than men. As the conventional idiom 'boys will be boys' suggests, males were expected, if not subtly encouraged, to opt for profanity over piety. As one woman tellingly quipped, men were

39 Stewart interview.  
40 Anderson interview.  
41 Ferguson interview.  
42 Clark interview.
less religious “because there was so much fun going on.”\textsuperscript{43} According to the people in this study, men were more likely than women to ignore or reject religion in the postwar decades because they were under little pressure to do otherwise.

Regardless of their own feelings about religion, my informants presented men’s greater secularity as part of their commonsense social knowledge. In this, they were influenced not only by wider cultural ideals, but also often by personal family histories. Twenty-six of the forty-four people interviewed for this study recalled their mothers as religious, whereas only thirteen used that term to describe their fathers. Only two individuals claimed to have grown up with a religious father and non-religious mother; by contrast, fifteen described having a religious mother and a non-religious father. In the oral interviews, people depicted their parents’ religious sensibilities in ways that conformed to normative gender patterns.\textsuperscript{44} Many recalled their father’s (often limited) religious involvement as something motivated, not by personal piety, but by their mothers. Larry attributed his father’s occasional churchgoing to his mother: “[my father] was never really religious, he just went along with the program.” According to Larry, his father was “religious, I think, just by default.”\textsuperscript{45} The idea that many men were religious “by default” echoed through the oral testimonies. Donald reflected: “I think my dad was like me. He used to go to church on Easter, a couple of times a year, maybe, because of my mother - because of her. But, I think he felt the same way I did that this was it, right here, right now, today.”\textsuperscript{46} A few informants remembered their fathers being openly hostile towards religion, particularly in its organized form. More often, however, the

\textsuperscript{43} McCallum interview.
\textsuperscript{44} Reginald Bibby, \textit{Fragmented Gods}, 100. Bibby also found that Canadians in the 1970s and 1980s typically identified their mothers as more religious than their fathers.
\textsuperscript{45} Allen interview.
\textsuperscript{46} Stewart interview.
interviewees struggled to recall precisely how their fathers felt about religion. Fathers were often described as not at all "churchy," and, in contrast to (most) mothers, as rather indifferent to religion.\footnote{Brown interview; and Anderson interview.} Charles echoed others when he remarked that he “never heard [his father] talk about [religion].”\footnote{Moore interview.} David similarly commented: “I had never heard that [my father] was enthusiastic about religious attendance or indulgence”; another woman reflected: “I can’t remember my father going to church.”\footnote{Becker interview; and Henderson interview.} In these life stories, memories of fathers’ religious feelings appear more hazy and indistinct than those of mothers. This is not surprising, as my informants grew up in a gender culture that made mothers largely responsible for the religious lives of children.

In the postwar culture, male indifference to the church fell within the realm of normative masculine behaviour and, interestingly, often served as a source for humour. As we saw in Chapter 2, even the churches themselves played upon the comic nature of masculine irreverence. Nanaimo resident Jean Stewart recalled that in the postwar decades, there “were always jokes about people falling asleep in church.”\footnote{Stewart interview.} My research suggests that such jokes were distinctly gendered. In a 1964 edition of the \textit{Canadian Churchman}, a cartoon portrayed a congregation in which wives glared at their impassive, yawning husbands; the cartoon depicted one woman rebuking her husband: “It’s bad enough snoozing, but yelling out ‘Fore!’ in your sleep...well!!.”\footnote{\textit{Canadian Churchman}, May 1964, 4.} Cartoons such as these that were meant to admonish men for their impiety, also helped to convey and entrench cultural perceptions of male religious disinterest as both typical and humorous. Such perceptions were not isolated to official or elite sources, but rather were internalized
and reproduced by ordinary people. Personal, humorous memories of irreligious fathers punctuated many of the narratives in this study; while anecdotal on their own, taken together such memories hint at the taken for granted, even comic, nature of male religious apathy in the wider postwar world. Shirley Clark, who worked as a nurse and homemaker in postwar Olympia, reflected: "I think that my dad didn't believe in anything. He'd go to church with her because she liked to go to church, and she liked to sing - she had a lovely voice. But dad would sleep all through the sermon. And I thought that was great! [laughs]."\(^\text{52}\) Bill Wilson, a retired miner, similarly found humour in his father's tendency to fall asleep during worship services: "Well, my old man, he wouldn't go to church because my mother said that he went to sleep, and my mother had to poke him [laughs]."\(^\text{53}\) Several of my informants adopted a notably humorous tone when telling stories of religiously indifferent fathers. Edna laughed as she described her father's role in her religious upbringing: "My father would take us to church. He would not go, I mean he would not go inside, he'd stay outside...There were lots of men waiting outside, he wasn't the only one! [laughs] They probably had a craps game going [laughs]!"\(^\text{54}\) The historian Robert Rutherford argues that "personal pasts are simultaneously embedded in social pasts": memories that appear idiosyncratic within a single life story, take on wider cultural significance when they recur across several narratives.\(^\text{55}\) Playful, humorous memories of religiously indifferent fathers recur in this study's oral narratives. Such memories hint at the cultural acceptance of male secularity as predictable, and not to be taken too seriously.

\(^{52}\) Clark interview.

\(^{53}\) Wilson interview.

\(^{54}\) Simpson interview.

In the postwar world, religion was invested with certain gender meanings; assumptions of male religious indifference and female piety formed part of the commonsense social imaginary. Such gender expectations were learned and disseminated at both official and everyday levels, within ordinary families and the broader culture. Although similarly gendered across both nations, religion elicited regionally specific responses from women and men in the Pacific Northwest. In BC and Washington, regional and gender norms intersected to shape, in complex and sometimes unexpected ways, everyday approaches to religion. In the Northwest, manly ideals of independence and rationalism reinforced regional norms of religious detachment, making this a place where men’s indifference toward religion and the churches was expected, if not wholly sanctioned. On the other hand, Northwest women were compelled to navigate their way through conflicting social realms in their approach to religion. Part of a gender regime that assigned them primary responsibility for the sacred, these women also inhabited a region that attached relatively little social value to religious involvement. Faced with such contradictory expectations, most women marked out (complex and often unstable) secular identities in the middle ground between piety and indifference. To better understand this middle ground, and the nature of male religious indifference, it will be useful to examine how ordinary Northwest men and women understood and negotiated two dimensions of religious experience: organized religion and personal belief. These two dimensions, while clearly interrelated, embodied different kinds of meanings, and

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evoked different kinds of responses from my informants. A complex array of regional, gender, and spiritual meanings were brought to bear on everyday approaches to the churches and religious belief.

As we saw in Chapter 3, Northwest women and men shared in criticizing organized religion, and in sustaining a regional indifference towards church involvement. Attitudes toward the churches, however, had a gendered dimension. Historian Lynne Marks reveals that in late nineteenth-century Ontario, women outnumbered men in the pews, in part, because they had few alternative social outlets. Women enjoyed access to a far greater range of leisure options in the 1950s than in the 1890s. By the postwar decades, many women viewed the churches, not as spaces for rare social interaction, but as bastions of sexism. Muriel described her disdain for the churches:

I definitely am quite anti-church, and I base that on some of my friends who have had bad experiences with churches, who have had church leaders tell them terrible things, who go to ministers for help and they give them very bad advice. I think you’re better off going to your friends, who will give you good advice. And, I think I’m the first generation of women to be somewhat of a feminist...And I think I find churches to be male-dominated, which bothers me a great deal. I think in a lot of churches, the women do all the work, the women do all the volunteer work, and the men come and sit down and say ‘where’s the tea?’ [laughs].

Although few defined themselves as feminists, several women echoed Muriel’s complaints, and identified patriarchy as one of the chief reasons that they avoided the churches. Joanne and Sandra of Seattle never joined churches because they viewed institutional religion as irredeemably sexist. As Sandra observed: “Organized religions

57 Lynne Marks, Revivals and Roller Rinks, 29-30.
58 Muriel Thompson interview.
59 Muriel Thompson interview; Sato interview; Jones interview; Tremblay interview; Morrison interview; Miller interview; Simpson interview; and Smith interview. Veronica Strong-Boag, “Their Side of the Story: Women’s Voices from Ontario Suburbs, 1945-60,” in A Diversity of Women, 66-68. Strong-Boag conducted several interviews with women about their experiences of suburbia in the postwar years; she also found that women were reluctant to define themselves as feminists.
were incredibly sexist. They were incredibly sexist. They had a place for women that involved doing an enormous amount of the work, and having none of the say.”⁶⁰ While Joanne and Sandra never joined a church, several other women abandoned the church of their childhoods, in part, for feminist reasons. Edna, who had attended a Baptist church with her family as a child, refused to join as an adult: “I resented the fact that the church teaches you to obey your husband. And I had a husband that couldn’t keep a job. I lost respect for him, and there was no way I was going to obey him, you know!”⁶¹ Susan left the Mormon church as a teenager, in part, because “the treatment of women was as a third, fourth, fifth class person.” Susan, who assured me that she had never “burned her bra” or considered herself a feminist, deeply resented the church’s treatment of women: “I wanted more than that. I knew I was as smart as some of those men! [laughs]...I was tired of the church telling me I wasn’t worth anything. You’re a female, you need to do what you’re told.”⁶² Sharon, who had left the Catholic church of her youth, simply quipped: “I’ll belong to the Catholic church again when they make a woman the pope.”⁶³ Repelled by patriarchy, rather than drawn by social opportunity (like their nineteenth-century counterparts), many women in the postwar era chose to stay away from the churches.

While the perceived sexism of the churches kept some women from ever joining a congregation, it also provoked some within the church to leave. In the 1960s and 1970s, North American mainline leaders lamented the decline of women’s church work, which they attributed to an expansion in the female labour force and the emergent feminist

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⁶⁰ Smith interview; and Johnson interview.
⁶¹ Simpson interview.
⁶² Young interview.
⁶³ Davis interview. Also see Canadian Register, 12 August 1967, 7.
movement. 

Although this decline turned out to be less dramatic than church officials had feared, my research suggests that a number of women did leave their congregations during this time period due to a lack of recognition for their church work. Beverly related the story of a friend who, having devoted much of her time to a Protestant congregation over the years, left quite abruptly in the 1960s: “all of a sudden she decided that she was working her butt off for nothing for this outfit, so she quit! She never went back to church!” Like Beverly’s friend, Patricia Jones invested much of her time and energy in the Anglican church in Nanaimo over the years. In the 1960s, Patricia faced the prospect of being excluded, by virtue of her gender, from participating in a church financial committee: “I thought, well, if that’s the way they like it, I suppose I shan’t bother to raise any more money for them... I just thought, well that’s all the cakes I bake for them! [laughs].” When she learned that she was being restricted because she was a woman, Patricia abruptly left the church: “Having spent lots of my energy and time, ever since I was young, into these church things, I felt that I was being used. And I didn’t wish to continue with that, and figured that you have to sort out your own beliefs, and way of living, without having to conform to what some people have made up.”

Although Patricia did not frame her decision to leave the church in explicitly feminist terms, her decision nevertheless contributed to the growing postwar resistance to the patriarchy of organized religion. In 1970, an article in the United Church Observer anxiously assessed the feminist movement: “although this is primarily a secular

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65 Wilson interview.
66 Jones interview.
revolution, it is a particularly challenging one for the church...Although in the past the church has led in seeking freedom for the individual – male or female – the feminists today see the Church as one of the last bastions of male superiority.”  My research reveals that many women who did not call themselves feminists also viewed the churches as ‘bastions of male superiority.’ Although most of my female informants did not consider themselves to be part of the feminist movement, these women were nevertheless clearly repelled by the sexism of the churches. Many responded to this sexism by avoiding or leaving the churches in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. In so doing, Northwest women participated in the cultural and feminist critique of organized religion that grew through the postwar years, and that found wider voice in the second wave women’s movement that emerged in the late 1960s.  Although their challenge to organized religion was not regionally specific, women in the Northwest did voice their criticisms with little risk of social ostracism, from within communities that were comparatively indifferent to the churches.

In his study of Catholic devotions to St. Jude, Robert Orsi discovered “a real difference in affective tone between men’s and women’s descriptions of their encounters with Jude.”  Drawing on a range of oral and written narratives, Orsi reveals that women imagined Jude in far more passionate terms than their male counterparts. Interestingly, in this study secular women were also far more passionate than men in describing their relationship with, and rejection of, the churches. Men certainly shared in criticizing the

69 Robert Orsi, Thank You St. Jude, xii.
hypocrisy, and sometimes the sexism, of organized religion. Generally, however, men described the churches in more detached terms than women. For a striking number of men in this study, reference to the churches called up memories of heterosexual, rather than spiritual, relations. Charles admitted that his brief attendance at church was inspired by less than sacred reasons: “I went to church, primarily because the minister - I think it was Presbyterian - because I liked his daughter, she was a pretty girl. And then they brought in a new Presbyterian minister from Scotland, Reverend ***, and I told my mother I didn’t like him.”

For Richard, the church gradually became “irrelevant” as he acquired new means of meeting women: “I still did things with the church, because it was still a good place to meet girls - and one never throws that out. So, I went to church things until, I think until I got into high school, and then I had jobs that caused me to work on weekends, so church just didn’t fit in anymore. And I had a car, so I had other bait to troll for girls.”

Bill playfully recounted the churchgoing habits of a childhood friend in Dawson, Yukon Territory: “He tried to date pretty near every girl in Dawson. If he was trying to get friendly with a girl in the Church of England, St. Paul’s, he would go there. If he was trying to get friendly with a girl in the Presbyterian Church, he’d go there [laughs].”

Patrick, a retired bartender in Nanaimo, similarly established a brief relationship with the church for the purposes of heterosexual courtship: “I went to church one time when I was about 13 because the Smith sisters both were going to church, and I had a crush on one of them and so I went, so I had an ulterior motive [laughs]. Church had nothing to do with it!”

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70 Moore interview.
71 Petersen interview.
72 Wilson interview.
73 O’Connor interview.
with it” captures the nature of many men’s relationship with the churches in the postwar era. As scholars have shown, both women and men have sought and found opportunities for heterosexual courtship in the churches and other religious venues through history.  

The narratives in this study reveal a clear gendered discrepancy in this regard: the subject of heterososexual relations predominated in men’s, but not women’s, memories of the churches. In focusing on courtship, men conveyed both their deep detachment from the churches, and their understanding of the churches as feminine spaces.

Several men attributed their (sporadic) church involvement to their relationships with women in the context of marriage, as well as courtship. Port Angeles agnostic Gary Nelson, who long ago married a devout Catholic, reflected that he had occasionally attended worship services over the years because he was “dragged there” by his wife.

James related, in greater detail, a similar situation in his postwar household:

my wife was up at 8 o’clock every morning, and she’d make me breakfast or make me coffee or something, and a lot of times I would argue with her, she’d ask me if I’m going to church with her, and I’d say no, because I was a little lazy myself, I wanted to sleep in. So I said no. But there was a lot of times I did go to church with her, rather than have an argument, I kept the peace around the house. My wife wanted to drag me to church and make a good boy out of me. So I went to church with her on some Sundays...But I don’t think I went to church to pray, it was just part of the scene, I just stood there like the rest of the people. I don’t think I said any prayers, or anything like that...

Richard also endured the occasional worship service to please his wife: “every so often my wife would get all excited, ‘we ought to go to church because it’s Easter or Christmas’...I’d say, ‘okay sure’. Or, once in awhile, she’d get spun up, spring-time, spring-cleaning, let’s go to church. But it never stuck, so I just had to be patient, and it

74 See, for example, Lynne Marks, Revivals and Roller Rinks, 175-77.
75 Nelson interview.
76 Anderson interview.
would go away.”⁷⁷ In their narratives, men imparted and entrenched wider cultural assumptions of churchgoing as, fundamentally, a ‘woman’s thing.’ In constructing the churches as female spaces these men called upon gender meanings that were national rather than regional in focus. However, in the Northwest context, male indifference toward the churches was further buttressed by regional norms of detachment from organized religion.

According to historian Sarah Williams, “the language in which social memory is created...provides a medium through which to consider varieties in cultural symbolism, not only between individuals and groups but also between genders.”⁷⁸ The oral narratives in this study reveal a distinctly gendered dimension to the language of religious belief in the postwar world. Women were generally far more hesitant than men to voice their unbelief and, especially, to call themselves atheists. For women, to reject religion altogether meant to significantly transgress the bounds of both social convention and normative femininity. Although men were also subject to the cultural disapproval around unbelief, such disapproval was subtly mitigated by the masculine ideals of rationalism and independence. As we saw in Chapter 3, class was also important here; although working- and middle-class men negotiated competing class ideals, they were subject to shared gender norms of masculine impiety. Rahim, like many of my informants, referred matter-of-factly to men’s essentially rational (and thus less religious) nature:

I think it’s pretty universal that males have a more rational approach to religion than females. Females generally are more orthodox, and have a deeper belief, in a way, their belief is more spiritual, and they do not want to pollute it with rational thought. And males have no — generally, I’m not talking about all males — males

⁷⁷ Petersen interview.
⁷⁸ Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture, 20-21.
generally have no qualms in questioning things. Females are scared, and do not want to touch spiritual things.\(^79\)

David voiced similar presumptions of men’s more critical, questioning character: “I think a man is more apt to be critically analytical of all he hears about religion, and is maybe a little bolder to reject.”\(^80\) Also informed by the manly, rational ideal, Thomas, an atheist and retired lumber-worker, thoughtfully articulated how gender had informed his perspectives on religious belief:

> I felt it was less to be expected that a man would be religious, and be outwardly demonstrative of his religion than a woman would be. It would be...a man would be more apt to keep it to himself, I would expect, and if a man were outward I would be more uncomfortable with him. I could be more comfortable with a woman who was religious, than with a man who was religious, and who sort of wore it on his sleeve.

Thomas went on to admit that he expected men, but not women, to be intellectual, critical, and, ultimately, secular:

> I guess I tended...and this probably shows a little bit of sexism. I think I’ve always expected - I think I’ve experienced, until more recent times, that intellectual women were more unusual, more uncommon than intellectual men. You didn’t expect a woman to not, sort of, fit the mould of the times. You wouldn’t expect her to be intellectually bold enough to break new territory. And it was not uncommon, I think I felt, that a man, intellectually, would launch out on his own.\(^81\)

Thomas’s honest observation reveals much about postwar gender meanings in the realm of religion. For him, as for many of his contemporaries, atheist women, like religious men, confounded conventional gender expectations. Contrary to such expectations, many women in the Northwest were, indeed, ‘intellectually bold enough to break new secular territory’; however, entrenched gender norms meant that public admissions of atheism constituted not only a more difficult but a more subversive move for women, than men.

\(^79\) Rahim Ahmed, personal interview, 22 October 2003.
\(^80\) Becker interview.
\(^81\) Brown interview.
Both men and women constructed their religious (and secular) identities in relation to fixed ideas about the normalcy of belief. At the same time, decisions around belief and unbelief were deeply gendered. When asked about his (ir)religious identity, John Hartwich of Nanaimo replied: "I’m an atheist." Seattle resident Frank Williams asserted: "I would probably have defined myself as an atheist starting at my fifth birthday." Like John and Frank, several Northwest men, in their letters and oral narratives, simply and confidently identified themselves as atheists. Some of my male informants related incidences in which they had insisted on being identified as atheists when asked, for official purposes, to state their religious preference. Brian recalled that when his brother Andrew joined the military, he demanded that his dog tags bear the label ‘atheist,’ as opposed to the more acceptable ‘no preference.’ According to Brian, Andrew’s public commitment to atheism was a matter of masculine resolve: Andrew would have considered it “weak-hearted” to settle for the label ‘no preference’ or even ‘agnostic.’ As we saw in Chapter 3, both men and women in this region were well aware that public admissions of atheism crossed the boundary of social acceptance. Gender norms, however, made this boundary more passable for men, than for women.

In their recollections, Northwest women criticized organized religion at length and expressed very few doubts about their decisions to eschew regular churchgoing and membership. These women were not impervious to broader cultural expectations of female piety, but regional norms of secular practice held greater sway within the realm of church involvement. National discourse on the ‘atheist evil’ intersected with ideals of feminine religiosity to shape Northwest women’s subjective approaches to unbelief.

82 Hartwich interview.
83 Williams interview.
84 Clark interview.
Women expressed far more conflict than men around issues of unbelief, and appeared more hesitant to call themselves atheists. Edna Simpson was an unbeliever but rejected the “cruel” and “harsh” label of ‘atheist’: “I don’t use that word - I don’t like it, but maybe that’s what I am, because I’m a non-believer... I’ve never referred to myself as an atheist, although I suppose some of my friends have.”

When asked if she considered herself an atheist, Beverly Wilson cautiously replied: “Well, no, I wouldn’t probably say I was an atheist but I’m just...I’m not religious, you know.” Many of my female informants described their lack of belief in faltering, uncertain terms. Sharon Davis admitted that as a homemaker and part-time public servant in the postwar decades, she evaded discussing her atheism publicly: “I think that was a word that people didn’t like. I probably didn’t...I really didn’t discuss it, you know, with anyone, except to say ‘no, I don’t believe anything.”

A BC woman expressed her aversion to the term ‘atheist’ in a letter to Marian Sherman: “After many years of religious faith-inquiry, and a feeling of being led around like a puppet, I have reached the same conclusion as yourself and yet hated to say I was an atheist.”

In suggesting that gender mattered to decisions around belief, my intention is not to reify female religiosity. That women were more hesitant to call themselves atheists than men reflects the influence, not of some pious inner essence, but of wider norms of respectable womanhood. Most Northwesterners fashioned ways of being secular that fell somewhere between religious and atheist extremes. However, masculine norms of rationalism and religious indifference ensured that men in this region, as elsewhere, were

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85 Simpson interview.
86 Wilson interview.
87 Davis interview.
88 BCA, MSN, MS-0409, Box 2, File: Correspondence re: CBC Interview, Letter to Sherman, 1966.
more willing and able than women to declare atheism. While Northwest women regularly challenged the ideal of female religiosity by avoiding the churches, this ideal proved to be more powerful, and more entrenched, in the realm of religious belief. Of course, the gender line in atheism should not be too sharply drawn. Although they had far to travel from the dominant, believing mainstream to define themselves as atheists, some women certainly did so.\(^\text{89}\) That these women were not necessarily passively or silently atheist is evident in the active part played by women in forming and sustaining the Secular Humanist associations in postwar Seattle and Victoria.\(^\text{90}\)

Women and men in the Northwest staked out ways of being secular that reflected, and occasionally challenged, wider gender norms. Although such norms influenced approaches to religion, the effect was never totalizing. Like Marian Sherman, the ‘sweet, gray-haired,’ atheist grandmother who we met in the opening of this chapter, Northwest women and men did not always or even often fully conform to gender expectations in the realm of religion. Such gender expectations did, however, at least partially set out how secularism would be understood, and the consequences it would evoke, in the postwar world. And of course, gender did not act alone, but rather intersected with class, race, and other social categories to frame and differentiate religious meaning and identity.

While women and men together created and sustained the Pacific Northwest’s secular

\(^{89}\) There is a lack of reliable data on the number of atheists in this region, but it is clear that levels of belief in a God remained high in both countries through the 1950s and 60s. In the American context, a 1965 survey found that 3% of men, and 1% of women, claimed that they did not believe in a God. See Martin Marty et al., *What Do We Believe?*, 216. In Canada, data from the census indicate that women in BC were more willing than women elsewhere to claim that they had ‘no religion.’ Although this suggests that women were more detached from religion in this province than in others, the ‘no religion’ figures cannot be taken as transparent representations of the number of atheists in this province.

\(^{90}\) Miller interview; Smith interview; and Johnson interview. BCA, MNS, MS-0409, Box 3, File: Victoria Humanist Fellowship, Correspondence, Minutes, 1969, “VHF: List of Members in Victoria Area”; Box 3, File: Victoria Humanist Fellowship, Notes, Correspondence, 1967, 1968, “Humanist Mailing List,” 1967. As some of my informants pointed out, Secular Humanist groups were not necessarily havens of gender equality. On the issue of sexism in organized atheism see Evelyn Kirkley, *Rational Mothers and Infidel Gentlemen: Gender and American Atheism, 1865-1915* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).
culture, they did not experience this culture in precisely the same way. Both men and women avoided organized religion without risk of social exclusion, but memories of, and relationships with, the churches were deeply gendered. Many women decried the sexism of organized religion, and attributed their (sometimes painful) disengagement from the churches to the institution’s patriarchy. By contrast, men revealed their indifference to the churches in playful stories about heterosexual courtship and nagging wives; through such stories, men conveyed the deeply held assumption that the churches were feminine spaces. Perspectives on religious belief revealed, even more clearly than those on the churches, the significance of gender to religious meaning and experience. Although subject to cultural pressures to believe, Northwest men were also influenced by manly ideals of rationalism, and by regional expectations of male religious apathy. In this context, men were more comfortable than women adopting and declaring atheist identities. Formed against entrenched assumptions of feminine (and, as we shall see in the next chapter, motherly) piety, women’s secular identities tended to be less stable and less certain than men’s. At the same time, the persistence of such gender assumptions underscores the extent to which Northwest women, in turning away from religion even partially, boldly broke new secular (and gender) territory.
Chapter 5: ‘The closest thing to me’: Secularism and the Family

Born and raised in London, England, Muriel Thompson moved to Toronto in 1955 at the age of 19, and settled in Vancouver, BC, the following year. Through her life, Muriel never attended church and understood herself as non-religious. While she confessed that religion was “unimportant” to her and that she did not “think about it very often,” religious encounters and events punctuate her narrative.¹ She recalled attending Sunday school as a child, having a church wedding, and sporadically praying for the health and safety of her children. While unique and personal, Muriel’s story echoes others in its emphasis on the family. Robert Orsi notes that all “religious ideas and impulses are of the moment, invented, taken, borrowed, and improvised at the intersections of life.”² For Muriel, as for many others in the postwar Northwest, religion was something that often arose at those “intersections of life” involving family, at times of ritual and celebration but also in ongoing relations with parents, spouses, and children.

In the oral narratives, references to the family called up memories of religious comfort and togetherness, but also of spiritual conflict and tension. As parents, my interviewees struggled with how, or indeed whether, to introduce their children to religion; at the same time, they negotiated with the religious expectations placed upon them by their parents and extended family members. Many of my informants engaged the sacred primarily in response to the needs or desires of family members, or in an effort to fulfill wider domestic ideals. However, it would be a mistake to caricature Northwest families as bastions of faith. This chapter suggests that the family (both imagined and real) could be secularizing as well as sacralizing. The distinct irreligion of the Pacific

¹ Muriel Thompson interview.
Northwest was partially reproduced within families, in everyday decisions about such things as whether to take the children to church or to say grace at the dinner table. This chapter traces the ongoing contradictions between personal secular impulses and the religious obligations of family, contradictions which were very much a part of everyday irreligion in the Northwest.

"[T]he home," remarked a writer for the *Presbyterian Record* in 1961, "has been looked upon as a nursery of faith. In the home one generation has borne its witness to another. Children acquire standards of conduct and standards of faith from what they are taught in their homes."³ Through the postwar years, the churches affirmed the religious significance of that ‘nursery of faith,’ the home. Recognizing the importance of religion to domestic life, scholars have probed the relationship between faith and family in various eras.⁴ Regularly identified as the chief setting for religious nurture and socialization, the home is rarely considered in relation to the development of secular thought and practice.⁵ By analyzing secularism and the family together, this chapter offers a new angle of vision on each. It contributes to growing research on the white, heterosexual, middle-class family ideal that predominated in the cultural narratives of postwar North America. In the popular imagination, postwar families were made up of homemaking mothers, breadwinning fathers, and happy children behaving in gender-appropriate ways, and living in affluent suburbia. Scholars have shown this to be a largely unrealizable ideal that obscured the actual complexity of postwar family

³ *Presbyterian Record*, June 1961, 6-7.
⁴ The literature on religion and the family is far more developed in the American than the Canadian context. In the United States see, for example, Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*; and Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victoria America*. In Canada see, for example, Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*; and Nancy Christie ed., *Households of Faith*.
⁵ For seminal works on secularization that do not address the family see, in the Canadian context, Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators*; and in the United States, T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*. 
relations. This invented ideal was not only white, middle class, and heterosexual, but also Christian; however, its religious implications have drawn little attention. This chapter further challenges the postwar domestic ideal by revealing the religious conflicts and ambivalences that simmered behind this ideal, in real family circumstances. The idyllic images of churchgoing families and cozy Christian domesticity obscured the tensions of gender and generation that characterized religion in many postwar homes. This chapter adds a new regional as well as religious dimension to existing discussions of the postwar family. Pervasive, national family norms shaped domestic life in the Northwest, but public discourse in this region also embodied distinctive meanings of family. An emphasis on mobility and individualism subtly undercut the wider family ideal and, in the process, at least partially attenuated the religious obligations of family in the region. Regional norms intersected with wider ideals, family priorities, and personal desires to shape the complex, disorderly secularism of Northwest households.

The family has often escaped analytic attention because of the difficulties involved in finding sources that illuminate the inner world of the household. As Cynthia Comacchio suggests, oral testimonies offer an invaluable, if partial, lens on many of the otherwise “dark corners” of family life. The family is also often overlooked because it is seen as something that reflects and responds to wider forces, but does not create them. According to Nancy Christie, much of the new family history challenges this notion by situating the family and household at the “nexus of broader cultural and social

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6 See, for example, Joy Parr ed., A Diversity of Women; and Joanne Meyerowitz ed., Not June Cleaver.


8 The history of the family in the Pacific Northwest has drawn little attention from scholars. See Susan Armitage, “Tied to Other Lives,” 19.

relationships." Recent studies show political and social hierarchies and identities flowing from, rather than imposed upon, the family. In this interpretive framework, daily decisions about what to tell the children about God or whether to send them to Sunday school are taken seriously as determinants of, rather than sidelines to, the main story of Northwest secularism. This distinct secularism was not, of course, created and defined solely within the home, but also in the streets, schools, workplaces, churches, and various other spaces where religion was encountered, engaged, resisted, or ignored.
Nevertheless, the family was at the centre of this region's everyday secularism, and the household a site of some of its deepest contradictions.

While my focus on the family draws on theoretical innovations in the study of lived religion and family history, it is more specifically grounded in the memories and priorities of Pacific Northwesterners themselves. As the oral histories make clear, it would be impossible to understand the religious lives and choices of the people in this region without giving serious attention to the family. When asked to discuss where she developed her views on religion, Nancy MacEwan began: "Within my own family, and I can speak to that, because that's the closest thing to me, and what I lived on a regular basis." Nancy's simple yet telling remark underlines the enduring connection between religion and family in the postwar world. Like Nancy, people in this region crafted their religious stories in relation to "the closest thing to them," their families. Most often, they attributed their perspectives on religion, whether positive or negative, to their

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11 MacEwan interview.
12 The tendency of my informants to situate their stories of religion within the context of family reflects the broader emphasis on familism in the postwar decades. For a discussion of the postwar ideology of familism, see Veronica Strong-Boag, "Their Side of the Story," 52-53.
parents.\textsuperscript{13} Echoing many of his contemporaries, Robert identified his mother as the main religious influence in his life: “Well, I suppose my mother because, you know, if it hadn’t been for her I wouldn’t’ve even gone to church to begin with. She planted the seed.”\textsuperscript{14} Typically, the most painful and joyful religious memories recounted in the oral testimonies centred on relations with family. My informants recalled resenting their parents for “sentencing them to church,” arguing with their in-laws about religion, and worrying about the spiritual lives of their children. They also remembered the pleasures of participating in sacred family rituals, and the comforts of spending time with children and parents on religious holidays. From dramatic tales of religious estrangement to ordinary accounts of churchgoing, the family was at the nexus of religious memory.

More than simply a recurrent topic of conversation, the family figured as a common reference point for the articulation of religious identity. In this study, the oral testimonies are probed not only for their content, but for, what Sarah Williams calls, the “manner of the telling.” How certain subjects were discussed (or not discussed) reveals much about the commonsensical idioms, norms, and habits of the everyday Northwest.\textsuperscript{15} While filled with content about the family, the oral histories in this study are most revealing in the “manner of the telling.” These oral histories were narratives of religion and family at once; religion was made sense of in terms of the family, both ideal and lived. For most of my informants, the religious influence of family members far outweighed that of friends, neighbours, or colleagues. Nanaimo resident Jean Stewart took for granted that religion was a family matter: “you’re bound to be influenced by

\textsuperscript{13} Several scholars have also shown the importance of parents to individual religious identities. See, for example, Thomas Davenport, \textit{Virtuous Pagans}, 206.
\textsuperscript{14} Taylor interview.
\textsuperscript{15} Sarah Williams, \textit{Religious Belief and Popular Culture}, 19.
your family, and what goes on within the family.” Most people, regardless of where they fell on the spectrum of belief, defined themselves, religiously, in relation to their parents and their experience of the sacred in childhood. Many claimed the denominational affiliation of their parents as their own, regardless of personal feelings of unbelief or religious indifference. In other cases, narrators invoked the family in their stories of secular “awakening” to mark the ideological distance they had travelled to carve out a new identity in, or more often against, religion. They described themselves in relational terms, as having “broken from,” “left,” “rejected,” or “drifted from” the religion of their parents. For Joanne Smith of Seattle, the absence of religion in her childhood home mattered most to her secular self-understanding: “Well, you know, if you really aren’t raised in religion, you aren’t exactly an atheist. It’s irrelevant. It really is a very different thing. It just doesn’t occupy my brain at all, unless somebody starts imposing upon me.” Richard told me that his wife is “just ambivalent, period” about religion because she “wasn’t raised in a church.” Similarly, Charles attributed his religious apathy to a secular upbringing: “It just was not important to me. Because my parents weren’t that way, so there’s no environment of being involved in church, and no feeling of guilt if I didn’t go, and so, I didn’t really need it.”

The family was so widely held to be the cornerstone of religion, that the absence of family provided an easy explanation for religious indifference. Patrick claimed that he was not religious because he lost both of his parents as a young child, and “didn’t have

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16 Stewart interview.
17 Smith interview.
18 Petersen interview.
19 Moore interview.
that parental guidance that most normal people get." To Seattle resident Frank Williams, an atheist who never married, being single and religiously uninvolved went hand in hand: "If I were in a church, I'd probably be married by now [laughs]. I would probably have some sort of a relationship with a woman, especially if they agreed with me in my religious principles." The oral narratives in this study demonstrate the centrality of the family to religious memory and identity. That people conveyed their religious histories in relation to the 'closest thing to them,' their families, is not, of course, a startling revelation. Perhaps so taken for granted as to escape analytic notice, the family has not been given priority in studies of irreligion, which have instead looked for the roots of secularism in dominant, elite institutions. The impulse to construct one's religious (and secular) identity in relation to, and often against, the family, was widely shared across class and gender. In "the manner of the telling," my informants revealed the association between religion and family to be a deeply embedded part of their commonsense social world.

While the oral testimonies convey the commingling of religion and family in the wider culture, they also hint at the existence of regionally specific meanings of family in the Pacific Northwest. Scholars have pointed to the presence of distinct geographies of sexuality and gender, but the relationship between place and family remains largely unstudied. In a recent review, Cynthia Comacchio called for greater analytic attention to the geography of family in Canada: "Given the tenacious nature of regional identities in Canada, it would be especially interesting to know what distinctive meanings of self

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and family might be ascribed to, and nurtured in regional cultures, or what comprises the social geography of family and identity.”^3 Constructions of the family were somewhat distinctive in the postwar Northwest context. References to the individual rather than the family predominated in cultural representations of the region. One postwar writer described the archetypal Northwesterner as a “man of destiny on whose broad shoulders rested the future of the nation and in whose veins flowed the sterling quality of individualism which impressed itself so deeply on the American consciousness.”^4 Domestic images and metaphors did not figure centrally in representations of the quintessential Northwest. When the Northwest family did come under discussion, it was often made out to be especially fragile and conflicted. On both sides of the border, religious and cultural leaders regularly cited unusually high rates of divorce in the region as evidence of the instability of the Northwest family. As one observer anxiously noted in 1957, in both Canada and the US the divorce rate “rises rapidly as we go west.”^5 A religious commentator reflected on the unusually troubled and secular character of the west coast family: “Especially in our western city life have the weapons of paganism and secularism taken their tragic toll in the family.”^6

The comments of postwar observers hint at place-specific meanings of family. Sometimes seen as exceptionally fragile, the Northwest family was also imaginatively

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^6 UCC, BCC, Minutes (1957), 1443; and (1960), 1630.

^7 BC Catholic, 8 March 1951, 4.
displaced by the regional valorization of individualism. Regionally specific notions of family were evident not only in the printed sources but in the memories and perceptions of Northwesterners themselves. George Thompson grew up in Ontario, lived for a time in Montreal, and settled in Vancouver, BC, in 1949. George described his initial impressions of BC:

> When I came to the coast it was a totally different atmosphere, I believe, as far as religion was concerned. Those people I met in Montreal were all...had been brought up in Montreal, and still lived in Montreal, their parents were still there. And when I came to BC, people were alone here, their families were back east or somewhere else or they didn’t have family.\(^{28}\)

In his narrative, George reproduced the widely held perception of the Northwest as a rootless place, where the ties of extended family were not readily apparent. He attributed the lack of religion in his own life and in west coast culture more generally to this region’s less family-centred culture. In constructing the Northwest as an individualistic, restless region, George echoed several of his contemporaries. In the oral testimonies, this place was imagined as a place of adventure and newness, rather than of tradition and family. Several narrators described the region in essentialist terms, as a place of freedom and independence. In the Northwest, the wider ideal of Christian family togetherness competed with, and was subtly undercut by, a powerful regional identity premised on individualism and mobility. Articulated from both above and below, this identity was evident not only in the social imaginary but in the demography of this region, a place where, as George noticed, “just about everybody had been born elsewhere.”\(^{29}\)

British Columbians and Washingtonians did indeed live in an especially transient part of North America. The highly mobile character of the west coast population,

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\(^{28}\) George Thompson interview.

\(^{29}\) George Thompson interview.
historically and at present, is well established in the existing literature. Through the postwar decades, people who lived in the Pacific region moved more often than their counterparts elsewhere.\textsuperscript{30} This was also a place with especially high levels of immigration; more people moved (and desired to move) to the west coast than to other regions through the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{31} Population instability, then, is a long-standing characteristic of the region. A number of secondary studies have argued that mobility contributed to irreligion in the West.\textsuperscript{32} Drawing on the available quantitative materials, sociologists have shown that high rates of mobility at least partly contributed to the large “no religion” population in BC, and to the unchurched character of the American Pacific states. There is, however, no general agreement on the nature and meanings of this relationship. Some studies contend that moving causes people to abandon their religious ties, while others suggest that non-religious individuals are more apt to move. Few scholars, however, have asked the people themselves. While the precise connection between mobility and secularism remains elusive, the oral testimonies in this study suggest the importance of bringing family into the analytic mix. For several of my informants, moving did indeed prompt a turning away from religious practice; it did so, however, primarily when it involved a separation from family.

Moving was not, as church leaders so often supposed, invariably secularizing. Nor was “rootedness” a clear predictor of religiosity: several of my decidedly non-religious informants had resided in the same community throughout their lives. While


the relationship between mobility and secularism is neither transparent nor predictable, moving away from family constituted a central turning point in many personal stories of secularism. Through his teenage years, Thomas lived in Tacoma with his father and "churchy" mother, and spent much of his time involved in Protestant youth organizations. Gradually, through discussions with a friend, Thomas became an atheist at the age of eighteen. He recalled feeling anguished about his newfound atheism:

One of the biggest agonies that I had was keeping all of this secret from my family. I mean, my interest in sex, of course, was somewhat comparable. But religion was bigger... There was so much, I don't know, trauma associated with my taking this position, and living at home, you know. I felt like... I used to say, if my mother learned I was an atheist, it would kill her. I felt so strongly about it... So, I had to live a double life.

Compelled to lead a "double life" while living with his parents, Thomas felt comfortable shedding his religious façade only after he had moved away from his family. Several other interviewees recalled that moving away from their parents had "liberated" them from religious practice. Robert stopped attending church after he moved away from his mother; although his experience was not characterized by anxiety, Robert, like Thomas, based his own religious participation on the proximity of family. David shared a similar inclination, confessing that he left home "to have a damn good time, where a church or a mother wouldn't be looking at me [laughs]." There was a distinct gender dimension to these stories: men were far more likely than women to describe their experience of moving in terms of liberation, freedom, and individualism. George told me that he left his Ontario home, and the church of his childhood, because of his "sense of

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33 UWM, WNICC, Acc.1567-2; File: Writings, "The State of the Church in the Northwest," nd. There is a longstanding debate about whether migration is an essentially sacralizing or secularizing experience. For an introduction to this debate see, in particular, Timothy Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America."
34 Brown interview.
35 Taylor interview.
36 Becker interview.
adventure”: “It was sort of the ‘go west, young man,’” he admitted. Calling upon the central myths and images of Northwest culture, George joined with other men in framing the experience of moving as a narrative of frontier adventure and liberation. The myths and images associated with the frontier appear somewhat less frequently in women’s testimonies; this is not surprising, as women have long been excluded from (and likely did not see themselves in) what has been constructed as a deeply masculine story.

In 1965, a Seattle journalist hinted at the connection between mobility and irreligion in this region: “People who, at best, went through the motions of going to church back home are hardly likely to maintain the practice here, since no social stigma is attached to non-attendance.” Apart from a Catholic man who deliberately moved to the west coast to escape the religious gaze of his anti-Catholic in-laws, my informants did not move for reasons explicitly related to religion. However, several speculated that had they not moved, they likely would have continued attending church. Joe Peltier grew up in New Brunswick, joined the army, travelled extensively, and settled in Nanaimo in 1966. In a discussion about life in his New Brunswick hometown, Joe called upon regional stereotypes of the Canadian Atlantic region as backwards and family-oriented:

There was nowhere else to go, nobody ever moved out of there. You married the girl next door if she was Catholic, or whatever...If I had stayed there, I'd a been as dumb as the rest of them. I don't think anybody - if they stayed there, definitely they all still went to church. Because it was something to do, in their small little own little family world, and that's it, you know.

Like Joe, Susan believed separation from the church went hand in hand with separation from family; she remarked on the nature of church involvement in the Idaho town of her

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37 Thompson interview.
40 Anderson interview.
youth: “I think that if they lived with their extended family, they were more likely to [attend church]. Whereas if they were independent and away from their family, they didn’t, they didn’t.” The oral narratives in this study reveal the family as the nexus between mobility and irreligion. Moving appeared to have little consequence in the religious lives and choices of my informants, except when it involved departures from family. Even then, moving affected religious practice, not belief. For instance, Thomas left the church and stopped leading a “double life” after he moved away from his family, but his inner atheist views remained unaltered. Similarly, George stopped attending church after he moved away from his family, but confessed: “no matter where I lived, I wouldn’t have been religious. No, I don’t think so.” Moving did not make unbelievers out of people, but it often disengaged them, at least temporarily, from one of the chief motives and settings for religious practice in the postwar world: the family.

Historian Suzanne Morton argues that in Atlantic Canada, “[o]lder and relatively stable populations fostered intense localisms and bonds of community and kinship,” and women “carried an especially important burden as the arbitrators and guardians of family reputation.” Although further comparative work is needed here, it seems likely that ‘family reputation’ was less relevant to social and religious relations in the Pacific Northwest. The printed and oral sources suggest that family meant something a little different in the Northwest, a region where independence was valorized and mobility attenuated the ties of extended kin. I do not mean to suggest that family meant the same thing to all people in the region. Family ideals and realities were understood and negotiated in race, class, and gender specific ways. In highlighting the significance of

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42 Young interview.
43 Thompson interview.
44 Suzanne Morton, “Gender, Place, and Region,” 122.
place to family I also do not mean to reify regional stereotypes - to imply, for instance, that west coasters were an inherently independent, transient, family-evading people. As we shall see in-depth below, most Northwesterners aspired to fulfill domestic ideals and gave priority to family relationships. However, the available evidence suggests that certain demographic and imaginative factors (and not some stable or enduring essence of 'westerners') combined to lessen the influence of extended family in this region. This, in turn, likely moderated religious activity here, since religion was often encountered and practiced within the family realm.

The Northwest was typically imagined as a place of lone adventurers, but this was still a region where most people lived within families.45 Even those people who had left connections of church and kin behind in their move to the Northwest, usually engaged religion anew when they formed their own families. Sabbath services held limited appeal in this region, but residents continued to seek out religious institutions for the family-centred ceremonies of marriage and baptism.46 That the churches were regularly used for family rituals but not worship frustrated religious leaders in both nations. In 1960, a writer for the Olympia Churchman grumbled that the ‘hitchhiker is a symptom of an age when all too many people are chiselers - out to get something for nothing. The Church has its hitchhikers, too; people who use it for burials, baptisms and weddings, but who do not support it and who rarely think of it at other times.”47 The Presbyterian Record likewise complained about “part-time” Presbyterians, adherents who avoided the church

46 Although I have chosen to limit my discussion to marriages and baptisms, the churches were also regularly used (by church members and non-members) for funerals.
47 Olympia Churchman, October 1960, 2. Also see UWM, WNICC, Acc.1567-1, Box 9, File 4: Incoming Letters, C-W, Letter from Velma Shotwell to Soren Kring, 3 September 1953.
except "[d]uring that small but important part of life which is concerned with baptism, marriage or burial."

The Northwest was predominantly unchurched, but most people in this region continued to engage religious institutions for family rituals. Many also sporadically entered such institutions on religious holidays, usually with family members. From the perspective of the clergy, the fact that people used the churches for family rituals and not for worship revealed the superficial character of postwar religion. A Canadian Anglican priest, concerned that the churches were being used for "festivals" and "family occasions" but not worship, remarked: "Religion, real religion, isn't too popular today... To omit the work of worship is rather like filing off the sharp edges of the Cross, rendering Christianity into something weak and harmless, sentimental and palsy-walsy." People who entered the churches occasionally for baptisms, weddings, and holidays, but not Sunday services were, in the eyes of this Anglican priest and many of his contemporaries, not "really" religious.

Much of the texture and disorder of everyday religion is missed by an exclusive focus on formal church involvement. There is a growing literature that challenges the idea, perpetuated by the clergy, that regular church involvement defines true piety. Scholars in North America and Britain have shown that popular religious cultures often take shape outside of institutions, as people engage the sacred in the streets and within households, during festivals and on family occasions. This is a welcome corrective to earlier scholarship that accepted the views of the clergy and interpreted non-attendance at

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48 Presbyterian Record, October 1962, 16. Also see Canadian Churchman, January 1961, 10.
49 Canadian Churchman, January 1961, 10.
50 See, for example, Robert Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street, xvi; Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture, 163; Jeffery Cox, The English Churches in a Secular Society; Norman Knowles, "Christ in the Crowsnest," 57-72; and Anne Brown and David Hall, "Family Strategies and Religious Practice: Baptism and the Lord's Supper in Early New England," in Lived Religion in America, 41-68.
church as straightforward evidence of indifference. In the more recent studies, practices such as church weddings and baptisms are judged on their own terms rather than against a normative standard of regular church involvement. In her work on nineteenth-century London, Sarah Williams rejects the “association of irregular church attendance with religious indifference,” and contends that the “passion among local families” for baptism and other church ceremonies “constituted a distinctly popular religious response.”

Following Williams and other historians of popular religion, I seek to move beyond the perceptions of religious authorities, and to explore how ordinary people encountered and understood religion in their everyday lives. Northwesterners participated in church-based rituals and celebrations for a range of reasons, both sacred and secular. While church-based weddings, baptisms, and religious celebrations are rightfully considered elements of popular religion, it is important to recognize that people could engage in such practices for very secular reasons. My research suggests that some Northwesterners used the churches for weddings, baptisms, and holidays in spite of their own irreligious inclinations, rather than because of any deep spiritual convictions.

This argument departs from the usual interpretation of such rituals, but is based on the memories of my informants themselves. While most studies of church-based rites of passage focus on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sociologist Reginald Bibby has explored the nature and meaning of such rites in more recent years in Canada. Drawing on national surveys conducted periodically since 1975, Bibby reveals that the majority of Canadians have continued to look to the churches for marriages, baptisms, and burials. According to Bibby, such rites are not just “rote performances,” but rather

51 Sarah Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture, 163.
practices that "indelibly link individuals with religious groups and traditions." Bibby argues that the persistence of such practices reveals that despite declines in churchgoing, Canadians have "still wanted to bring the gods in on major life events." My research suggests that at least for some postwar Northwesterners, sporadic engagements with the churches had more to do with family obligation than an inner desire to "bring the gods in." Although some of my informants were unusually resistant to the churches, even those who considered themselves very spiritual often engaged in church weddings and baptisms at least partly to appease their families. Although he notes that in "many cases" people engaged in rites of passage due to the "pressures of relatives and friends," Bibby underplays these pressures. In-depth oral interviews enable us to see not only that people engaged in such rites and rituals, but why they did so. Many of my informants reluctantly baptized their children or were married in churches to placate their families. Such practices were not somehow 'superficial,' as church leaders claimed, but neither should they be seen as uncomplicatedly religious. When it came to church weddings and baptisms, my informants claimed to be guided far more by family expectations than by what Bibby describes as "a sense that somehow 'God needed to be brought in' on what was happening." In recent years, scholars have rightly objected to the correlation of churchgoing with religiosity, and have worked to illuminate those religious practices (such as baptisms and church weddings) that remained widely popular. Although it

52 Reginald Bibby, Fragmented Gods, 55, 76-77.
54 Reginald Bibby, Restless Gods, 29.
55 Of course, oral narratives are not clear, unmediated windows on an objective past. My informants were aware that they were participating in a project on irreligion. In "blaming" their involvement in church-based rituals on family pressures, some of my informants may have been seeking to reconcile the apparent contradiction between their professed secularism, and their spiritual practice. It is possible, then, that some of my informants downplayed their personal religiosity in an effort to better "fit" the aims of my project.
56 Reginald Bibby, Restless Gods, 29.
would be a mistake to uncritically accept the view, expounded from the pulpit, that such practices (independent of regular church attendance) were superficial, we must also be careful not to attach meanings to these practices that were not felt by the people themselves. Northwesterners initiated and participated in church weddings and baptisms for a range of spiritual and cultural reasons; they also did so to fulfil the obligations of family (both ideal and real). My research suggests that some who engaged in such practices worked against their own secular impulses in the process.

In the postwar decades, marriage ceremonies remained firmly tied to the religious realm. Northwesterners, like their national counterparts, typically confronted the issue of religion in preparation for marriage. Most residents of the US, including those in Washington, opted for religious marriage ceremonies in the postwar decades. In 1972, only 19.5% of people in Washington were wed in a civil ceremony, in line with 20% nationally.\(^{57}\) While most British Columbians also chose religious ceremonies, they were more apt to follow their secular impulses in the realm of marriage than their Ontario counterparts. Figures reported by the *Presbyterian Record* and the *United Church Observer* reveal that in 1959, only 4.9% of Ontarians were married in civil ceremonies as compared to 11.5% of British Columbians.\(^{58}\) According to Reginald Bibby, by the 1970s, approximately 20% of British Columbians opted for civil ceremonies, as compared to 10% nationally.\(^{59}\) Although civil marriages held wider appeal in BC than in other regions, most British Columbians were wed in religious ceremonies. In the Pacific Northwest and across both nations, far more people opted for religious weddings than

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\(^{58}\) *United Church Observer*, 15 October 1960, 12; and *Presbyterian Record*, November 1965, 2.

\(^{59}\) Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods*, 89.
were found in regular attendance at church. As one Presbyterian writer noted: “Whether
the wedding is simple or elaborate, the majority of couples still seek the blessing of the
church upon it. This is true even though only half of those who wish to be married by a
minister are church members, or attend divine service more than once a month.”

One of my informants, Rahim Ahmed, described marriage as a fundamentally
spiritual endeavour: “weddings and marriage have a deep spiritual significance, it’s not
just a man and woman, it’s not just bodily...it’s more than that...The union of a man and
woman is much more than just a union of a man and woman, you know. It has a greater
significance to mankind.” Rahim, who was married in a Muslim ceremony in Pakistan,
was the only one of my interviewees to point explicitly to the religious importance of
marriage. A few of my secular informants, like Muriel, opted for religious wedding
ceremonies because they seemed to represent a deeper commitment. Muriel explained:
“...there were some things, even if you say you’re not religious, I’ve heard people say
that if you get married at City Hall, it’s like going and getting a driver’s license, and
getting married in a church feels like real commitment. I think a lot of people feel this
way, even if they’re not churchgoers.”

In most of the oral testimonies, church weddings were described as family rather
than explicitly religious occasions. Of course, religion is inextricably bound to other
facets of human experience, including those involving the family. As Sarah Williams
argues with respect to participation in church rites in nineteenth-century London: “Both
the social sentiment and the spiritual formed parts of a single religious expression which

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60 Presbyterian Record, November 1965, 2.
61 Ahmed interview.
62 Muriel Thompson interview.
was too closely interwoven to be separated." While recognizing that family and religious motivations were entangled, this chapter teases out some of the tensions and contradictions that secular people confronted when it came to family religious practices. In the postwar Northwest, some who participated in family-centred religious rites did so against their own secular impulses. Torn between personal secular inclinations and family obligations, most opted to oblige those who were closest to them. Asked why she was married in a church, Jean Stewart of Nanaimo put it quite simply: "Because it wasn’t my decision, it was...[pause]...perhaps the thing to do. You know, girls got married in churches, and although I’d probably been a non-conformist all my life, but not to the point where I would hurt my parents. So, that was why." Most of my informants would see themselves in Jean’s response. For them, the desire not to ‘hurt’ family members overrode personal secular feelings in preparation for marriage. Over and over again, my respondents told me that they opted for religious weddings to appease their families. They did so to “[m]ake everybody happy,” to “placate” their parents, and to avoid upsetting their in-laws. Anne Carlson, a homemaker in postwar BC, recalled: “His family was very religious which is why we got married in a church! [laughs] I think that happens to a lot of young people. The pressure is there, it was the thing that you did, it was a family thing you did, and you were respectable.” Edward likewise indicated that family dictated the religious setting of his wedding: “Well, mainly I think because both mothers [laughs] thought that we should be married in a church...They seemed to be

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63 Sarah Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture*, 10
64 Stewart interview.
65 Carlson interview.
quite interested in how things should go [laughs]. And then we wanted my sister to come, too, and she would’ve been very upset if it hadn’t been in a church."

The oral testimonies suggest that for a significant minority of Northwesterners, religious wedding ceremonies were at least partly motivated by family relations and ideals. To see in such practices evidence of an enduring religiosity would require a distortion of the words and memories of the people consulted for this study. Many of my interviewees urged me not to mistakenly attribute their decision to get married in a church to any inner religious feeling. David, who worked as a physician in postwar Olympia, reflected on why he was married in a church: “Not because, to be perfectly honest with myself, of that great judge in the sky [laughs]. Church was the way to go, it was the proper way to have a wedding. It was part of the social milieu of marriage. So, I mean, it wasn’t because of any religious connection or affiliation or feeling.” Like David, several others confessed that their church wedding had not been motivated by spiritual inclinations. In these oral histories, decisions to get married in churches were framed as family rather than religious decisions. For many, the religious aspect of marriage “didn’t mean anything” and “wasn’t important.” Linda Sato echoed several of my informants in recalling her (private) desire for a civil marriage ceremony: “Oh, I would’ve loved to have [a civil ceremony], but it was kind of like pressure from...from all sides. All sides. I had great arguments with [minister/friend] when we golfed. I think it’s nonsense, I said to him, it’s nonsense [laughs].” The few interviewees who were married in civil ceremonies did so against the wishes of family members. Seattle resident Joanne Smith opted for a civil ceremony, much to the dismay of her Jewish in-laws:

66 Lewis interview.
67 Becker interview.
68 Sato interview.
My first husband was raised Jewish. His parents, his mother, never practiced religion particularly, they were a little bit culturally Jewish. And he did go through the bar mitzvah, but beyond that there really wasn’t a lot of religion. Until I came along. And all of a sudden they didn’t want their son to marry a Christian. And they couldn’t see that no, I wasn’t a Christian.  

Joanne’s in-laws objected to their son being married in a civil ceremony, but were even more concerned about him marrying a non-Jewish person. Like Joanne, atheist Thomas Brown upset the religious sensibilities of his future in-laws. He recalled a conversation with his future mother-in-law: “I said ‘hey, if you want us to get married in a Catholic Church, it doesn’t make any difference to me. If you want me to go to this thing before, for non-Catholics, to learn all this stuff, fine. It doesn’t make any difference to me. I’m comfortable where I am, but I’ll do it’. And that made her furious, that, in effect, I was scoffing at all of this.”  

Unlike most people in this era, Thomas and Joanne resisted family pressures, followed their secular desires, and were married in civil ceremonies.

In the existing scholarship, the practice of baptism is often held up as evidence of popular religious conviction. Although there is an absence of statistics on the regional distribution of baptisms in postwar America, the printed materials suggest that the practice remained popular in postwar Washington. In 1964, the Olympia Churchman noted that the demand for baptisms remained high despite the difficulties involved in finding godparents in this transient region:

So many of the persons living in the Diocese are virtually displaced persons, who have no relatives in the area and have very few friends. This is affecting the Church today. There are families in the parishes and missions of the Diocese who have adults and children to be presented for Holy Baptism. They do not know enough people to be able to find qualified persons to act as Godparents or sponsors.

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69 Smith interview.
70 Brown interview.
71 Olympia Churchman, April 1964, 7.
Baptism remained a popular practice in postwar BC, although less so in this province than elsewhere in Canada. According to Reginald Bibby, in the 1970s approximately 70% of British Columbians desired baptism for their children, as compared to 90% of Canadians more generally. A complex mix of sacred and secular motivations guided Northwesterners in baptizing their children; as with religious weddings, some baptized their children in spite of their own secular feelings, and to oblige their families. Anne Carlson, mother of four, recalled why her last child was not baptized:

Oh, because the grandparents had gone by then, and I really thought it was a bunch of bull. I mean, I really did it...oh, it was a family thing, you just did it. My husband was one of four, and he was the baby. And oh god, he was the big baby that everybody loved, and for his wife to be a miserable little bitch that won’t do this and won’t do that...so I just did it. But I didn’t do it for the girl because they weren’t around! [laughs].

Anne shared a similar experience with her close friend: “she had all her kids done [baptized] but one too! [laughs] I don’t think she got the last one done either, and that was again because his parents died. I think that’s the push for it.” For Anne and her friend, baptism was a practice determined by the presence of grandparents rather than any inner religious feeling. Patrick O’Connor also baptized his children for family reasons: “I basically think that was to accommodate my wife at the time. And the family, who said you should have your children baptized or christened. So, fine and dandy, we did that.” The majority of my informants attached little religious significance to the ceremony of baptism. Nancy MacEwan, who defined herself as a Christian, conveyed a very secular view of baptism: “It was more that, okay, this is traditional and customary, and we will do this. Not that we felt that, in any way, it was giving greater eternal security to the

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73 Carlson interview.
74 O’Connor interview.
children. That was not our perspective on it at all. And that it would give them a commitment to the church, at large, in the future - we never had any of those feelings at all.” In these oral testimonies, baptism was described as “unimportant”, “harmless,” and “the thing to do,” and as a family, rather than spiritual, requirement.

Although they were distinctly unchurched, Northwesterners often engaged the churches for family rituals. Many otherwise religiously uninvolved residents also entered the churches on religious holidays. Because the majority of my informants were raised in the Christian tradition, my discussion here is limited to holidays that were part of this tradition. It is left to others to discern how those raised in non-Christian religions made sense of their own holidays, and those of the dominant Christian culture.” In 1959, a cartoon in an Olympia Episcopalian paper depicted a couple attending Easter services with the caption: “Oh, Father, we look forward so much to seeing you each year.” As this cartoon suggests, Northwest churches, unfilled most of the time, drew large crowds on the Christian holidays of Easter and Christmas. This was a phenomenon specific to neither the Northwest nor the postwar era. Several scholars have shown that church attendance on holidays - and not at other times of the year - was an important part of popular religious cultures. They have demonstrated that religious holidays have always embodied both secular and sacred elements. As Leigh Schmidt insists, the commercial

75 MacEwan interview.
76 One of my informants - Rahim - was raised in the Muslim tradition. Ahmed described his participation in Eid, as well as in Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter, in a very secular way. He remarked: “you were with your friends and you celebrated. But, in a spiritual way? Hardly. No. You celebrated with family and friends, and that’s about it. And if you went to church it was more about cultural than religious significance.”
77 Olympia Churchman, April 1959, 6.
elements of Easter constituted a "deep religious wellspring." My informants, regardless of where they fell on the secular spectrum, uniformly celebrated Christmas and Easter within their homes through the postwar decades, and a few marked such occasions by attending worship services. Even those Northwesterners who were indifferent to the churches encountered Christian idioms and expectations ingrained in the dominant culture. One informant reflected on the story of Christ's birth: "it was just something I had heard and it was there, so you have to live with it." Christmas and Easter did not often figure as "religious wellsprings" in the ordinary lives of my informants. Often, like baptisms and weddings, these religious holidays were considered family occasions - sporadic encounters with the sacred in otherwise comfortably secular lives.

Through the postwar decades, the clergy in the Northwest and beyond worried that Christmas and Easter were turning into "carnivals of commercialism," and urged people to "bring Christ back in" to their celebrations of these increasingly "paganized holidays." Evidence from the oral narratives suggests that the clergy had reason to worry, at least in the Pacific Northwest. Most of my informants described their participation in these religious holidays in explicitly secular terms. Gary recalled what a typical Christmas was like for his Port Angeles family:

well, my wife and children - two daughters - would go to church on Christmas. I even went once or twice, for the hell of it. And then we'd have people, often my wife's relatives, they'd come for Christmas. But there again, it had very little to do with religion, at least as far as I was concerned, it might have meant a lot to

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79 O'Connor interview.
80 Presbyterian Record, April 1953, 10; Canadian Churchman, 20 December 1951, 395-397; and Lutheran, 5 December 1951, 16-17.
81 According to an American survey conducted in 1962, schools in the western states were least likely to observe religious holidays. See Richard Dierenfeld, Religion in American Public Schools (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1962), 68.
them. We didn’t discuss it. For me, Christmas was like Thanksgiving or the Fourth of July.  

In likening Christmas to the Fourth of July, Gary echoed a widely held secular sensibility; those who (sporadically) attended services on religious holidays often did so, much to the clergy’s chagrin, for cultural rather than explicitly spiritual reasons. The following comments from the oral narratives reveal the ambivalence of those who attended church on Christmas and Easter: “it wasn’t significant, you didn’t know why you were there”; “I went, but there was no feeling there or anything”; “I went, but there was no religion involved.” While some attributed their church attendance on holidays to family obligation, Sharon Davis had a more material motivation for attending Easter services: “we went to the Catholic church one time, but it wasn’t because we were religious, particularly, it was just to see what was going on, what people were wearing [laughs].” Scholars have argued that religious symbols and festivals embody multiple rather than singular or fixed meanings; in the circumstances of their everyday lives, people appropriate such symbols and festivals, making them religiously their own.  

Secular people likewise injected religious symbols, festivals, and holidays with meanings of their own. Although not wholly secularized in the wider sense, Christmas and Easter were capable of being understood and celebrated in the most secular of ways. My informants repeatedly affirmed that, for them, these occasions were “good, secular holidays” celebrated as “cultural” and family rather than spiritual festivals. The continued relevance of Christian holidays further illuminates the ambiguities of religion

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82 Nelson interview.
83 Stewart interview; Griffith interview; and O’Connor interview.
84 Stewart interview; Griffith interview; O’Connor interview; and Davis interview.
85 See, for example, Robert Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street.
86 Moore interview; Lewis interview; Hartwich interview; Peltier interview; Morrison interview; Sato interview; Hawthorne interview; George Thompson interview; and Sanders interview.
in the Northwest, a place where personal secular impulses regularly collided with the spiritual demands of family.

In recent years, scholars have argued that to capture the rich, complicated religious lives of ordinary people we must move beyond an exclusive focus on formal church attendance. I share in this project, but my research has impelled me onto somewhat different interpretive ground. In this study, my effort to take seriously people’s own perceptions in the realm of religion has meant, at times, acknowledging an absence of religious feeling. While it may be tempting to see church weddings, baptisms, and religious holidays as evidence of a flourishing popular spirituality in the Northwest, my informants themselves compel a different, more moderate interpretation. Such practices were certainly part of lived religion in the Northwest; however, for at least some Northwesterners, decisions to engage in such practices were motivated as much or more by secular than sacred concerns. The evidence presented here also reminds us to consider religion statistics with caution. Taken alone, figures on the prevalence of church weddings or baptisms might seem to indicate widely felt spiritual convictions in the Northwest. The people themselves tell a more complicated story, one in which church weddings, baptisms, and religious holidays appear not solely as spiritual occasions, but also as family responsibilities, sometimes carried out in contradiction to personal secular sensibilities.

In the oral testimonies, church weddings, baptisms, and religious holidays were often described in terms of ambivalence. For the most part, my informants participated in these ceremonies and celebrations without complaint. Looking back, many acknowledged that although they had sometimes set aside their own secular feelings in
the process, they were quite comfortable doing so in the name of cultural tradition, or for their families. Many understood rites of passage and religious holidays as family events that did not fundamentally compromise personal irreligious sensibilities. Far greater tensions arose in the narratives when discussions turned to religion and parenting. Those who easily suppressed their secularism on their wedding day or on religious holidays often experienced inner conflict when it came to decisions about what to tell their children about religion. Even many atheist Northwesterners worried about how or whether to religiously educate their children. That they did so reflects, in part, the immense reach of the postwar Christian family ideal. As we have seen, images of family and home were not central to constructions of the Northwest’s regional identity.

Nonetheless, residents of this region, like their national counterparts, were subject to the pervasive ideals of family that resonated in postwar North America.

In the postwar era, a growing cadre of experts, including educators, psychologists, and social workers, weighed in on the subject of proper parenting. Calls for more effective parenting certainly did not originate in the postwar years, but such calls were especially fervent in this family-centred, baby-boom era. Historians have demonstrated that the end of World War II ushered in a period of soaring birth-rates and heightened domesticity. According to Joy Parr, this era saw a “yearning for a settled domesticity after the disruption of depression and war.”87 The family images that crowded public

discourse in these years perpetuated a white, middle-class, heterosexual version of
domestic bliss that was exclusive and largely unattainable. Cultural commentators
reinforced and entrenched domestic norms, but their discussions also betrayed deep
concerns about all that seemed to threaten the family. Family stability was said to be
"assailed" by multiple forces, including rising rates of delinquency, divorce, unwed
motherhood, and wage-working wives.\textsuperscript{88} Although the postwar domestic ideal was
prescriptive rather than descriptive, it served to normalize particular family behaviours
and patterns and make others seem deviant. Several studies have unveiled "cracks" in the
shiny, one-dimensional image of the postwar family. They have shown that few actual
families conformed to the class, gender, race, and sexual norms that were embedded in
the domestic ideal.\textsuperscript{89} Although rarely addressed, religion (or the lack thereof) could also
locate real families outside of this ideal. This became sharply apparent to a Canadian
couple who were denied the right to adopt a child in 1964 because of the husband's
atheism.\textsuperscript{90} Postwar observers affirmed the significance of religion to stable families, and
urged parents to religiously educate their children as a bulwark against the threat of
"atheistic-communism."\textsuperscript{91} Scholars have recognized that the family ideal was not only
white, middle class, and heterosexual, but Christian; however, they have not examined
the religious "cracks" in this ideal. The assumption seems to be that the requirements of
family religion were either easily ignored or straightforwardly followed. This chapter

\textsuperscript{88} Catholic Northwest Progress, 5 August 1966, 3. Also see, BC Diocesan Post, October 1971, 2;
Presbyterian Record, May 1970, 7; UCC, BESS, Annual Report (1963), 102-103; and ACC, Diocese of
\textsuperscript{89} See, for example, Mona Gleason, Normalizing the Ideal, 7.
\textsuperscript{90} Progressive World, January 1964, 27; and April 1964, 27.
\textsuperscript{91} Seattle Magazine, December 1965, 66; and Port Angeles Evening News, 1 December 1951, 1.
looks behind the images of cosy Christian domesticity to reveal religious tensions and
conflicts in Northwest homes. 92

Parenting could be a realm of religious anxiety and contradiction in even the most
secular of Northwest homes, particularly for mothers. Men and women shared in
negotiating Christian family norms, and in constructing their religious identities in
relation to family. However, gender discrepancies emerge in memories of child rearing.
Women devoted far more attention than men to the subject of religion and parenting, and
were also more apt to recall feeling troubled about the religious training of their children.
While it may be that women were more willing and able to express such feelings, as
mothers they also carried primary responsibility for the spiritual life of the family.

Postwar commentators reminded women that men might casually “leave the practising of
religion in the family to the mother,” but women must accept “their great responsibility in
the training of their boys and girls” and recognize the “paramount need to establish the
Christian home.” 93 Such religious norms, together with wider expectations around
motherhood, could inspire uncertainty in even the most secular of women. Several
studies have shown that postwar advice on parenting focused mainly on mothers, who
were reminded “time and time again that errors in child rearing were their sole
responsibility.” 94 Women were subject to contradictory directives, warned of the dangers

92 On the Christian family ideal, see Margaret Bendroth, Growing Up Protestant, 99; and Doug Owram,
Born at the Right Time, 108.

93 United Church Observer, 15 April 1957, 19–20; Canadian Churchman, 4 August 1955, 359; Nanaimo
Free Press, 2 December 1966, 6; Torch, March 1950, 3–4; and Port Angeles Evening News, 6 February
1966, 2.

94 Katherine Arnup, Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth-Century Canada
(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 150. Also see Joan Sangster, “Doing Two Jobs: The Wage-
Earning Mother, 1945–1970,” in A Diversity of Women, 104; Mona Gleason, Normalizing the Ideal, 64;
Jessica Weiss, To Have and to Hold, 56; Annalee Golz, “Family Matters,” 27; and Lynne Weiner,
“Reconstructing Motherhood: The La Leche League in Postwar America,” Journal of American History 80:
of over-mothering and under-mothering, of coddling their children and working outside of the home. Scholars have identified a strong current of “mother-blaming” in this era, which prompted feelings of guilt and inadequacy in women.\textsuperscript{95} Given these wider pressures, as well as ingrained ideals of motherly piety, it is not surprising that ordinary Northwest women often felt anxious about the religious education of their children.

Family was a central priority in the oral testimonies regardless of who was doing the telling. However, in the broader culture and the homes of ordinary Northwesterners, decisions about the religious lives of children fell mainly to mothers. Joanne recalled that in postwar Seattle women “generally had the responsibility for raising the kids, and so they then felt that that was part of their responsibility, teaching their children religion.”\textsuperscript{96} Gendered views of parenting echoed through the oral narratives. Thomas remarked that “women in those days, as mothers, would be inclined to think that this was good form, good way to raise children. Like my mother, in part, it was just that she wanted her kids to have a church background.”\textsuperscript{97} Beverly likewise speculated that “women are the ones that are bringing up the kids, and they want maybe to give them a little...how would you say, bringing up in the proper way, or whatever, you know, in a little more of a religious attitude, more than a father would give them, I guess.”\textsuperscript{98} My informants widely ascribed responsibility for the religious upbringing of children to mothers. Many matter-of-factly pointed out that men were disinterested in the spiritual training of children - as one woman remarked, “I don’t think men particularly cared.”\textsuperscript{99} According to several

\textsuperscript{96} Smith interview.
\textsuperscript{97} Brown interview.
\textsuperscript{98} Wilson interview.
\textsuperscript{99} Davis interview.
interviewees, fathers avoided religion because they desired to engage in more manly pursuits; as George commented: “Men were out fishing, or they were out, you know. And women probably if they wanted to give their children religious training, it would’ve been them who brought the kids to church.” Others likewise noted that “dads want to go fishing, or watch the hockey game,” or “spend their time in the beer parlor,” rather than share religious time with their children. As these comments indicate, mothers were assigned primary responsibility for the religious life of the family not only by professional and popular observers, but by ordinary people. Such gender expectations were difficult to ignore, even in the relatively secular Northwest.

My female informants worried about how or whether to introduce religion to their children. Many turned, for at least a brief period, to the Sunday schools. The available qualitative and statistical evidence suggests that levels of Sunday school enrolment were somewhat lower, and dropped more sharply in the 1960s, in the Northwest than elsewhere. Nevertheless, Sunday schools remained a popular option for religious education in the region, even among those who were indifferent or hostile to the churches. Through the postwar years, church officials complained about the apparent increase in “Sunday school orphans” - children who were dropped off at the churches by their non-attending parents. Church leaders derided parents for using the Sunday

100 George Thompson interview.
101 Taylor interview; and Anderson interview.
102 Margaret Bendroth, Growing Up Protestant, 104.
school as a babysitter. A comic in the Canadian Churchman showed two women playing
golf, with the caption: “I’m deeply perturbed by the void created when Sunday school
closes...I mean, where d’ya dump the brats every Sunday morning.” Unchurched
parents who enrolled their children in Sunday school were widely criticized by postwar
religious leaders - they have also drawn disapproval from present-day historians.
Margaret Bendroth notes the “distressingly high proportion of parents” in postwar
America who dropped their children at the churches without attending themselves. According to historian Doug Owram, the common practice of parents sending “their
children off to Sunday school while one or both of them remained at home” reveals the
“obvious superficiality” of religion in postwar Canada. This practice did not flow
easily from some wider religious commitment in the region, but it was also not somehow
“superficial.” Mariana Valverde notes that when we imagine the postwar era, “we often
make assumptions about what people felt, about what a particular woman meant when
she married, bought an appliance, or moved to the suburbs.” Echoing the sentiments
of church leaders, scholars have often presumed to know what a woman meant when she
sent her children to Sunday school, but stayed away from the church herself. My
research suggests that in the postwar Northwest context, this behaviour was neither
merely superficial nor uncomplicatedly religious. Neither interpretation captures the
tensions, ambivalences, and feelings of guilt that could be bound up with decisions about
the religious lives of children.

Western Regular Baptist, March 1956, 8-9; UWM, GSCC, Box 14, File 16: United Church Men of Seattle,
105 Canadian Churchman, July-August 1966, 4; and June 1964, 4. Also see United Church Observer, 15
October 1963, 19.
107 Doug Owram, Born at the Right Time, 108.
Despite the assumptions of the clergy, unchurched parents did not always arrive easily at the decision to send their children to Sunday school. For mothers with secular inclinations, this decision could cause particular anxiety. In 1967, an author for the *Victoria Humanist* noted that secular mothers encountered particular difficulties: “Those of us brought up in the Judaic-Christian tradition are sometimes puzzled as to what attitude to adopt toward teaching our children these concepts.” Many Northwest mothers were indeed ‘puzzled’ about how or whether to religiously educate their children. Through the postwar decades, prominent BC atheist Marian Sherman received several letters, from mothers in particular, requesting advice on secular parenting. In one letter, an atheist woman from Alberta described her struggle to reconcile a personal secular sensibility with the feeling that her “children needed a certain degree of religious instruction.” She wrote: “I taught church school for one term, and this time I really tried to put my heart and soul into it, because I felt that the future spiritual welfare of my family was at stake.” Pacific Northwest women were not alone in occasionally working against their own secular inclinations for the sake of their families. The religious expectations associated with motherhood reached across both nations in the postwar years, affecting women even in the comparatively secular Northwest. A Nanaimo woman discussed her hesitant decision to enrol her children in Sunday school: “I had a problem with the children, I have four, and I decided against my better judgement of not wanting to bring them up believing a lot of myths and decided to send them to a Sunday school. My only reason was that they cannot defend themselves later

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109 *Victoria Humanist* (Late Summer 1967), 13.
on, against a subject they know nothing about."\textsuperscript{111} Many women similarly recalled sending their children to Sunday school against their "better judgement." Mothers sometimes reluctantly enrolled their children in Sunday school to appease extended family members. Even in the absence of family pressures, however, secular women worried that they were not fulfilling their responsibilities as mothers. They put their children in Sunday school out of a sense of duty and responsibility, and, as one woman put it, because "they didn’t want that guilt."\textsuperscript{112} Some of my informants removed their children from Sunday school after a very brief period due to their discomfort with the teachings or atmosphere of the church. A Seattle mother sent her children to Sunday school once, but decided not to send them again after she concluded that it was "too religious."\textsuperscript{113} As these examples suggest, for at least some Northwest women, decisions regarding Sunday school were not made easily on the basis of religious commitment, but rather anxiously against personal secular inclinations.

Spiritual concerns were not always the main impulse behind the practice of sending children to Sunday school, but this is not evidence of superficiality. To presuppose, as did the clergy, that non-attending parents were casually using the Sunday school as a babysitter misses the careful consideration and concern that often went into decisions about the religious education of children. Neither want of a daycare nor a strong commitment to religious education prompted my women informants to send their children to Sunday school. Rather, most were motivated by a sense that to do so was good mothering, and would contribute to the well-being of their children. More specifically, secular Northwest mothers enrolled their children in Sunday school for two

\textsuperscript{111} BCA, MNS, MS-0409, Box 2, File: Correspondence re: CBC Interview, Letter to Sherman, 1966.
\textsuperscript{112} Stewart interview.
\textsuperscript{113} Smith interview.
central reasons: to fulfill the democratic family ideal, and to provide their children with a
sense of belonging. Many women who had otherwise led comfortably secular lives found
that the arrival of children compelled them to revisit their feelings on religion. Although
she never attended church and considered herself a non-believer, Edna, a homemaker in
Olympia, decided to send her children to Sunday school. Edna reflected on her decision:

That kind of stumped me. I didn’t know what to do about it, because I didn’t
believe myself, and my husband wasn’t participating in it. But I thought they
should be subjected to it, and let them make their own decisions. But I’m not sure
that they made their own decisions, I think they made the same decision I did.
Maybe because I did. They could see that we were not religious.\textsuperscript{114}

Like Edna, many mothers felt that they needed to introduce their children to religion, so
that their children were able to “make their own decisions.” Anne echoed this sentiment:

“I sent my kids to Sunday school. They all went to Sunday school. I wanted them to
make up their own minds. I didn’t want to prejudice them. But we didn’t go to church as
a family.”\textsuperscript{115} Women worried that to not expose their children to religion was to deprive
them of choice. In emphasizing the importance of providing choices for their children,
my informants drew on and reproduced wider ideals of democracy within the family. As
several scholars have shown, in the years following the war parents, mothers in
particular, were urged to raise their children “more democratically.”\textsuperscript{116} My informants
worried that in not exposing their children to religion, they were making their minds up
for them. Karen, an ardent atheist, reflected upon why she sent her children to Sunday
school: “I guess I felt that...you know, some people say, I send my children to church or

\textsuperscript{114} Simpson interview.

\textsuperscript{115} Carlson interview.

\textsuperscript{116} Annalee Golz, “Family Matters,” 27; and Mona Gleason, Normalizing the Ideal, 140. Also see Mariana
Valverde, “Building Anti-Delinquent Communities,” 22; Margaret Bendroth, Growing Up Protestant, 107;
and John McGreevy, “Thinking on One’s Own: Catholicism in the American Intellectual Imagination,
Sunday school so they can make up their own minds. I suppose it was something along those lines, because they didn’t become rigid churchgoing people later.” Similarly, Ruth McCallum commented: “I thought they should have some kind of exposure to something. I just thought it was the thing to do, and then they could make up their own mind, which they did.” In sending their children to Sunday school, many Northwest mothers were deeply influenced by the democratic family ideal, a “powerful trope” in the years following World War II. Few secular mothers expected (or necessarily even desired) the Sunday schools to make their children especially religious; rather, they were mainly concerned with giving their children the freedom to choose.

Mothers also sought to provide their children with a sense of belonging. Through the postwar years, secular humanist groups in North America and Britain replicated the Sunday school format in an effort to appeal to families. An American humanist observed that “the young humanist couple with children...have been known again and again to leave the humanist movement because we have made no provision for the equivalent of a ‘Sunday school.’” Another writer noted the benefits of a weekly programme for the children of secular humanists: “In form, at least, it gives them something in common with their peers who attend traditional Sunday schools, and this goes far in counteracting the feeling of being ‘left out.’” Many Northwest mothers sent their children to traditional Sunday schools so that they would not be “left out.” These women worried that if their children knew nothing of religion or rejected it altogether, they would be alienated from

117 Morrison interview.
118 McCallum interview.
119 Mona Gleason, Normalizing the Ideal, 140.
120 BCA, MSN, MS-0409, Box 3, File: Humanism: Clippings, Unpublished Papers, Pamphlets, etc., “American Humanism: Can it Grasp its Opportunities,” by Herbert Rosenfeld, 22. Also see Victoria Humanist, September 1964, 10.
their peers and the wider world. In 1968, atheist activist Marian Sherman remarked: "It seems to me now that my parents, like many in those days and, perhaps, today too, feared the hardships their children were certain to encounter if they became known as questioners of Christian doctrine."122 Children of known atheists did face potential "hardships" in the postwar decades. Washington resident Alice Miller anxiously reflected on how her outspoken atheism had affected her children: "the two older girls had an awful lot of trouble in school. The neighbours wouldn’t allow their little girls to play with them, and things like that because...First of all, because we objected to the creationist point of view, we were considered communists."123 While few were atheists, my women informants were generally resistant or indifferent to organized religion. As mothers, however, these same women turned to the Sunday schools in search of acceptance for their children. They saw such involvement as a means to provide their children with a sense of belonging. A Seattle mother hoped that attending Sunday school would help her introverted children make friends and become more "connected to peers."124 Another woman noted that she sent her children to Sunday school because that was "what was considered best for the family."125 My research indicates that concerns about doing what was "best for the family," especially the children, outweighed personal secular impulses in some Northwest homes.

In the postwar era, the religious expectations of motherhood extended into the Pacific Northwest and affected even the most secular of women. Linda was non-religious, but recognized that as a mother she was expected to feel spiritually connected:

122 Humanist in Canada (Winter Solstice, 1968), 7.
123 Miller interview.
124 Smith interview; Humanist in Canada (Winter Solstice, 1968), 7; Smith interview; Jones interview; Davis interview; and Young interview.
125 Jones interview.
"You have the babies, so you should be feeling connected, but no."\textsuperscript{126} Atheist Sharon Davis similarly remarked: "having children probably should've made me more religious. Maybe thinking...wanting to guide these children, but no, it didn't."\textsuperscript{127} As we have seen, many Northwest mothers sent their children to Sunday school despite their own secular feelings. It would be a mistake, however, to characterize Northwest motherhood as wholly sacralizing. Sunday school enrolments were comparatively low in the region, and women here were less apt than their counterparts elsewhere to see religion as an important and relevant part of their lives. While much has been made of the role of mothers as spiritual teachers, their secularizing influence has been largely ignored.\textsuperscript{128} The oral testimonies indicate that at least some Northwest women deliberately shielded their children from religious influences. Donna, who worked as a homemaker in the postwar decades, affirmed that her children "never went to Sunday school, never had them brainwashed. Which is what, to me, religion is brainwashing."\textsuperscript{129} In a more emotional tone, Linda recalled that she had actively protected her children from religion:

I wouldn't do it to them, I just wouldn't. It's kind of like a painful thing, working through the religion thing. I don't think it is something that comes without a lot of soul-searching. For me, anyway. It means coming to terms with a lot of stuff. I just wouldn't do it to them, no. No, I wouldn't do it to them.\textsuperscript{130}

While these women were unique in deliberately shielding their children from religion, many more mothers in the region helped to nurture, in overt and subtle ways, secular children. Although they often used the Sunday schools, few of my informants recalled bringing religion into their households. Sharon enrolled her children in Sunday school,

\textsuperscript{126} Sato interview.  
\textsuperscript{127} Davis interview.  
\textsuperscript{129} Tremblay interview.  
\textsuperscript{130} Morrison interview; Tremblay interview; and Sato interview.
but refused to teach them religion at home: "I wouldn't want them to have to go through all that - it was a lot of mumbo jumbo, and a waste of time."\textsuperscript{131} As the oral testimonies suggest, in some Northwest homes religion was rarely discussed, prayers were not uttered at dinner or bedtime, and children were not pressured to believe. In such homes, children were not explicitly taught to be non-religious, but they did grow up in environments where the secular was accepted. Although their role has escaped notice, mothers helped to nurture these domestic secular environments, and played a key role in reproducing the distinct irreligion of the Northwest.

At the beginning of this chapter we met Muriel Thompson, a BC woman who defined herself as non-religious but admitted that she had called on the sacred at certain moments in her life. For Muriel, such moments usually involved relations with family: "I think there have been times in my life where I felt a great deal like a bit of a hypocrite, when my kids are sick or something and I think oh ‘please, God’, and you pray, go to bed at night and you can’t sleep, and so...something is ingrained, from way way back."\textsuperscript{132} As Muriel’s comment suggests, even the most irreligious of Northwesterners found that especially when it came to family, the boundaries between sacred and secular were blurred. Like religion, irreligion is not "a fixed dimension of one’s being, the permanent attainment of a stable self."\textsuperscript{133} As this chapter has shown, many people in this region found that it was difficult to maintain stable, secular selves, especially in the realm of the family. People who otherwise never entered the churches did so for baptisms, weddings, and religious holidays. The persistence of such practices does not negate the existence of a deep strand of secularism in the Northwest. However, it does suggest that this

\textsuperscript{131} Davis interview.
\textsuperscript{132} Muriel Thompson interview.
\textsuperscript{133} Robert Orsi, "Everyday Miracles," 8.
secularism was neither discrete nor totalizing but rather entangled with sacralizing impulses and engagements. As we have seen, certain tensions and contradictions emerged when it came to the religious education of children, particularly for Northwest mothers. Some mothers struggled to reconcile their own secular inclinations with the broader expectations of motherhood. In the end, most did what they felt was ‘best for the family,’ which often involved sending the children to Sunday school for a brief period.

This chapter suggests that sporadic engagements with the churches in the Northwest were neither wholly superficial nor straightforwardly religious. In using the churches for rituals, celebrations, and Sunday school, many Northwesterners were at least partly motivated by a desire to meet the needs of their families. At the same time, family religion was somewhat attenuated in this region by high levels of mobility and a regional valorization of individualism. As we shall see in the following chapter, regionally specific material and imaginative conditions, including the emphasis on individualism, helped to nurture a distinctive, secular sense of place in the Northwest.
Chapter 6: Religion, Irreligion, and the Difference Place Makes

This dissertation has traced the existence of a regionally distinct secularism in the postwar Pacific Northwest. Although they were not uniformly secular, Northwesterners were more apt to ignore, reject, or otherwise ‘live against’ religion than inhabitants of other regions. As we have seen, Northwest secularism cannot be attributed to any single demographic factor. Residents of BC and Washington, regardless of their social identity, were far less religiously involved than their national counterparts. We are left to consider what, in fact, produced and sustained this irreligion. This chapter suggests that the Pacific Northwest was more than just the setting for secularism, it contributed to its making. People define themselves, and each other, in relation not only to race, gender, and class, but also place. They form attachments and give meaning to multiple places, local, regional, and national. They create places but are also situated by them, often behaving in ways that are geographically specific. This chapter contends that irreligion was nurtured and sustained by certain symbolic and material elements of the Pacific Northwest itself. Geography, then, is central, not incidental, to our understanding of secularism.

In addition to being gendered, raced, and classed, religion is also placed. Geography, according to one scholar, is the “neglected stepchild” of social theory. Place is often treated as the “stable context or site for historical action,” as a “container” for wider processes rather than something that is itself in need of explaining.1 In the existing

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1 David Harvey, as cited in David Livingstone, “Science and Religion: Foreword to the Historical Geography of an Encounter,” Journal of Historical Geography 20: 4 (1994): 368; John Agnew, Place and Politics, 2. For several years American scholars have debated about whether the West should be considered a place, region, or process. See, for example, see Kerwin Klein, “Reclaiming the ‘F’ Word, or Being and Becoming Postwestern,” Pacific Historical Review 65: 2 (1996) 179-215; Michael Steiner, “From Frontier to Region,” 479-501; Michael Lansing, “Different Methods,” 232; Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North
literature, secularization often appears ‘placeless,’ as a nationally uniform rather than regionally divergent phenomenon. Secularization is typically depicted as a nation-wide process, emanating from Ontario in Canada, and from the Northeast States in America. My work indicates that secularism was not only more prevalent in the Pacific Northwest, but carried with it meanings specific to this region. Northwest irreligion was not simply a regional variant on a national development but something distinctive in its own right.

Focused on uncovering the often hidden spiritual impulses in the Northwest, scholars rarely acknowledge that secularism has itself been a significant strand in the culture of this region. In his seminal work, the geographer Wilbur Zelinsky contends that the American West “has substantial numbers of members in almost all the denominational groups, but is not the major centre for any.” He concludes by characterizing the West as the region with the “least recognizable religious personality.” In Zelinsky’s study, as in many others, religiosity is approached as normative; secularism appears as a lacuna rather than as an element of this regional culture in its own right.

While more attention has been given to the geographical dimensions of the sacred than the secular, scholars of religion often neglect the category of place. The historian Samuel Hill hints at the reasons for this neglect: “It may be surprising to many that so apparently private, and perhaps culture-transcendent, an aspect of life is heavily influenced by where one lives, indeed the place to which one migrates.” As Hill implies, to suggest that where a person lives affects how, or indeed whether, they practice religion, is to acknowledge the extent to which human religious behaviour is shaped by

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American History,” *American Historical Review* 104: 3 (1999): Par.2

2 Samuel Hill, “Religion and Region,” 140.
the everyday. This contradicts the ingrained idea of religion as something “transcendent, not present in things,” as something that is separate from, rather than made by and through, culture. According to sociologist Rhys Williams, American scholars of religion often ignore place because they focus on Christianity, “a self-proclaimed ‘universalist’ religion that aims to bring its truth to all peoples in all lands, regardless of geography.”

Despite entrenched ideas about the universal, transcendent meanings of religion, decisions about the sacred, I argue, were often very clearly grounded in place.

In suggesting that region mattered to human behaviour, my work partly echoes the largely debunked thesis of western exceptionalism. This thesis defined the western labour force in turn-of-the-century North America as exceptionally radical, and attributed this radicalism to the unique conditions of the frontier. Proponents of the thesis have been widely criticized for accepting, a priori, the intrinsic radicalism of western workers, and for failing to situate their findings in comparative context. Perhaps as a reaction to the exceptionalist thesis, Canadian historians in particular have given less attention to region than to other categories such as class, race, and gender. I submit that region matters and is, in fact, central to understanding these other categories. My work departs from the exceptionalist approach by addressing region comparatively, and defining it as something that was shifting and constructed, rather than stable and essential. This chapter is informed by theoretical innovations in the study of ‘place,’ which the geographer John Agnew defines as “how everyday life is inscribed in space and takes on

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4 Robert Orsi, “Everyday Miracles,” 6. Also see Belden Lane, “Giving Voice to Place,” 58.
5 Rhys Williams, “Religion, Community, and Place,” 260-1.
6 For the classic statement of the western exceptionalism thesis, see David Bercuson, “Labour Radicalism.” Also see Carlos Schwantes, Radical Heritage.
7 For two insightful studies of the shifting and constructed nature of regions see Ian McKay, The Quest of the Folk; and John Lutz, “Making ‘Indians’ in British Columbia.”
meaning for specified groups of people and organizations.8 I argue that everyday secularism in the postwar Northwest both produced and reflected regional, or place-specific, sensibilities. Scholars have rarely examined regionalism and secularism together, perhaps because the former is conventionally seen as traditional and the latter as modern.9 This chapter points to the mutual constitution of secularism and regionalism in the postwar Northwest. It contends that secularism helped to define Pacific Northwest identity, and was itself produced and entrenched by regional discourses.

Most scholars of region and religion address their subjects within the bounds of the nation-state.10 Although such an approach makes sense in many cases, in the postwar Pacific Northwest, place worked in cross-border ways. In 1952, an American Northwest Baptist paper remarked upon the BC Bible Conference: “the people seem little different in crossing the national boundary line. They are a vigorous, happy, outdoor, independent breed like all the people of the great Northwest.”11 In the postwar era, those within and outside the region shared in representing BC, Washington, and Oregon as a transborder region inhabited by an essentially similar type of people. Such representations were articulated not only by cultural leaders but ordinary people. Port Angeles resident Susan Young echoed others in conveying a cross-border sense of place:

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8 John Agnew, “Introduction,” in American Space/American Place, 5. Also see Cole Harris, The Resettlement of British Columbia, xiv; John Agnew, Place and Politics; John Agnew and James Duncan eds., The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space; and Rob Shields, Places on the Margin.
10 For studies that cross the U.S.-Canada border see, for example, Kenneth Coates and John Findlay eds., Parallel Destinies; Sheila McManus, The Line which Separates: Race, Gender, and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Norbert MacDonald, Distant Neighbours; Carlos Schwantes, Radical Heritage; Colin Howell, “Borderlands, Baselines, and Bearhunters: Conceptualizing the Northeast as a Sporting Region in the Interwar Period,” Journal of Sport History 29: 2 (2002): 250-270; and Lauren McKinsey and Victor Konrad, Borderlands Reflections: The United States and Canada (Orono: Borderlands Monograph Series, 1989).
11 Western Regular Baptist, 15 February 1952, 12.
You know, I think that actually this part of Washington and Canada should be one country, because we’re a lot alike, a great deal alike. We can go way up in the woods, and it’s people that we enjoy. But, say, if we head east, and we get to the Midwest or something, it’s like we’re from Mars. I think we’re all the same people. It’s just this piece of water out here, that’s the only thing between us.\(^{12}\)

Although divided by a national border, Washingtonians and British Columbians often imagined themselves (and were imagined by others) as inhabiting a common place.

Place, historian Katherine Morrissey reminds us, refers to an “organized world of meaning” rather than to a definite location. This chapter identifies irreligion as an important strand in the crowded “world of meaning” that was the Pacific Northwest.\(^{13}\)

The porousness of the border between BC and Washington is well established in the existing literature. Popular and academic writers note that BC and the American Northwest states are (and have been) bound by common trade and tourism interests, a shared commitment to environmentalism, and an historic tradition of labour radicalism. Some even argue that this cross-border region should form a separate nation, alternately named Cascadia or Ecotopia. Scholars have shown that migration rates between Washington and BC were high through the postwar era.\(^{14}\) The majority of those interviewed for this study travelled often across the border, and many lived in both places. Cultural media of the postwar decades, including fiction, histories, and travel books, typically conceptualized the Pacific Northwest as a cross-border region.\(^{15}\)

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\(^{12}\) Young interview.

\(^{13}\) Katherine Morrissey, Mental Territories, 16.


easy movement of ideas across the line sometimes caused concern among church leaders. In 1954, the United Church introduced its new Social Service Secretary for Canada’s west coast province: “With headquarters in Vancouver, he is responsible for British Columbia, so rapidly developing; and because it is so much shut off from the east that it is affected by American mores moving up the coast - mores not always the best for Canada.” While BC religious leaders occasionally bemoaned American influences, they also enjoyed strong connections with their counterparts south of the border.

Organized secularism also crossed the national boundary. Secular Humanists in BC and Washington met regularly for meetings, conferences, and workshops. In 1964, the editors of BC’s *Victoria Humanist* considered changing the name of their journal to better capture the transborder character of Northwest secularism. One woman offered her opinion on the proposed name change:

> From my own experience of publishing, I would not worry about changing the title to embrace a wider field. Our friends across the line consider us as part of their Pacific Northwest cultural heritage. The name, ‘Victoria’ is magnetic and there is no valid reason why we should not be originating ideas and clear thinking in print. If much of the industrial wealth is in the East, a great deal of real ability and drive is to be found on the Pacific Coast.

As this comment suggests, Northwesterners often found more common ground with their “friends across the line” than with their national counterparts to the east. Literal and symbolic border crossings nurtured the distinctive culture of the Pacific Northwest, including its irreligion.

This does not mean that the national boundary was irrelevant to religious practice and identity in the postwar Northwest. William New maintains that, while porous and constructed, borders configure “separate arenas of social possibility and expectation: in

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17 *Victoria Humanist* (December 1964), 2.
other words, *cultural difference.*" Secular Humanist literature of the postwar period hints at the significance of the national border to religious possibility and expectation. Humanist commentators on both sides of the border noted that the American mainstream media was far more averse to the subject of atheism than its Canadian counterpart. As one writer remarked in 1952, "Canada permits programs on atheism even if the US does not." As we saw in Chapter 1, rates of atheism and ‘no religion’ were higher in BC than in Washington, a finding that at least partly reflects the greater social disapproval around unbelief in America. My informants readily identified religious differences between Canada and the US; most pointed out that religion is (and has been) more central to public life and social acceptance south of the border. British Columbian Donald Stewart observed that Canadians “are not under the same pressure as Americans are to become a member of the church, because that’s sort of a social thing down there. If you’re going to be a politician, and you’re not a member of a church, you’re probably dead in the water. In Canada, I don’t think it would make much difference, in most cases.” While they identified America as the more religious country, many narrators questioned the authenticity of this religiosity. According to Anne Carlson of Victoria, American piety is “not real. I think they are very religious, oh I pledge my allegiance to my God and my country. I think Americans are very much more so than Canadians. I don’t know if it’s true deep down, but on the outside looking in it certainly is that way.” People on both sides of the border echoed Anne’s suspicions. Port Angeles resident

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21 Stewart interview.
22 Carlson interview.
Thomas Brown remarked that while the US was highly religious “in form,” Canada was the “truly religious” nation in practice: “I don’t see the United States as being a Christian nation or even a religious one, in a broader sense, in terms of character as a nation...In terms of more truly conducting themselves in a Christian way, and respecting religion, I would say Canadians are way ahead of Americans.” References to the “showy,” “phony,” and “surface” nature of American religiosity appear in many of the oral testimonies. Such comments hint at the extent to which ingrained ideas about the religious differences between Canada and the US were shared across the border.

According to Edward Ayers and Peter Onuf, people “carry in their heads quite powerful and uniform mental maps of the United States.” Certainly, people carried powerful mental maps of religion in North America. When asked to consider the religious cultures of Canada and the US, the narrators often responded in regional terms. For instance, Sharon Davis of Victoria replied: “Well, when you talk about the South, you hear so much about religion there.” Others echoed Sharon’s regional assessment:

“All I knew was that Quebec was very religious.”
“Canada is a little bit ahead of the United States. There’s no deep South in Canada.”
“I saw the South-East as heavily religious, and Utah as religious, California as not religious. There are pockets. The Midwest is more religious, but not so religious as the South-East.”
“Well, I could see Quebec being quite religious because there are so many Catholics there and they are so religious.”
“Oh, of course, we were well aware of the situation in the South, the bible belt.”
“The South was, you know, the hoot and holler religion.”

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23 Brown interview.
24 Anderson interview; Williams interview; Hartwich interview; Nelson interview; Hawthorne interview; and McCallum interview.
25 Edward Ayers and Peter Onuf, “Introduction,” in All Over the Map, 3.
26 Davis interview.
27 Clark interview; Davis interview; Williams interview; Sanders interview; Wilson interview; Moore interview; Nelson interview; Morrison interview; MacEwan interview; Brown interview; and Harris interview.
As these comments indicate, Quebec and the American South figured powerfully in the widely held, mental maps of North American religion. When asked whether her husband’s parents were religious, Donna replied: “I presume so, because they were in Quebec.”

Like Donna, people carried with them taken for granted ideas about the religious character of regions. In addition to Quebec and the South, Alberta, Utah, and the Midwest were considered especially religious, and the Pacific Northwest and entire west coast non-religious. In Chapter 3, we saw that Northwesterners who had lived in or visited other places found their own region to be relatively secular. Even those who had rarely moved or travelled, such as Seattleite Frank Williams, knew the Northwest to be a comparatively non-religious place. Frank distinguished his own region from “back East where religion is taken a bit more seriously.”

In 1968, a Humanist magazine matter-of-factly referred to Atlantic Canada as a region “where religion still holds the field.” In contrast to most other regions, the Northwest was often assigned a secular place in the “mental map” of North American religion; this imaginative map was not irrelevant but rather helped to mark out religious expectations in the region.

The study of regional cultures, Celia Applegate argues, “does not so much undermine national histories as complicate them and, especially in the case of border regions, emphasize the ambiguities and instabilities of the nationalizing project.” From a Northwest perspective, my work destabilizes certain national religious narratives, such

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28 Tremblay interview.
29 Williams interview.
30 Humanist in Canada (Fall 1968), 24.
<http://www.historycooperative.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/journals/ahr/104.4>
as those of secularization and Puritanism. In a 1975 speech, Episcopalian minister Thomas Jessett remarked upon the unique character of Washington State:

The Biblical idea of being a people chosen of God that permated (sic) the thinking of our New England ancestors has played an important part in our national history. With it has gone both a sense of privilege and a sense of responsibility. Neither of these appears to have found lodgment (sic) in the thinking of the citizens of Washington.\(^\text{32}\)

As Jessett’s comment suggests, Washington never quite fit the dominant story of American religion. The Puritan myth belies US diversity generally, but it lacks particular resonance in the comparatively secular Northwest. Overarching national narratives such as Puritanism and secularization are rendered unstable and ambiguous from the view of this cross-border region. This view also disrupts entrenched ideas about the nature of church-state relations in Canada and the US. Scholars often identify church-state relations as the chief arena of religious difference between these two countries. It is something of a settled truth that a strict adherence to the separation of church and state has fundamentally distinguished America’s religious culture from that of its neighbour to the north.\(^\text{33}\) Few studies, however, have compared state interventions in religion in these two countries, particularly at the regional and everyday level. Although it is not possible to conduct a thorough comparative analysis of such a complex subject here, my research suggests that BC and Washington were not irrevocably divided on the terrain of church-state relations. Despite constitutional differences, these two places responded similarly to the contested issues of religion in the schools and Sabbath legislation.


The First Amendment of the US constitution explicitly supports the principle of church-state separation, whereas the Canadian constitution contains no such clause. Although regularly taken as proof of the rigid “wall” between church and state in the US, the First Amendment should be seen as prescriptive rather than descriptive. In 1967, the Greater Seattle Council of Churches complained that the “strict separation of church and state in Washington [provides] one of the most difficult situations in the nation for maintaining working relations between religious bodies and governmental institutions.”

American church leaders regularly complained that Washington’s constitution was the most “strongly-worded” in the country with respect to the separation of church and state. When it came to the issue of religion and education, Washington joined most other states in prohibiting public aid to sectarian schools. However, it was one of the few states to forbid Bible reading in the schools and to disallow public support for the transportation of children to parochial schools. My research suggests that the western states, including Washington, were uniquely committed to keeping religion out of the public schools. In 1962, an author for the secularist Progressive World noted that religious exercises were far more prevalent in the eastern and southern states...But in the western states the percentage of schools holding religious exercises is far less. The farther west you go, things get worse and worse, and when you come to California you find so many godless schools you begin to believe that the Constitution is really taken seriously by the inhabitants.

In the 1960s, a series of national surveys on religion in the schools revealed clear regional variances. Such surveys indicated that religion was far less prevalent in school systems of the West. For instance, when asked whether their schools aimed to teach “spiritual values,” 21.29% of Americans replied in the negative, as compared to 31.13% of westerners. Also, 91.38% of westerners noted that their schools did not hold homeroom devotional services, compared to only 49.76 of people nation-wide.38 Despite generalized statements about church-state relations in the US, regional discrepancies emerged in the arena of religious education. The states of the American West were comparatively strict in keeping religion out of the public schools, a fact that was lamented by religious leaders and celebrated by secularists.39

Unlike its American counterpart, the Canadian constitution allowed for state-supported religious education. Provincial variations in approaches to religious education abounded in Canada. Like Washington, BC was considered a “stronghold” of church-state separation.40 In postwar Canada, all provinces except British Columbia and Manitoba supported separate Catholic school systems; BC was considered especially

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38 Unfortunately, these surveys did not include state-level data. See Richard Dierenfeld, Religion in American Public Schools, 47-94. Also see David Roozen and Jackson Carroll, “Recent Trends in Church Membership and Participation: An Introduction,” in Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 34.
39 David Buerge and Jonius Rochester, Roots and Branches, 195; National Catholic Reporter, 26 February 1969, 5; UWM, WNCC, Acc.1567-2, Box 9, File: Legislative Conferences, 1957 and 1959, “Legislative Conference at Olympia,” February 7 and 8, 1959; Box 16, File: Legislative, Miscellaneous Sessions, Pamphlet: “Puritanicness Exallich the Nation: Proposed Amendment to the Constitution to the State of Washington, 1945; Episcopal Church, Diocese of Olympia, Minutes (1959), 75; UWM, University of Washington Religious Director’s Association (hereafter UWRD), Acc.3454, Vertical File 1310, “Legal Points Involved in REW Ban Debate, UW Daily, 28 October 1957; and Seattle Times, 15 November 1963, 10.
“extreme” in withholding state support for parochial schools.\textsuperscript{41} In 1969, a BC journal urged Catholics in the province to “go east for a fair deal”: “What a contrast! West of the Rockies Catholic schools get next to nothing in government support. Just east of the mountains, in Alberta and Saskatchewan, they’ve got it made.”\textsuperscript{42} Another writer pointed to the “grave injustices that Catholics in B.C. are enduring through its educational system, when all other provinces have much more favorable conditions.”\textsuperscript{43} In the 1950s, British Columbians debated about whether Catholic schoolchildren should be allowed to ride public school buses. A radio host contributed to the debate: “in British Columbia, it looks as if we haven’t the same respect for the other fellow’s viewpoint that they have in Quebec and Ontario. That sort of thing isn’t normal in B.C. On most matters we’re more than broad-minded.”\textsuperscript{44} Catholic and cultural observers described BC’s education system as uniquely “pagan,” “un-Canadian,” and “extremely secular.”\textsuperscript{45} Secondary research points to the distinct secularity of BC’s public school system, which in the postwar era made no provisions for religious instruction, and excluded the clergy from teaching


\textsuperscript{42} \textit{BC Catholic}, 6 February 1969, 9.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Torch}, April 1951, 3-5, 7.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{BC Catholic}, 3 May 1951, 1.

positions. In 1968, the editor of the Canadian Register remarked that BC schools were "American-type public schools, basically non-religious." Although the subject of religion in the schools requires further comparative research, the available evidence suggests the need to reconsider any easy truisms about the nature of church-state relations in these two countries. BC and Washington belonged to nations with different constitutional traditions. However, when it came to state interventions in religious education, these two places seemed to share more in common with each other than with their counterparts to the east.

In the postwar era, debates about the state's role in religion centred not only on schools but on Sundays. Through the 1950s, Christian leaders in Canada constructed an idealized "Canadian Sunday," a nationally observed day of rest and worship that distinguished this country from its neighbour to the south. In 1957, a writer for the Presbyterian Record worried that the "Canadian Sunday" was at risk of becoming Americanized: "We need the Sunday for worship and, as Canadians, we ought to maintain our wholesome reverence for the Lord's Day. Let us see that opportunity to worship and create a nobler world is not further desecrated." Maclean's magazine likewise imagined a distinctive "Canadian Sunday," describing this country as "the chief upholder of the closed Sunday in the English-speaking world." The notion of a uniformly reverent, national Sunday was, of course, a fiction that excluded many

46 Doug Owram, Born at the Right Time, 104; Vincent McNally, "Challenging the Status Quo," 8; and Ronald Manzer, "Public Philosophy and Public Policy," 259. In the United States, it was illegal to prohibit the clergy from becoming public school teachers, or to restrict the hiring of teachers by faith. See Richard Dierenfeld, Religion in American Public Schools, 36.
47 Canadian Register, 20 July 1968, 5. Also see United Church Observer, 15 June 1961, 2.
48 Presbyterian Record, April 1957, 3. For an expression of concern about the "Americanization" of the Canadian Sunday see UCBCA, LDA, Box 2, File 23, letter from Rev. Allen to Harvey Smith, 11 October 1961.
49 Maclean's, 15 February 1955, 32.
Canadians, including those who observed different Sabbaths. References to the Canadian Sunday also obscured regional differences. Despite both legislative and imaginative efforts to define a national Sunday, there has never been a singular Canadian (or, for that matter, American) Sunday. Such efforts were regularly destabilized and undercut by ordinary people in local and regional contexts.

In Canada, the Lord’s Day Act of 1906, which prohibited businesses from opening on Sundays, remained in effect until 1985. The Lord’s Day Act should not be taken as a window on the Canadian Sunday, as over the years the Act was differently enforced, contested, and amended across the country. In the US, Sunday closing laws were initiated by each state, including Washington, in 1909. In the postwar era, the ‘blue laws’ in this cross-border region were widely viewed as outdated and unenforceable.

As early as 1937, a Washington newspaper observed: “One of the deadest of Washington’s many dead laws is the Sunday closing law…The statute has never been repealed, has been violated generally through the state every Sunday for the past quarter of a century.” In 1966, the Seattle Magazine reported that the majority of Washingtonians were “blithely unconcerned about legal limitations on their Sunday activities.” North of the border, religious leaders bemoaned the contemptuous disregard for the Sunday laws among legal officials themselves. As one LDA spokesperson reported in 1957: “A police commissioner lent himself to attack the Sunday Observance

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52 Argus, 28 August 1937, 3.
Act of B.C. in some of its lapsed aspects, claiming that he had broken the law by failing to attend church on Sunday. His excuse was a ‘sick wife.’"  

The oral testimonies suggest that the blue laws prescribed, but did not determine, Sunday activities in the region. Through the postwar years, laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol on Sundays were subject to frequent contest in both BC and Washington.  

William recalled that during the 1950s in the Olympia area, his parents and others easily evaded the Sunday liquor laws:

> My parents...managed to get [liquor] from people who would bootleg for them on Sunday. In fact, you could call up and order it, and they’d bring it out. There was a man in town here, he had an ambulance, and he’d come out in his ambulance and deliver liquor out the back of his ambulance on Sunday, to people who needed alcohol on Sunday.  

Ordinary people navigated their way around the blue laws and found access to liquor on the ‘Lord’s Day.’ Sunday liquor legislation was also challenged and ignored north of the border. Patrick recalled that on Sundays during the postwar years, he regularly helped his friend “clean” a Nanaimo pub:

> he had a trap-door behind the bar, and it went down to his cellar, his basement. And we’d go down in there, and we’d drink the zam first to get rid of the beer in it so we could clean it. And the local constable would come by and knock on the side door, and he’d come in, and he’d party with us too, you know. So we used to have the police down there and everything. That was a - and I’ll use the word ‘religious’ - happening every Sunday.  

As these stories suggest, Sunday legislation must not be treated as a window on actual behaviour. Much to the chagrin of certain religious and government officials, ordinary people continued to reject and avoid the blue laws and to define the meaning of Sunday.

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54 UCBCA, LDA, Box 1, File 9, Letter from Rev. Allen to Rev. A.S. McGrath, 2 November 1957.  
55 UPC, Synod of Washington, Annual Session, Minutes (1952), 331; Argus, 8 December 1961, 1; Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 10 December 1964; and Presbyterian Record, April 1957, 3.  
56 Harris interview.  
57 O’Connor interview.
for themselves. In the Northwest, these local subversions reflected and reinforced the wider, unchurched culture of which they were a part.

Of course, Sunday closing legislation was challenged across both nations, not only in the Pacific Northwest. However, debates about Sunday laws served to articulate and disseminate this region’s distinct secularism. According to the historian Katherine Morrissey, shared regional identities are made and entrenched, in part, during instances of conflict.\(^{58}\) Through the 1950s and 1960s, BC’s secular identity was made visible in an ongoing contest around Sunday work in Canada’s pulp and paper industry. Claiming that they needed to do so to meet American competition, BC mills defied the Lord’s Day Act and operated on Sundays through these years. LDA officials complained that mill workers sought out Sunday work for the “financial advantage,” and that mill owners were generally indifferent to the churches and actually encouraged “organized sport and other secular activities” on Sundays.\(^{59}\) In disrespecting the Lord’s Day, mill owners were seen as contributing to the widespread secularity of BC’s resource towns. As one LDA officer commented: “There appears to be a negative attitude on the part of most of the local company executives about Sunday in general and church attendance in particular - and this attitude seems to reflect itself (sic) in the attitude as a whole of the townspeople regarding the observance of the Sunday.”\(^{60}\) The persistence of Sunday work was alternately blamed on the irreverence of BC’s workers, employers, and even this province’s Attorney General. Although national in scope, the Lord’s Day Act was


\(^{59}\) UCBCA, LDA, Box 1, File 9, Letter from Rev. Allen to Rev. McGrath, 2 November 1957; Box 2, File 7, Special Meeting of the LDA of Canada, BC Executive, 18 May 1955; and Box 2, File 9, Minutes of Policy Committee, 1 April 1959.

\(^{60}\) UCBCA, LDA, Box 2, File 11, Memo to P. Mallon, Archbishop’s Representative, LDA Committee, 13 January 1961.
enforced by Attorneys General at the provincial level. BC’s Attorney General was especially resistant towards the Act, causing one LDA officer to remark: “Sunday difficulties in B.C. are in part a creation of the Attorney General’s Department.” In a letter to the Attorney General, the LDA executive urged the cessation of Sunday work in BC’s pulp and paper industry:

The variation in this industry which we experience in B.C. cannot help but exercise a harmful influence on the moral, social and spiritual climate of our people, for such policy permits the setting aside of the Lord’s Day with its emphasis on spiritual values, as a day of special observance, in favour of the unchecked operation of the material factors of life.

BC’s defiance of the Sunday laws was regularly called upon to pressure “the Governments of Eastern Provinces to permit continuous operation of pulp and paper mills in Ontario, Quebec and the Eastern Maritime Provinces.” This conflict over Sunday work brought regional variations to light, and is just one example of how the Northwest’s distinctive secularism became embedded in the postwar social imaginary.

On both sides of the border, contests over Sunday not only revealed, but also disseminated, the Northwest’s secular identity. This does not mean that everyone who opposed or ignored the Sunday laws was non-religious (or that all who supported these laws were religious). However, through such public debates the secular Northwest came to be known by those within, and outside, the region. In 1963, one journalist decried the “paradox” of Washington’s blue laws:

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61 UCBCA, LDA, Box 3, File 9, Review and Observations for 1961, Field Secretary for Alberta and B.C.
62 UCBCA, LDA, Box 2, File 24, Letter from LDA Executive to the Attorney General, 14 May 1960.
64 For instance, working class and labour movements have often supported Sunday legislation for political and economic rather than explicitly religious reasons.
Washington State has one of the lowest church memberships in ratio to the population of any state of the fifty in our Union. It is a truth that at least one denomination has considered designating its Rosellini-land outposts as foreign missions. When we are this sinful I do not think it meet that pastors seek legislation to save either Sunday or Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday, for the family or anybody else.\footnote{Argus, 1 March 1963, 4.}

BC’s reputation for being “directly opposite the other nine provinces” on Sunday observance continued through 1980, when it became the first province to allow municipalities to enforce (or abandon) Sunday shopping legislation.\footnote{UCBCA, LDA, Box 4, File 3, Letter from Les Kingdon, General Secretary to the Honourable Allan Williams, Atty-General, Province of BC, 9 July 1980.} Public discourse on the Sunday laws set Washington and BC apart, religiously, from other regions. Much has been made of the different nature of church-state relations in Canada and the US. My research points to some of the regional variances that flourished behind the national constitutional and legislative prescriptions on schools and Sundays.

BC and Washington shared much, even when it came to matters typically considered to be at the heart of national identity, such as church-state relations. The Pacific Northwest was, religiously and otherwise, a cross-border place. Cultural geographers have shown that place is both materially and symbolically constituted, and works in multiple ways to shape human behaviour.\footnote{See, for example, John Agnew, The Power of Place; Linda McDowell, Gender, Identity, and Place; Rob Shields, Places on the Margin; Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose eds., Constructions of Race, Place, and Nation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); and Katherine Morrissey, Mental Territories.} Geography influences religious behaviour in very basic ways. While this has often escaped the notice of scholars, ordinary people readily offer geographical explanations for their religious or irreligious behaviour. When asked why she had never attended church, Donna explained: “Oh, I think a lot of the main reason is the circumstances of where we were – physically, we were out of town. We always seemed to live somewhere out of town. It was mostly, I
think, probably the physical." 68 Another woman claimed that she did not christen her child, in part, due to the geographical obstacles of living in the North: "they had a little ferry that went across the Klondike, and if the water was too high, you couldn’t run the ferry... And it was the same thing in the spring, when the ice broke up. There were times you couldn’t get across, you know. So, things like that, and time went by, and so we never had him christened." 69 Several of my informants admitted to selecting religious institutions for weddings, baptisms, and Sunday school based on proximity. Muriel, a homemaker in postwar Vancouver, reflected upon how she chose the setting for her wedding: "I happened to live in Kerrisdale at the time, and I walked by this church everyday, and I thought it looked like a real pretty English type church." 70 As these stories suggest, despite the conventional view of religion as somehow detached from ordinary life, decisions about religion were often tied to the everydayness of place.

Place worked not only in local but also regional ways to shape religious practice and identity in the postwar Pacific Northwest. “Like people, things, and activities,” contend sociologists Lee Cuba and David Hummon, “places are an integral part of the social world of everyday life; as such, they become important mechanisms through which identity is defined and situated.” 71 Of course, places defy easy or singular definition; it is not possible to determine all that the Pacific Northwest meant to the people who lived there. Keeping in mind that all definitions of place are necessarily partial, this chapter now turns to a discussion of some of the ways in which the Pacific Northwest defined and situated secular identity. In a recent article, Mark Silk notes that scholars who explore

68 Tremblay interview.
69 Wilson interview.
70 Thompson interview.
the regional dimensions of religion are “in the business of opening conversations that have barely existed, rather than of having the last word.” My work joins these emergent conversations; it probes some of the connections between place and irreligion, rather than offering the definitive or ‘last word’ on the subject. Drawing together new themes with some previously discussed, I suggest that certain demographic, historical, and imaginative elements of the Pacific Northwest combined to nurture irreligion in the region. Northwest secularism was not tied to any single factor. Rather, it was entangled in the particular demography, history, and culture of this distinctive place.

This dissertation joins several other studies in arguing that Northwest irreligion was not demographically determined. This does not mean, however, that demography is irrelevant to this story. Certain demographic elements, interwoven with the Northwest’s history and culture, helped to foster secularism in the region. The region’s highly mobile population was especially significant. Many scholars identify transiency as a defining characteristic of the Pacific Northwest. Mobility should not be seen as invariably secularizing. However, in the specific context of the postwar Northwest, mobility facilitated disengagements from religion. As we saw in Chapter 5, moving often separated people from one of the chief motivations for religious involvement, extended

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72 Mark Silk, “Religion and Region,” 266.
74 For a useful discussion on BC immigration, see Cole Harris, The Resettlement of British Columbia, 253. Also see Eric Ewert, “The Case for Place,” 5; John Findlay, “A Fishy Proposition,” 45; and Robert Burkinshaw, Pilgrims in Lotus Land, 4.
family. Mobility also reproduced secularism in another way, which is hinted at in the following description of the American Northwest in *The Lutheran*:

...by cold and indisputable statistics a family moving to this region runs greater risk of losing its connection with the church, and of having its faith in God sicken and die, than it would anywhere else in the United States. (It should be pointed out that for Canada somewhat the same conditions prevail in British Columbia, which is also a part of the Pacific Synod). For the Christian Church this is an emergency area.\(^75\)

Sociologists have shown that migrants often conform to the dominant religious (or secular) culture of their new region. As Roger Stump has demonstrated, "changes in religious commitment among migrants reflect regional norms of religious behaviour."\(^76\)

When it came to religious behaviour, *where* a person moved was more important than *that* they moved - in other words place was more significant than moving itself to religious identity. As we shall see below, a distinct irreligion has been part of Northwest life since the nineteenth century. People who moved to the region in the postwar decades, as in earlier times, encountered a culture that ascribed comparatively little value to religious involvement. They may not have become godless, but migrants to the Pacific Northwest were likely to experience a decline in religious participation and commitment.

Population mobility, then, has helped to reproduce Northwest secularism over time.

Mobility worked not only in historical but also imaginative ways to entrench norms of irreligion in the Northwest. Moving was imagined as a Northwest tradition, a central part of this region's independent, adventurous, and masculine identity. As my informants matter-of-factly affirmed, the call to "go west, young man" was about escaping, not

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\(^75\) *Lutheran*, 26 March 1952, 14.

seeking, religion. Moving was invested with place-specific, and indeed secular, meanings in this region. As part of the Northwest’s cultural as well as material world, mobility helped to stimulate and sustain place-specific detachments from religion.

The oral testimonies suggest that another demographic factor may have been significant to irreligion in the BC context. BC has always had a comparatively small Catholic population: in 1971, 46.2% of Canada’s population identified as Catholic, compared to only 18.7% of BC’s population. Several of my informants were struck by the relative absence of a Protestant-Catholic cultural divide in BC. Certainly, BC was not entirely free of anti-Catholicism. In 1951 the BC Catholic encouraged the distribution of Catholic reading material to “cut down prejudice in B.C. where only one in ten persons is of the Faith.” However, religion seems to have been a less prominent marker of difference in this province, than in others. Sharon discovered that her identity as a (nominal) Catholic meant something quite different in Victoria than it had in her hometown of Edmonton. Sharon, who had confronted anti-Catholicism and had herself chanted: “Catholics, Catholics, ring the bell, Protestants, Protestants, go to hell!” in Edmonton, found that religious identities were hidden or irrelevant in BC. Edward similarly discovered that being Catholic or Protestant mattered little in BC, even in the realm of politics. He remarked: “there was more of a religious bias in Halifax. You were recognized as either Catholic or Protestant. The NDP were running a chap for city council in Halifax, and the consensus was that he wouldn’t get in - not because he was

77 Thompson interview; Anderson interview; and Wilson interview. Also see Robert Burkinshaw, Pilgrims in Lotus Land, 4.
78 Census of Canada, Special Series #5, Table 1 (1971).
79 BC Catholic, 25 January 1951, 2. For an American example, see Catholic Northwest Progress, 20 January 1961, 5.
80 Davis interview.
NDP, but because he was Catholic.\textsuperscript{81} Like Sharon and Edward, many of my Canadian informants were struck by the lack of Catholic-Protestant tensions in BC. Linda, a nurse who was raised Protestant, moved from Winnipeg to Nanaimo in 1957. Having worked only with Protestant nurses in Winnipeg, Linda was “shocked” to discover that many of her Nanaimo colleagues were Catholic: “It was kind of jolting. The Nanaimo nurses just mixed together.” According to Linda, anti-Catholicism was embedded in Winnipeg culture. When her Catholic friend dated a Protestant, “the family found out that she was Catholic, and they were just horrified.”\textsuperscript{82} The oral narratives suggest that BC was neither as firmly nor as visibly divided along Catholic-Protestant lines as provinces to the east. Of course, this is not, by itself, evidence of BC irreligion. As several scholars have shown, Catholic-Protestant conflicts have often been as much (or more) about ethnicity and race than about religion. For instance, strains of virulent anti-Catholicism in nineteenth century Ontario were motivated by deep prejudices against the Irish.\textsuperscript{83} The presence of a deep Catholic-Protestant divide is not reliable evidence of religiosity. However, the absence of such a divide in BC at least partially reflected and reinforced the comparative irrelevance of public religious identities in Canada’s westernmost province.

Scholars have identified a strand of anti-Catholic sentiment in American Northwest history, but this sentiment had waned by the postwar era.\textsuperscript{84} Roman Catholics

\textsuperscript{81} Lewis interview.
\textsuperscript{82} Sato interview.
have long been the largest religious body in Washington and Oregon, consistently outnumbered only by those claiming no religion. My American informants did not recall the existence of Catholic-Protestant tensions in postwar Washington. Brian remembered that as a child of atheist parents in Olympia, some of his best friends were Catholic: “It was never a big thing...If you lived out here your whole life, you wouldn’t have known the difference, because out here nobody really cared that much.” Historian Patricia Killen contends that Catholic religious identities have been more muted in the American Northwest than in other regions. She argues that Catholics who came to the Northwest did not link their ethnic identity “to religious identity in the way that greater numbers of Catholic immigrants to the eastern and Midwestern United States did.” The oral testimonies suggest that there was a relative absence of anti-Catholicism in postwar Washington. My American informants, however, were less apt than their BC counterparts to describe this absence as a striking regional phenomenon. Helen Griffith, who grew up Catholic in Olympia, encountered little religious prejudice:

I think there was more discrimination against blacks...I can remember when the first black people came to town, and I can remember there was this nice black family - they happened to be Catholic, they went to church, they were good people, they lived out by where my dad...a couple of houses from where my father lived - somebody burned a cross on their lawn, and then they decided to move.

As Helen’s comment suggests, race outweighed religion as the dominant terrain for defining and articulating difference in the Northwest. The oral narratives, secondary sources, and printed materials point to deep divisions of race in postwar BC and

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86 Clark interview.
87 Patricia Killen, “Writing the Pacific Northwest,” 82-3.
88 Griffith interview.
Washington. Religious divisions were less evident here, distinguishing this place from certain other regions of North America. Far more research is needed on the regional dimensions of Catholic-Protestant relations in Canada and the US, particularly in the years following World War II. It is beyond the scope of the present work to capture all the nuances of such relations in the Northwest. Nevertheless, the available evidence suggests that in the postwar era, this region was a place with neither extensive nor deeply ingrained Catholic-Protestant antipathies; this was especially true in BC, with its unusually small Catholic population. The relative lack of such antipathies did not cause irreligion. However, it did mean that religion was less a part of public discourse and identity in the Northwest than in places with more apparent Catholic-Protestant divides.

The Northwest's specific demography worked in both material and cultural ways to nurture wider secular possibilities in this region. Northwest irreligion was also constituted historically. "Despite the current fashion to dismiss history as a force in everyday events," writes Gerald Friesen, "Western Canadians respond to contemporary pressures in ways that are profoundly conditioned by the past." The "habits of region," he argues, "are sunk deep in the Canadian soil and psyche." The Northwest's secular 'habits' did not suddenly appear in the 1950s, but rather were 'sunk deep' in this region's past. In 1860, a Protestant minister described his impressions of Olympia, Washington:

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89 See, for example, John Findlay, "A Fishy Proposition," 46; Kay Anderson, Vancouver's Chinatown; Quintard Taylor, In Search of the Racial Frontier; Lance Laird, "Religions of the Pacific Rim," 107-138; and Laurier Mercier, "Reworking Race, Class, and Gender," 61-74.
Infidelity and skepticism are not nourished in secret; intemperance does not fix the same blot upon the escutcheon of individual reputation as in the older settled portions of our country. Many of the population...seem to have forgotten the religious and moral restraints of early education and habit, and deem themselves emancipated from restraint and responsibility...Many, also, are there who think less of God and the future than the excitement of money-making, the delirium of politics, or the delicious frenzy of intoxication.\textsuperscript{92}

Scholars have traced the Northwest’s distinct irreligion back to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.

American researchers have shown that in 1890, only 16.4\% of people in Washington State adhered to organized religion, as compared to 34.4\% in the US as a whole.\textsuperscript{93} In the Canadian context, Lynne Marks has demonstrated that in 1901, British Columbians were far less involved in churches, and far more likely to be atheists, than their counterparts in other provinces.\textsuperscript{94} The secularity of the post-World War II Northwest must be considered as part of a much longer history. Regional cultures are not stable essences, but rather human constructions that shift across time. As the geographer Cole Harris writes,

societies and the places they occupy are part and parcel of each other. The one is not the stage on which the other evolves. Nor are societies made by their settings, as environmental determinists once thought, or settings the simple effects of human activity. The two are interrelated, each affecting the other in complex, ongoing interaction.\textsuperscript{95}

Contingent on time as well as place, Northwest secularism was not the same in 1950 as it was in 1900. In the earlier period, for example, this region’s unique irreligion partially stemmed from a demographic preponderance of young, single males.\textsuperscript{96} While this gender imbalance levelled out by the postwar era, the masculine connotations of the Northwest persisted through the 1970s, and continued to influence this region’s secular identity. As

\textsuperscript{92} UWM, Thomas Jessett Papers, Acc.1832, Box. 9, File: Proposed Writing of History of Episcopal Church in Northwest, “The Episcopate of Thomas Fielding Scott,” 13.
\textsuperscript{94} Lynne Marks, “Leaving God Behind.”
\textsuperscript{95} Cole Harris, The Resettlement of British Columbia, 254.
this example suggests, historical forces shaped, but did not determine in any predictable way, the secularism of the postwar Northwest.

History worked on two levels to reproduce Northwest secularism: in ordinary households, and in public constructions of this region’s past. In a recent review of studies on religion and place, Rhys Williams writes: “people perform religious rituals precisely because they have been done repeatedly by their forebears - rituals connect people over time.”97 Although understood and practiced in different ways across the generations, religious traditions are often passed on within families. To take secularism seriously as an element of regional culture is to acknowledge that it, too, was entangled in family histories. Karen, a retired nurse in Port Angeles, reflected on her mother’s secular influence: “as far as religion was concerned, apparently she hadn’t had any particular influence in her family, from her mother and father, and she didn’t pass any on to us. And I’m grateful for that, because it gave me a chance to do my own thinking.” Karen continued this secular tradition when she became a parent: “Religion was just never that big a deal, I guess, to us because we didn’t really talk about it the way some people do, and we didn’t say grace at dinner, and we didn’t bless everybody.”98 As we saw in Chapter 5, postwar Northwesterners constructed their religious identities in relation to family. Several of my informants, including Karen, attributed their secular inclinations at least partly to one or both of their parents. Out of the 44 individuals interviewed, more than half came from non-churchgoing families and/or families where one or both parents were non-religious; approximately 16 of these were from families with deep roots in the Northwest. Sociologists have demonstrated that how, or whether, one encounters religion

97 Rhys Williams, “Locating the Transcendent,” 250.
98 Morrison interview.
in their childhood home is an important predictor of future religious involvement. Evidence from the oral testimonies suggests that irreligion was at least partly reproduced within Northwest families. William attributed his non-churchgoing, in part, to his upbringing in Thurston County:

I don’t recall anybody in my family ever going to church. I don’t recall my grandparents ever going to church, I don’t recall my mother or father, or even my stepfather going to church. So, as far as I know, nobody in my family ever went to church. As far as I can recall. I mean, I know that I never went to church with my parents. I went to church one time with my uncle, and that was to a Catholic Church, one time, just because we were staying with him. But, none of my family went to church.

Nanaimo resident Donald Stewart recalled that in opting for atheism, he had not consciously set out to “follow his dad,” but had been deeply influenced by his father’s religious scepticism. Secular traditions were reproduced, historically, within ordinary households, in actions taken and not taken in those “local spaces of everyday life,” including the dinner table. According to historian Karen Wigen, it is in these “local spaces” that regional identities were produced and disseminated. The household, Wigen maintains, is an “essential ‘capillary’ of regional reproduction, the level at which distinctive patterns of speech, labor, and sociability have been both forged and lost.”

Although more elusive than religious rituals, distinctive, regional patterns of secularism were also forged, and perpetuated across time, in Northwest households.

This regional secularism was reproduced in public as well as private histories.

Religion rarely appears in the dominant tellings of the Pacific Northwest past. Popular

99 Reginald Bibby, Fragmented Gods, 236-7; and Everett Perry et.al., “Toward a Typology,” 394.
100 Harris interview.
101 Stewart interview.
and academic histories of the region that emerged in the postwar era typically ignored religion, or addressed it only in relation to Christian mission work in the nineteenth century. For example, in 1957 the *Nanaimo Free Press* included an extensive supplement on the history of this city that included references to industry, leisure, and transportation, but not religion; likewise, Washington State’s centennial celebrations in 1989 contained no mention of religion. Cultural media not only circulated but also established this region’s secular past. Popular histories disseminated the idea of Northwest secularism, helping to ingrain it in the public, historical memory, and, as we shall see in a moment, in the minds of ordinary people. As one regional writer affirmed, in the Northwest “there are not even strong ties with the tradition of religion.” Social commentators in earlier years and today have reinforced this region’s secularism by depicting it as a place with a “pioneer, honky-tonk history” that was “free of religious constraints.” Historian Laurie Maffly-Kipp rightly notes that “religion as a social presence is either absent or at best, serves as a minor and ineffectual player” in popular and academic histories of the American west. Maffly-Kipp, like many scholars, counters this absence by pointing to the “religious ferment” in this region’s history. Intent on showing religion’s presence, scholars rarely acknowledge that secularism was itself an important aspect of Northwest regionalism. The Pacific Northwest’s regional

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104 *Nanaimo Free Press*, 31 October 1957, 2; and *Seattle Times*, 21 October 1989, A15.
and secular identity became entwined, in part, through popular (and also academic) historical representations. In overlooking religion, such representations described, but also helped to make, this regional secularism.

The secular Northwest was constituted not only on demographic and historical, but also imaginative terrain. This place was more secular, in part, because it was imagined that way. In arguing that Northwest secularism was culturally constructed, my work moves beyond some of the more deterministic explanations for this regional phenomenon. Patricia Killen attributes Northwest irreligion to “the conjunction of geography and demographics.” According to Killen, “sheer space and mobility combined with sparse populations of any given ethnic group - contribute to the dynamic of the region leaching religiousness out of people.”

Killen aptly suggests that geographic and demographic elements influenced this regional secularism; she is, however, less attentive to the cultural, place-specific meanings of these elements. Geographic and demographic factors function and are interpreted differently across various contexts - such factors do not by themselves inexorably “leach religiousness out of people.” As we saw in Chapter 2, postwar church leaders believed otherwise. As one American Episcopalian minister affirmed, the Northwest’s “natural world dominates its reality,” which makes “the work of a priest more difficult because the church’s traditional forms are not as readily accessible as, say, a mountain landscape.”

Canadian religious leaders also regularly blamed the mountains for drawing British Columbians away from the church, and for acting as not only a geographical but spiritual barrier. One United Church leader anticipated that British Columbians would become more religious when

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the mountains became more passable: "the new highways through the mountains will make a difference, and B.C. people will be more in touch with Alberta." \(^{110}\)

Postwar church leaders (and, often, present-day scholars) suggested that the Pacific Northwest's landscape dictated its secularity. As we have seen, place could shape religious practice in very basic ways. Place must, however, be understood in both material and symbolic terms. Contrary to the opinions of church officials, mountain ranges, forests, and other material geographic features did not, on their own, determine religious choices. As regional comparisons make clear, attention to cultural context is crucial. In Canada, an Anglican official matter-of-factly pointed out that the "Church's hold is always precarious" in northern BC, because this "rough country" entails "dangerous journeys along a treacherous coast and arduous trips into a forbidding interior." \(^{111}\) Interestingly, on the opposite coast, a rugged geography was deemed responsible for inspiring deep attachments to religion and the church:

> The Church occupies an important place in the life of the people of Newfoundland. It might be that because the people have been so closely related to the sea with its constant reminder of the power of God and with its heavy toll in human life, they seem to be more God conscious than people in inland areas. One of the results has been that Newfoundland has produced more ministers for the Christian Church in proportion to its population than any other area in Canada. \(^{112}\)

As this example reveals, seemingly 'objective' geographical characteristics could be considered inherently secularizing in one context, and sacralizing in another. Geography, then, does not determine culture, but rather is mediated by it. In the postwar imaginary, Northwest geography was most often (though not always) cast as secularizing.

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\(^{110}\) United Church Observer, 15 October 1963, 11, 46.

\(^{111}\) ACC, General Synod, Journal of Proceedings (1959), 381.

\(^{112}\) United Church Observer, 1 October 1951, 13.
Place is socially constructed, but it "feels solid and grounded." Like religious and cultural commentators, ordinary people assigned secular meanings to Northwest geography. Although there was nothing inherent in this region's landscape that made people less "churchy," the people themselves suggest otherwise. Northwest regionalism was popularly viewed as "a quality of life thrust upon man by the mountains and the sea." As historian Carlos Schwantes notes: "Rugged mountains and gargantuan trees called forth strong-willed, self-reliant individuals to match them, or so Northwesterners have often claimed." In the regional vernacular, the mountains, trees, and the sea were understood to be at least partially responsible for secularizing the quintessential Northwest lifestyle. My informants regularly looked to the landscape to explain their own irreligious behaviour, and that of others. James, who worked as a salesman in postwar Vancouver, stayed away from churches through much of his life because "BC is an outdoor type of place. On a Sunday I would just get in my car and drive down to Seattle or drive down to Whistler, and enjoy nature. More preferable than sitting for an hour in church. That didn't turn me on at all. I think people in BC have literally been drawn away from the church because we have other activities." Port Angeles resident Susan Young similarly framed her decision to stay away from church in geographical terms: "the area that we live in, we can go miles in any direction, and we have a cathedral

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113 William Lang, "Beavers, Furs, Salmon," Par.9.
anywhere we want to turn.”\textsuperscript{117} Another woman claimed that the church was irrelevant in Nanaimo because of “the absorbance of...[pause]...I’d call it nature, I don’t know what else to call it.”\textsuperscript{118} Several of my informants attributed their absence from church to the Northwest’s favourable climate; one BC man, discussing his life outside of the church, simply affirmed: “we’re living in Eden!”\textsuperscript{119}

The Northwest’s distinct secularity was not intrinsic to its natural environment, but it was partly a product of how that environment was defined. To recognize that regional identity is constructed is not to deny its relevance to human behaviour. As American historian Patricia Limerick argues, because “of an idea of the South and of Southernness, people have submitted to federal authority and resisted federal authority; they have stayed home and moved away; they have stood in solidarity and stood in one another’s way; they have killed and been killed. Region is a mental act and region is real, at one and the same time.”\textsuperscript{120} Because of an idea of the Pacific Northwest, people approached and interpreted religion in particular ways. Because Northwesterners imagined themselves (and were perceived by others) as ‘outdoorsy’ people who opted for nature over churches, many did so. My informants did not have religion “leached” out of them by their physical surroundings, but they did help to assign secular meanings to the Northwest’s mountains, forests, and waters, geographical elements considered religiously inspiring in certain other contexts. In the Northwest’s regional imaginary, such elements rendered religious institutions irrelevant, and occasionally supplanted the sacred altogether.

\textsuperscript{117} Young interview. Also see Frederick Lindsay, \textit{Cariboo Yarns} (Quesnel, BC, 1962), 3.
\textsuperscript{118} Tremblay interview.
\textsuperscript{119} Taylor interview; Ferguson interview; Young interview; Stewart interview; Johnson interview; and Carlson interview.
\textsuperscript{120} Patricia Limerick, “Region and Reason,” in \textit{All Over the Map}, 103.
Secularism was construed as inherent not only to the Northwest’s landscape, but to its people. Both those within and outside the region helped to make and entrench dominant images of Northwesterners as a particular kind of people: independent, individualistic, and frontier-minded.¹²¹ Cultural leaders and ordinary people shared in essentializing “the Northwesterner [as] sort of a solo, individual person.”¹²² Although it drew on wider western myths, the discourse on Northwest individualism and independence was regionally specific. Postwar cultural observers within the region often insisted on differentiating the Pacific Northwest from other Wests. As historian Stewart Holbrook wrote in 1952: “This Northwest is the one where men have their faces to the sea, and can go no farther. It’s time Minnesotans gave up calling their state the Northwest.” Holbrook went on: “one of the Northwest’s charms is this feeling of being tucked away in a forgotten far corner of the United States...The sense of isolation also contributes to the restless pioneering spirit, the opening-up-of-the-country idea.”¹²³ In 1963, historian Roderick Haig-Brown remarked that BC “is Canadian, but it is also West Coast Canadian, never quite forgetful of the mountains that divide.”¹²⁴ Postwar religious leaders similarly imagined the Pacific Northwest as a sort of ‘West beyond the West.’¹²⁵ In 1967, an Anglican minister identified “exclusiveness” as the chief characteristic of British Columbia; south of the border, a Washington minister observed that most “folks

¹²² Ron Strickland ed., Whistlenunks and Geoducks, 295.
¹²³ Stewart Holbrook, Far Corner, 4, 6.
¹²⁴ Stewart Holbrook et.al., The Pacific Northwest, 176.
¹²⁵ Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West. Also see Stewart Holbrook et.al., The Pacific Northwest, 11. Holbrook described Northwesterners as a distinct type of people, and observed that the existence of degrees of West among Westerners.”
on the East Coast don’t know Seattle is even out there. They are unconscious of the Northwest, and that gives Seattleites a kind of freedom.”

Evidence from the oral interviews suggests that secularism was entwined with regional myths of Northwest independence. My informants saw their own secularity as part of a shared regional sensibility; irreligion, like independence, was described as intrinsic to the ‘true’ Northwesterner. Richard, an engineer in postwar Olympia, noted that secularism “comes out of our pioneering experience... We were widely separated - we had time to think. We had to be self-reliant. We didn’t have anybody bailing us out.” The interviewees regularly called upon history to explain this region’s, and their own, secularity. As Joanne Smith affirmed: “the people that founded Washington State were generally more independent... you know, the ones that headed west when this was really the frontier, you know. That independence lives on... people rebelling in terms of the union, and rebelling in terms of the status quo of religion. They were the explorers.” Donald similarly interlinked this region’s frontier and secular identity:

We are less religious because we had to stand on our own two feet from the beginning. My grandmother came from Ohio, and her husband came from Ontario, and they were pioneers in the Okanogan, there was no welfare, there was no handouts from the government, there was nothing, they had to do their own thing. Everybody who came to BC had to do their own thing. That idea of being independent stuck, I think.

Irreligion gave meaning to, and was itself a product of, regionally specific senses of self.

For many of my informants, religious detachment was an expression of regional identity, a characteristic that differentiated them from people in other places. Susan echoed others

127 Petersen interview.
128 Johnson interview; Young interview; Brown interview; Tremblay interview; Stewart interview; and Clark interview.
129 Smith interview.
130 Stewart interview.
in describing Northwesterners as an independent people, religiously and otherwise; people from the east coast, she remarked, “don’t know how to plant a seed or mow a lawn. They don’t know how to start a fire. They’re really helpless.” The geographer Rob Shields argues that regional myths “motivate,” they have “social impacts” and are “articulated with a set of active practices which are both institutional and personal.” Reproduced by cultural leaders and ordinary people, the myth of the ‘true’ Northwesterner was a fiction with empirical consequences, particularly in the religious realm. Those within and outside the region knew this ‘far corner’ to be an outdoorsy, independent, and generally ‘unchurchy’ place. Regional stereotypes motivated, though they did not singularly determine, secular behaviour. As other chapters have shown, regionalism and secularism were negotiated and experienced differently according to class, race, and gender. Although partial and contested, regional myths helped to normalize and entrench Northwest irreligion.

Scholars of religion have focused on uncovering the hidden sacred in the Northwest. They have often interpreted secularism as a product of this region’s particular geography, rather than as a deliberate creation of Northwesterners themselves. Secularism is rarely seen as a condition of one’s own choosing. Northwesterners, we are told (by historians as well as postwar church leaders), had religion “leached” out of them by geographic and demographic forces beyond their control. My research suggests a far more complicated story. Places significantly shape behaviour, but are themselves products of the human imagination. As historian Vicente Rafael remarks, “the regional has been neither symbolic nor just material but both at the same time, circulating in the

131 Young interview.
132 Rob Shields, Places on the Margin, 6, 199.
imagination as much as in the marketplace."\textsuperscript{133} Northwest secularism was produced not only by a particular geography, demography, and history, but also by the people themselves. Ordinary people shared with church officials in ascribing an intrinsic secularism to the Northwest. However, unlike most religious and scholarly observers, residents of this region often cast secularism as a positive element of Northwest culture. For instance, in 1952 Northwest author Stewart Holbrook described Oregon’s secularity as a source of pride rather than shame: “Any place where Billy Sunday could not draw a full house,” he wrote, “must be more civilized than most.”\textsuperscript{134}

“In conversations with the self,” note sociologists Lee Cuba and David Humman, “cultural images of places may...be appropriated by individuals to elaborate self conception.”\textsuperscript{135} In ‘conversations with the self,’ residents of this region called upon Northwest irreligion to signal their own tolerance and broad-mindedness. Edward, a socialist and retired public servant in Nanaimo, declared that to label BC non-religious was an “accolade” that showed this region to be “a bit more laid back.”\textsuperscript{136} For David, who worked as a physician in postwar Olympia, the relative lack of organized religion in this region reflected that “the farther west you went, the seemingly more understanding, or less critical they would be.”\textsuperscript{137} Vancouver resident Robert Taylor speculated about the causes of Northwest irreligion: “the further west you come in Canada, and the further north you come from the States, the less racial intolerance there is. We tend to be more tolerant in this area...Maybe it’s because we all believe in equality of life.”\textsuperscript{138} Although

\textsuperscript{133} Vicente Rafael, “Regionalism, Area Studies,” 1.
\textsuperscript{134} Stewart Holbrook, \textit{Far Corner}, 10.
\textsuperscript{135} Lee Cuba and David Hummon, “A Place to Call Home,” 113.
\textsuperscript{136} Lewis interview.
\textsuperscript{137} Becker interview.
\textsuperscript{138} Taylor interview.
the ideal of Northwest tolerance was belied by this region’s history of racism and prejudice, this ideal predominated in the regional imaginary. Frank Williams echoed others in depicting this region’s secularity as evidence of its openness: “Seattle,” he remarked, “is probably one of the most liberal places in the country.”139 Others spoke with pride of the “unchurchy” and non-judgemental character of Northwesterners; as one person noted, “there was never any anti-anything out here.”140 Organized secularists in the postwar era also imagined the secularism and tolerance of the Northwest to be mutually constituted. As one American Humanist noted after completing a lecture tour: “It seemed to me that the general atmosphere on the West Coast is somewhat more free and tolerant than in the East, partly no doubt because the Pacific states are farther away from the centre of government and legislative repression in Washington, D.C.”141 Northwesterners were perceived (by themselves and others) to be more outdoorsy, independent, and tolerant than people in other places. Although rarely addressed by scholars, secularism both reflected and shaped the ongoing re-imaginings of the ‘true’ Northwesterner. Ordinary people here encountered secularizing forces, but they were not pawns of these forces. Instead, they actively and creatively made irreligion a part of regional expectations.

Northwest secularism was constituted, in part, by place. Northwesterners were embedded in multiple worlds at once: they encountered religion through the intersecting lenses of class, race, and gender, and also of place. Secular identities were defined and situated through place, which was made imaginatively, demographically, and historically.

139 Williams interview.
140 Harris interview; Green interview; Griffith interview; Taylor interview; Lewis interview; Becker interview; and Allen interview.
141 Progressive World, August 1958, 7.
People do not behave in ways that reflect their history or regional imaginary in one moment, and their demographic position in the next. Although separated here for the purposes of analysis, these factors were entwined in actual human experience. Northwest secularism is explained, not by any single factor alone, but rather by the commingling of this region's specific demography, history, and imaginary. Place was neither stable nor essential, although it often felt that way to the people who lived here. There was nothing inevitable about the relative irreligion of the Northwest, but by the postwar era being “unchurchy” had come to seem typical of the region and its people. In this dissertation, as in all studies of human behaviour, a key question concerns how ideas and practices come to be shared by a wider group. John Agnew joins other cultural geographers in observing that common senses of place are created as “human practices give rise to a set of expectations and meanings that in turn guide practice.” The religious associations of place are typically more apparent than the secular: few would contest the existence of a shared Mormon culture in Utah, Baptist culture in the South, or Catholic culture in Quebec, but the secular culture of the Pacific Northwest has gone largely unnoticed. Of course, this secular culture was partial and contested. As we have seen, a significant minority of Northwesterners rejected religion altogether, and a majority were not regularly involved in organized religion. Secularism was an important element of Northwest culture, but it had far from displaced all spiritual impulses in the region. This chapter has suggested that secularism came to be part of Northwest culture through public contests over Sunday work and private decisions about family prayer, through popular histories of this region and in everyday constructions of religious and racial


\[143\] See Wade Roof and William McKinley, *American Mainline Religion*, 126.
difference, through actions taken and not taken in governments and ordinary households. Like religion in other contexts, then, secularism became embedded in this regional culture in multiple, overlapping, and partial ways.

This regional secularism was not, of course, perceived and experienced in the same way by all people. Place shapes human behaviour, but it is not a meta-category; place gives meaning to, but is itself differentiated by class, race, gender, and other social identities. As the geographer Rob Shields contends, “a spatial problematic does not displace problematics of class, gender, or ethnicity. Rather, it relativizes most of the sweeping generalisations which have been extracted from limited case studies and reintroduces us to the complexities of the interplay between the different facets of social life.”

The class, race, and gender dimensions of place help to further illuminate regional religious behaviour. For instance, Chapter 3 demonstrated that the Northwest’s regional identity was premised partly on working-class values and expectations, including those around religion. Similarly, Chapters 2 and 4 revealed that the Pacific Northwest was gendered masculine, which not only helped to make religion an awkward fit in this region, but differentiated the secular experiences of men and women. Northwest secularism carried different implications for people, depending on their social identity. To acknowledge such differences does not erase the significance of place, but rather draws attention to its contingent, contested character. The people who lived in the Northwest were not determined by this region’s secular culture, but rather helped to make it, and experienced it in class, race, and gender-specific ways. Nonetheless, even those who challenged this culture, such as church leaders, recognized its existence, and shared

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an understanding of its "habits," possibilities, and expectations: they shared, in effect, a sense of place.

In the postwar years, as in other eras, Pacific Northwesterners were often described as a people who had "left God on the other side of the mountains." Scholars (and many cultural observers) regularly dismiss this claim, and focus their attentions on the abundant spiritual energies in this region. They rightly note that most Northwesterners left organized religion rather than God "on the other side of the mountains." This important work should continue, as much remains to be discovered about the nature of popular religious life of this region. However, the secular impulses evident in Northwest culture have been too easily dismissed or ignored. My research suggests that secularism was a significant (though contested and unstable) strand in Northwest culture. This chapter has shown that place, defined as the product of intermingled material, demographic, historical, and imaginative elements, nurtured wider possibilities for the secular in this region. These secular possibilities were made on both material and discursive terrain, and were experienced differently according to class, race, gender, and other categories of identity. My work contributes a new geographical perspective to the history of secularism, and demonstrates that choices about religion were tied to the everydayness of place. In other words, it suggests that being "on the other side of the mountains" did, in fact, matter to secular meaning and behaviour in the Pacific Northwest. This is not to deny moments of transcendence in this region; rather, it is to affirm that people perceived and negotiated such moments in relation to their everyday social, cultural, and indeed geographical, worlds.

146 Western Regular Baptist, March 1954, 11.
Conclusion

In 1995, BC author Jim Christy wrote: “British Columbians are different from anybody else. The province is its own distinct universe cut off from the rest of Canada...The notion that every British Columbian carries around in his or her head, whether acted upon or not, is that this is the best of all possible places to do whatever the hell you want to do.”¹ In 2003, Seattle Times writer Curt Hopkins described the American Northwest as “more than just a little off-center”: “Northwesterners simply don’t belong. They don’t belong to the rest of the nation.” According to Hopkins, the Northwest is “The Last Weird Place,” a region that not only accepts but honours “the absurd, the deviant, [and] the profoundly odd.”² As these comments suggest, the Northwest is often regarded as a unique and even strange place, inhabited by people with a penchant for radical politics and alternative lifestyles. Home to a wider array of religious groups than most other regions, the Northwest has also long been considered a ‘distinct universe’ with respect to religion. Spiritual traditions considered eccentric or bizarre in many other contexts, such as the “Jesus Freak” movement of the 1970s, found acceptance and flourished in the communities of Washington and BC.³ The Northwest has been seen as a haven not only for those who seek alternative spiritualities, but also for those who wish to escape religion altogether. In cultural discourse, the distinctly secular or unchurched nature of the Pacific Northwest is often held up as further evidence of this region’s peculiarity.

² Seattle Times, 6 June 2003 <http://archives.seattletimes.nwsource.com>
References to the unusual character of the Pacific Northwest typically draw on ingrained regional stereotypes rather than actual research. This dissertation has endeavoured to move beyond the stereotypes to examine one element of the Northwest’s apparent distinctiveness: its secularism. In formulating this project, I was partly motivated by a desire to determine the meaning and relevance of statistics on irreligion in the Northwest. For many years now, census and survey statistics have pointed to the striking irreligion of BC and the American Northwest; the release of such statistics often gives rise to anxious discussions in cultural and religious circles about the spiritual life of the Northwest. Although this subject has drawn relatively little attention from scholars, some have argued that the Northwest was “secular but spiritual,” a place filled with people who were uninterested in organized religion but drawn to the transcendent and to non-institutional forms of spirituality.\(^4\) In this project, I set out to discern if Northwesterners were, in fact, uniquely secular, or if they were just religious in ways that eluded quantitative measurement. Admittedly, I initially expected to produce a study of the multiple ways that Northwesterners have engaged the sacred, but my research took me in a somewhat unanticipated direction. Residents of this region did carve out unexpected, informal, and unquantifiable ways of being religious. While the multifarious popular spirituality of the Northwest requires extensive further study, my own research reveals the importance of secularism in this region’s past.

The Pacific Northwest was not wholly secular, but irreligion was a significant element of this region’s postwar culture. Inhabitants of this place were more likely to reject, ignore, or otherwise ‘live against’ religion than their national counterparts. This finding marked the starting point for my analysis, rather than its final conclusion. I was

\(^4\) See Mark Shibley, “Secular but Spiritual,” 139-168.
interested in exploring not only if and why but also how Northwesterners were secular, and in what ways this affected their everyday existence. What did it mean to reject religion in the postwar world? Did social and family identities influence decisions to avoid or engage religion? Guided by these sorts of questions, my research reaches into the relatively uncharted social history of secularism. As other studies have established, religious institutions have held particularly little appeal in the Northwest. Many residents objected to the hypocrisy of organized religion, and took special pride in not being ‘churchy.’ People here shared a common understanding that ‘true religion’ was entirely separable from organized religion. Although few were involved in religious institutions, most residents did not call themselves atheists. Atheism marked a substantial departure from social convention, even in this comparatively secular place. Most Northwesterners claimed a belief in some sort of higher power. While this complicates any easy idea of Northwest secularity, it should not be taken as clear evidence of the spiritual commitment of this region’s inhabitants. Northwesterners were less likely than people in other regions to consider religion, in all of its forms, to be relevant and important in their lives. This suggests that while most were not unbelievers, they were also not uncomplicatedly spiritual. My research locates the majority of Northwesterners in the shifting space between atheism and committed religiosity. It departs from most studies, however, in focusing on the secular impulses and practices that were part of this contested space.

Scholars of popular and lived religion have done much to redirect our focus away from religious leaders and institutions and toward the spiritual lives of ordinary people. Although it focuses on the secular, my dissertation contributes to this analytic redirection. Studies of secularization in North America have looked almost exclusively at elites and
institutions, and have told us little about the secular in everyday life. Drawing on insights
in the social history of religion, my work reveals the significance of race, class, and
gender to secular identity and practice in the Northwest. Separated in this study for the
purposes of analysis, these categories were commingled in human experience. We saw
that Northwest secularism crossed lines of race and ethnicity, but was presumed to be
made and perpetuated primarily by whites in the region. Secularism was imagined as an
element of the Northwest’s frontier identity, an identity premised in part on unquestioned
assumptions of whiteness. We saw that men and women of all social classes in the
Northwest shared a common awareness of the possibilities and parameters of secularism.
All knew that public professions of atheism contravened social convention in the postwar
years. At the same time, decisions about atheism were deeply gendered and classed.
Ingrained expectations of feminine piety partly explain why women were more hesitant
than men to call themselves atheists. Middle-class ideals of religiosity also worked to
constrain middle-class expressions of unbelief in the region. Masculine and working-
class norms of impiety made it at least somewhat easier for working-class men in the
region to cross the boundary of atheism. As we saw, the churches were correct in
identifying a strong working-class element to this regional secularism. However, they
missed the extent to which a distinct irreligion reached into the more ‘respectable’
communities and homes of the Northwest. Staying away from religious institutions
defied national middle-class ideals, but many middle-class Northwesterners did just that.
Middle- and working-class residents also shared in criticizing the churches, although their
critiques were occasionally class-specific. Inspired by studies in lived and popular

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religion, this dissertation identifies a diffusive, everyday irreligion that embodied both cross-class and class-based elements.

My research reveals strands of secularism in unexpected places, including among women and within families. In suggesting that women and families had anything to do with secularism, my work contradicts conventional wisdom and also the wider literature on the subject. Gender historians have challenged popular images of postwar domestic bliss, and revealed family lives that were far more complicated than the ‘Leave it to Beaver’ ideal implies. My dissertation contributes to this project, unveiling the tensions and contradictions of religion that simmered behind the domestic ideal in actual families. For many Northwesterners, religion was something often encountered in family relations. Indeed, as we saw, some who participated in family religious rituals and celebrations did so against their own secular inclinations. While family and spiritual motivations were entwined, most of my informants insisted that their participation in practices such as baptisms and church weddings had little to do with transcendence; their memories confound any easy interpretation of church-based rites as straightforwardly religious. This dissertation demonstrates that normative gender assumptions resonated powerfully in the realm of religion. Expectations of feminine piety made it difficult for women to disengage entirely from religion, especially as mothers. In their efforts to reconcile personal secular inclinations with the religious obligations of motherhood, many unchurched women decided to at least briefly send their children to Sunday school. My work sheds light on the tensions and anxieties felt especially by women when it came to the religious education of children. I argue that many Northwest women sent their

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8 See, for example, the articles in Joanne Meyrowitz ed., Not June Cleaver, and in Joy Parr ed., A Diversity of Women.
children to Sunday school for reasons that were neither ‘superficial’ nor uncomplicatedly religious. Rather, many did so in an effort to fulfill democratic family and motherly ideals, and to nurture a sense of belonging for their children. Women and families played a central, though complex and contested, role in Northwest irreligion.

Class, race, gender, and family influenced how people engaged, and disengaged from, religion in the postwar world. However, no single category alone explains the unusual secularity of the Pacific Northwest. Why was the Northwest distinctly secular? The three levels of sources consulted for this study offer somewhat competing answers to this question. The writings of religious and cultural observers suggest that Northwest secularism was mainly a product of white, working-class men and a lingering ‘frontier mentality’ in the region. By contrast, extensive quantitative materials indicate that this secularism was perpetuated not only by male loggers and miners in the region, but also by women, families, and the middle classes. The oral testimonies reveal that the boundaries between sacred and secular were neither fixed nor stable, but rather fluid and contested within the realm of the everyday. My informants worked against religion in various ways, but they also sporadically engaged the sacred, often as family practice or in response to crises. In this study, the oral narratives, quantitative materials, and printed sources talk back to each other, revealing a more textured, nuanced view of Northwest secularism than may have been provided by any single source.

While accepting that there is no single, settled truth of secularism in the Northwest, this dissertation nevertheless suggests that place nurtured and sustained wider possibilities for living against religion in this region. What did the schoolteacher in Bellingham, the pulp mill worker in Nanaimo, the businessperson in Vancouver, and the
homemaker in Olympia have in common? Although subject to pressures and expectations based on class, gender, race, and various other social locations, these people were loosely connected by 'place' - in other words, they shared an organized world of meaning that was the 'Pacific Northwest.'\(^7\) As we saw, in demographic, material, historical, and imaginative ways, irreligion has become embedded in the regional identity of the Northwest. This study identifies the Pacific Northwest as more than just a setting for wider secular processes; this region itself has helped to create, and has been partially defined by, irreligion.

My research affirms the continued relevance of regions in twentieth-century North America. Regional cultures in Canada and the US have been sustained, in part, by place-specific approaches to and understandings of religion.\(^8\) The place of religion in the Northwest (as elsewhere) is unpredictable, a fact that becomes evident when we look at the growth of Christian evangelicalism in the region. Although still a minority tradition in BC and Washington, evangelicalism has become increasingly popular among Northwesterners in recent years. Like evangelicalism and other regional religious cultures, secularism in the Northwest was neither uniform nor permanent. There was nothing intrinsic or essential to the Pacific Northwest that made it comparatively less religious. Partly a product of the human imagination, the Northwest, like all regions, has changed and will continue to shift across time. This dissertation focuses on a particular region, but its findings are not merely parochial. It demonstrates that practices occurring within the family did not simply reflect the wider world, but helped to shape and create it. It shows that secularism was deeply gendered, and that women were central to its

\(^7\) For a seminal work on the category of 'place' in cultural geography, see John Agnew, *Place and Politics.*
\(^8\) See Mark Silk, "Religion and Region," 265, 269.
making. It indicates that, contrary to common assumption, working-class people were sometimes more than just ‘unconscious secularists.’ It reveals the cultural permeability of the Canada-US border, and challenges many of the national meta-narratives that have dominated the study of religion in both countries. Although they were linked to each other by a sense of place, Northwesterners also encountered many of the same kinds of religious, gender, class, and family expectations as their national counterparts. For instance, people in this region and beyond negotiated with the religious ideals of motherhood, material barriers to churchgoing, masculine norms of impiety, and the sacred obligations of family. This dissertation traces the existence of a regionally specific secularism, but its findings have broader implications for our understanding of religion, class, race, gender, family, and place in the postwar world.

As noted earlier, this dissertation contributes to the opening up of conversations about religion in the Pacific Northwest, rather than offering the last word on the subject. We still have much to learn about religion and secularism in Northwest history and culture. Three subjects, in particular, beg for further research. First, we need to know much more about the religious and secular experiences of non-European, non-Christian populations in the region, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century. My dissertation demonstrates the importance of race and ethnicity to constructions of religion and region in the postwar world. However, we need to hear from those outside of the white, Christian mainstream themselves: how did aboriginal, Asian, and other groups negotiate the secularism of Northwest culture? Did they help to produce and perpetuate, ignore or reject this secularism? By pursuing these sorts of questions, researchers will add further texture to our understanding of Northwest culture, and provide insights into
the influence (or irrelevance) of this region’s secularism outside of the dominant society. Secondly, the intersections between religion, irreligion, and leisure in the Pacific Northwest demand further research. My study indicates that the Northwest’s natural world was invested with several competing meanings. In the postwar decades, religious leaders struggled to reaffirm the importance of churchgoing, but they also endeavoured to bring church to the people by establishing worship services on ski hills and in campgrounds. We need to know more about how the Northwest’s emphasis on leisure, particularly nature-based, affected religious practice and identity in the region. Finally, more research is needed on the connections between the religious, political, and moral perspectives of Northwesterners. Opinion polls show that people in this region have held distinct views not only of religion, but of such things as abortion, assisted suicide, and the environment. It is left to future scholars to make explicit the connections, if any, between the Northwest’s irreligion and its seemingly unique moral and political culture. Research on these and other subjects will help to shed further light on the intersections between religion, irreligion, and place in the postwar Northwest and beyond.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Introduction:
-can you tell me about where you were born and raised?
-when did you move to ______ and why? (describe this experience)

2. Childhood
-describe your favourite memory of childhood
-can you tell me about your experience with religion as a child?
-how did your parents feel about/treat religion? (mother/father-any difference?)
-was there any religion in your home? (family prayers etc.)
-were you exposed to religion in school? (describe)
-what did you do on Saturdays as a child? On Sundays?
-did your parents teach you religion? Were they regular churchgoers?
-how did you feel about religion as a child?
-did you attend Sunday School? (describe this experience)
-can you describe the role, if any, of the church in your childhood?
-how did you feel about the church growing up? (debates with parents?)

3. Adolescence/Leaving home
-can you tell me how you felt about religion as a teenager?
-did your relationship with religion change at all as a teenager?
-did your relationship with/involvement in the church change at all as a teenager?
-describe the role of religion in your family life as a teenager
-describe the role of religion in your relationship with your parents as a teenager
-how old were you when you left home? (and reasons-where did you go etc.)
-do you remember if your feelings about religion/church changed at all after you left home? (describe)

4. Single/Married life
-were you married? (year)
-if no - do you think that being single affected your perspective on religion? The church? (describe)
-if yes:
-can you walk me through your wedding day?
-were you married in a church? Why? What did this meant to you? How did you select the setting for your wedding, the minister/officiant etc.?
-tell me about how your spouse felt about religion
-describe the role of religion, if any, in your relationship with your spouse
-did your feelings about the church or religion change in any way once you were married? (describe)
-did you and your spouse share the same feelings about the church/religion in these years? Any disagreements? (describe)

5. Parenting/Children
-did you have any children?
-if no: -do you think not having children affected how you felt about religion, or the church?
-if yes:
-how many children did you have? When were they born?
-can you tell me if the arrival of children affected/or changed your attitude toward/relationship with religion? The church?
-did you have your children baptized/christened? (describe/explain)
-describe the role of religion in your family life in the 1950s-1970s
-can you describe for me what you and your family would do on a typical Sunday in the 1950s/60s/70s?
-did you teach religion to your children? Send them to Sunday school? (why/explain)
-do you remember if your children learned religion in school?
-do you remember what you told your children about religion? About the church?
-what did you tell them if/when they asked you questions about God etc.?

6. Family (general)
- tell me about the role of religion in most (typical) postwar families
- was religion important to the families that you knew in those years? In what ways?
- can you describe the religious roles of mothers and fathers in the postwar years? (any difference)
- in the 1950s-1970s, did you talk with your family members (siblings, parents, extended family) about religion? Did you share any religious experiences with them? Any debates?
- Did your family members share your ideas about religion/the church? (describe)

7. Organized Religion

- tell me how you felt about churches/organized religion in the 1950s? 1960s? 1970s?
- did your feelings about the churches/organized religion change in any ways over the years? In what ways?
- why did you leave the church/religious institution (if left)?
- can you describe why you felt this way about organized religion/the churches?
- did you enter a church/religious institution at all in the postwar years? If so, why? For what occasions? (describe what this meant to you)
- why do you think other people went to church in those years?
- can you walk me through a typical Christmas in your home in the 1950s/60s/70s? Easter? What did these holidays mean to you and your family?

8. Religious Identity/Religiosity/Spirituality

- how would you have described your religious identity in the postwar decades? (for instance, on a census/survey form)?
- would you have ever considered yourself religious? (describe what this meant to you)
- would you have ever considered yourself as spiritual? (define/describe)
- in the 1950s/60s/70s – did you believe in a God? Describe what this meant to you; Did your beliefs change over the years? Why/in what ways?
- did you believe in the supernatural, or transcendent? (describe); What role did these beliefs play in your everyday life
- did you pray? (describe-when/why did you pray?)
-if you believed, why did you feel that it was not necessary to attend a church/religious institution?
-did you ever have doubts about your beliefs? (describe)
-would you have ever called yourself an atheist/agnostic?
-did you know any other atheists/agnostics in that time period?
-tell me what it meant to be an atheist/agnostic in _______ in the 1950s/1960s/1970s?
-in times of crisis, religious people often pray; What do/did you do in times of crisis?

9. Paid Work
-did you work outside of the home in the 1950s/60s/70s?
-did you go to school after high school? (education levels)
-what kind of work did you do? (what kind of work did your husband/wife do?)
-can you describe how your colleagues at work felt about religion/church?
-did you talk about religion with your colleagues? (why/why not?)
-did your colleagues generally share your views on religion/the church?
-(for stay-at-home parents)-how did the other stay-at-home parents feel about religion? The church? Did they attend church? Did they share your views?
-were you (or would you have) felt comfortable bringing religion/irreligion up at work?
-were you in a union?-union activities? If so, did religion ever come up?
-do you think that the type of work that you did affected your church/religious institution involvement? Did it affect your thoughts on religion?
-do you think that attending (or not attending) church/religious institutions-affected people’s status in their jobs in the 50s/60s/70s?

10. Age/Gender
-looking back on the 1950s/60s/70s: who do you think was going to church/religious institutions in those years?
-were men or women more inclined to become involved in churches/religious institutions? Why?
-do you think men or women were more likely to be religious? Why?
- tell me how or whether being a man/woman/mother/father affected your attitude toward religion
- tell me how or whether being a man/woman/mother/father shaped your relationship with the churches/religious institutions
- do you think that in the 1950s/60s/70s, the majority of other people in your age group shared your feelings about church/religion? Why/why not?
- do you think that your attitude toward religion/the church had anything to do with your age at the time?
- were there any social groups in the 1950s/60s/70s that were seen as ‘anti-religious’ or ‘anti-church’? Examples?
- and conversely—were there any social groups that were presumed to be particularly religious?

11. Community/Leisure
- tell me about some of your main leisure activities in the postwar years; involved in any groups/clubs? (any religious aspect?)
- did you ever talk with your friends about religion in those years? Did they share your views?
- did your friends attend church/religious institutions? If so—why do you think they did so?
- tell me about the community (or communities) in which you lived in the postwar decades; What were your neighbours like?
- did your neighbours attend church/religious institutions? Did you ever discuss religion with them? Any debates/tensions?
- were there many things to do on Sundays in ________ in the 1950s/60s/70s? (discuss the closing laws, feelings about these laws etc.)

12. Mobility
- how often did you move in the postwar years? (when/where-talk about all moves, what prompted moves etc.)
- did you live near your family?
- did this affect your relationship with the churches/religious institutions, or your feelings on religion at all? (describe)
- what part of the city did you live in? Suburbs? Downtown?

13. Province/State/Nation
- how would you describe Washington/BC in terms of religion? (a religious/non-religious place?) Explain?
- did you have any sense of whether the religious situation in Washington/BC was the same or different than other states/provinces? (describe)
- would you describe Canada/U.S. as a religious or non-religious country in the 1950s/60s/70s? Explain.
- do you think that church involvement was important to most people in Washington/BC in the postwar decades? In what ways/why/why not?
- was it socially acceptable to call yourself an atheist in those years? Explain.
- did you have any sense of whether the United States was more or less religious than Canada? Examples? Reasons?

14. Conclusion
- tell me the main reason(s) that you didn’t become involved in [or left] the church/religious institution
- thinking back on your life now, what do you think is the main reason that you held the views on religion that you did? (a particular person/event? or gradual?)
- can you tell me what the word “religion” means to you? “Religious”? “Organized religion”? “Spirituality”?
- did you ever feel that you were missing anything by not becoming involved in the church? (explain)
- have your feelings about religion changed in any way over the years? Can you walk me through the ways in which they have changed?
- do you think that where you lived (community, city, province, country) in any way shaped your attitude toward religion? Toward the church/organized religion?
- how would you define yourself for census/survey takers, in terms of religion?
-do you have any thoughts on why Washington/BC was (and is), in statistical terms, less religious than other states/provinces?
-can you sum up your relationship with the church/organized religion in the 1950s-1970s?
-can you sum up for me your thoughts on religion in the 1950s-1970s, and why you felt that way?
-anything to add?
Appendix B: Sample Newspaper Advertisement

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: For my Ph.D. dissertation in history at the University of Victoria, I am seeking to interview people who lived in Vancouver, Nanaimo, Seattle, Olympia, or Port Angeles at some point between 1950 and 1971, were born in 1943 or earlier, and who, between 1950 and 1971, fit one or all of the following criteria: 1) considered themselves non-religious; 2) did not attend a church or religious institution; and/or 3) stopped attending a church or religious institution. Participants will remain anonymous, and will be asked questions about their views on, and relationship with, religion and religious institutions in the postwar years. If you are interested, please contact Tina Block by telephone at 388-7210; by mail at 27-225 MacLaren St., Ottawa ON, K2P 0L4; or by e-mail at: tmblock@uvic.ca.
Appendix C: The Cities

United States and selected cities, population, 1970:

US: 203,211,926
Seattle: 530,831
Olympia: 23,111
Port Angeles: 16,367

Christian church adherents as percentage of total population, US and selected counties, 1971:

US: 49.6%
Washington: 32.5%
King County (Seattle): 28.8%
Clallam County (Port Angeles): 28.7%
Thurston County (Olympia): 26.6%

Canada and selected cities, population, 1971

Canada: 21,568,315
Vancouver: 1,082,355
Nanaimo: 14,955

Percentage of the population claiming no religion, Canada, BC, and selected cities, 1971

Canada: 4.3%
British Columbia: 13.1%
Vancouver: 15.1%
Nanaimo: 12.8%

### TABLE 1: Number and percentage of those of ‘no religion’, B.C., and Canada, 1951-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>BRITISH COLUMBIA</th>
<th></th>
<th>CANADA</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>% of Population</td>
<td>No Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>25,396</td>
<td>1,165,210</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>59,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961*</td>
<td>27,477</td>
<td>1,629,082</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>94,763</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>287,115</td>
<td>2,184,620</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>929,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>566,905</td>
<td>2,713,615</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>1,783,530</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>987,985</td>
<td>3,247,505</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>3,386,365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* ‘no religion’ was not included as a separate category in the 1961 census; the figures for 1961 are estimates provided by the Census of Canada.

Source: *Census of Canada, 1951-1991*
TABLE 2: Percent distribution of the ‘no religion’ population by provinces, Canada, 1951 and 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>% of Canadian Population</th>
<th>No Religion #</th>
<th>% of Canadian No Religion Population</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>14,009,429</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>59,679</td>
<td>100.00</td>
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<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>1,165,210</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>25,396</td>
<td>42.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>4,597,542</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>13,943</td>
<td>23.4</td>
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<td>Alberta</td>
<td>939,501</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7,314</td>
<td>12.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>831,728</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>4,652</td>
<td>7.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>776,541</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3,374</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>4,055,681</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>3,066</td>
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<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>642,584</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>515,697</td>
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<td>580</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<td>361,416</td>
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<td>113</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
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<td>634,555</td>
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<td>NW Territories</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEI</td>
<td>111,640</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Canada, Vol.10, Table 5, 1951; Vol. 5, Part 1, Table 5, 1971.
TABLE 3: Number and percentage of those of ‘no religion’, Canada, provinces, and territories, 1951 and 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># No Religion</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1951</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
<td>59,679</td>
<td>14,009,429</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>9,096</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>25,396</td>
<td>1,165,210</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>7,314</td>
<td>939,501</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>4,652</td>
<td>831,728</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>3,374</td>
<td>776,541</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>13,943</td>
<td>4,597,542</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW Territories</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16,004</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>642,584</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>515,697</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>3,066</td>
<td>4,055,681</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEI</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>98,429</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>361,416</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1971</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
<td>929,580</td>
<td>21,568,310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>287,115</td>
<td>2,184,620</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>1,625</td>
<td>18,390</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>108,410</td>
<td>1,627,875</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>343,685</td>
<td>7,703,105</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>42,490</td>
<td>988,250</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>34,090</td>
<td>926,245</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW Territories</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>34,810</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>19,185</td>
<td>788,960</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>11,885</td>
<td>634,555</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>76,685</td>
<td>6,027,760</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEI</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>111,640</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>2,280</td>
<td>522,105</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Canada, Vol.1, Table 38, 1951; Series 5, Special Bulletin, Table 1, 1971.
### TABLE 4: Percent distribution of the "no religious preference" population by region, United States, 1952* and 1965**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% Total U.S. Population</th>
<th>% Total &quot;No Religious Preference&quot; Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East South Central</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West South Central</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East North Central</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West North Central</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The 1952 results were based on 2,987 personal interviews with a quota sample of Americans 18 years of age and over.

**The 1965 results were based on 2,783 personal interviews with a quota sample of Americans 18 years of age and over.

TABLE 5: Percentage of the population claiming ‘no formal religion’ by selected categories, United States and regions, 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>West/ Midwest/ East/ South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7 3 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEX</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10 4 5 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 1 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RACE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7 2 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 4 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8 4 8 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6 2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade School</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 3 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OCCUPATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. &amp; Business</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6 4 7 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical &amp; Sales</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9 2 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 1 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 3 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10 5 9 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 2 3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and over</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INCOME</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,000 &amp; over</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7 2 6 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 - 14,999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 3 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,000 - 9,999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10 2 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 - 6,999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 2 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 - 4,999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 3 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 3,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 3 3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNITY SIZE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000 &amp; over</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9 4 4 X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500,000 - 999,999</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8 3 5 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000 - 499,999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6 3 1 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500 - 49,999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 3 3 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 2,500, Rural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 1 3 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Gallup Opinion Index 70* (April 1971), 70-81.
TABLE 6: Percent distribution of the ‘no religious preference’ population in the United States, by regions, 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage of Total U.S. Population</th>
<th>Percentage of ‘No Religious Preference’ Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Gallup Opinion Index* 70 (April 1971), 57.

TABLE 7: Percentage of population claiming ‘no religion’ (or ‘no religious preference’), comparing Canada, U.S., and the West, 1970/71, and 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>B.C.</th>
<th>Pacific Northwest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>West: 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Pacific Northwest: 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>United States: 14.1%</td>
<td>B.C.: 35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE 8: Percentage of the census Anglican population known to the parish clergy, 1951 and 1961, BC and Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliation (census)</th>
<th>Parish lists</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1951</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2,060,720</td>
<td>1,107,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>315,469</td>
<td>124,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1961</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2,409,068</td>
<td>1,358,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>367,096</td>
<td>158,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1951 figures are estimates; affiliation figures derived from the *Census of Canada* Sources: *Canadian Churchman*, 6 November 1952, 336; 2 October 1952, 299; October 1962, 9; June 1963, 8; and *United Church Observer*, 1 September 1962, 8.
### TABLE 9: Percentage of the census United Church population ‘under pastoral oversight’, Canada and provinces, 1951, 1961 and 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliation (census)</th>
<th>Number ‘under pastoral oversight’</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1951</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2,864,520*</td>
<td>2,000,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>85,571</td>
<td>76,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEI</td>
<td>25,969</td>
<td>22,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>141,152</td>
<td>124,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>71,879</td>
<td>62,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>129,219</td>
<td>104,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>247,345</td>
<td>182,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>224,554</td>
<td>161,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>1,320,366</td>
<td>935,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>285,391</td>
<td>152,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>333,074</td>
<td>176,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1961</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3,659,598*</td>
<td>2,636,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>97,886</td>
<td>95,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>154,938</td>
<td>136,301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.E.I.</td>
<td>27,395</td>
<td>23,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>163,633</td>
<td>137,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>85,710</td>
<td>71,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>296,253</td>
<td>229,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>1,640,564</td>
<td>1,210,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>269,975</td>
<td>184,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>429,636</td>
<td>262,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>493,608</td>
<td>284,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1971 (selected conferences)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3,768,805</td>
<td>2,277,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>101,805</td>
<td>87,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>256,560</td>
<td>193,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>274,285</td>
<td>201,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>474,355</td>
<td>293,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>456,930</td>
<td>237,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>537,570</td>
<td>222,054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*note: this total does not include figures from Yukon and NW Territories

### TABLE 10: Reported membership of participating religious bodies as percentage of total population, U.S., regions, and divisions, 1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>[REGIONS]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>[DIVISIONS]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West South Central</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East South Central</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West North Central</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East North Central</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Since African-American churches did not participate in the study, African-Americans were removed from the total population figures upon which the percentages are based.

**Protestant figures were also adjusted; the authors of the study write: “Denominations which do not count membership from infant baptism were increased by 30% to yield comparative figures. The degree of increase was determined by a study which showed that over a period of years the difference between baptized and confirmed membership in groups which report both is about 30%.”

TABLE 11: Reported membership of participating religious bodies as percentage of total population, U.S. and selected states, including all Western states, 1952*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>United States - 61.1%</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Northeast</strong></td>
<td><strong>North Central</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>West</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>South</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*includes the highest and lowest percentages within each region

TABLE 12: Reported membership of participating religious bodies as percentage of total population, by counties of Washington State, U.S., 1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United States</th>
<th>54.6%</th>
<th>Washington State</th>
<th>30.9%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>Cowlitz</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walla Walla</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>Kitsap</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>Stevens</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>Ferry</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yakima</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>Okanogan</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokane</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>Thurston</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garfield</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whatcom</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>Clallam</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asotin</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>Grays Harbor</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitman</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benton</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelan</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>Island</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>Pend Oreille</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skagit</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>Klickitat</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>San Juan</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kittitas</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>Wahkiakum</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snohomish</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>Skamania</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCCC, Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1952, Series C, No.57, Table 127; Series A, No.3, Table 6.
TABLE 13: Christian church adherents as percentage of total population, by region and division, United States and Regions, 1971*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total Adherents**</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>203,211,926</td>
<td>100,812,489</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REGION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>49,040,703</td>
<td>26,355,064</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>56,571,663</td>
<td>30,231,539</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>62,795,367</td>
<td>30,996,970</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>34,804,193</td>
<td>13,228,916</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIVISION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>11,841,663</td>
<td>7,150,196</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West North Central</td>
<td>16,319,187</td>
<td>9,691,788</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West South Central</td>
<td>19,320,560</td>
<td>10,763,900</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>8,281,562</td>
<td>4,333,497</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>37,199,040</td>
<td>19,204,868</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East North Central</td>
<td>40,252,476</td>
<td>20,539,751</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East South Central</td>
<td>12,803,470</td>
<td>6,507,863</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
<td>30,671,337</td>
<td>13,725,207</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>26,522,631</td>
<td>8,895,509</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*based on membership data gathered from 53 Christian denominations (approximately 80.8% of the total Christian membership in the United States); given the omission of several religious bodies, including large African-American denominations, total membership figures were likely higher than those reported in this table, particularly for the South

**in an effort to account for different definitions of church membership, the assemblers of this study created a “total adherents” category; in cases where denominations reported only communicant, confirmed, or full members, total adherents were estimated using a formula based on 1970 census returns

TABLE 14: Christian church adherents as percentage of total population, U.S. and selected states, including figures for all Western states, 1971
*Includes the highest and lowest percentages within each region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United States - 49.6%</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northeast</strong></td>
<td><strong>North Central</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>South</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>West Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 15: Christian church adherents as percentage of total population, by counties of Washington State, U.S., 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United States</th>
<th>49.6%</th>
<th>Washington State</th>
<th>32.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garfield</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
<td>King</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>Klickitat</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>Clallam</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walla Walla</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>Asotin</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benton</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>Kittitas</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whatcom</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>Kitsap</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yakima</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>Thurston</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokane</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>Okanogan</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelan</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>Stevens</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>Grays Harbor</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skagit</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>Snohomish</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>Wahkiakum</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitman</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferry</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>Skamania</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowlitz</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>San Juan</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pend Oreille</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Douglas Johnson et.al, *Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1971*, Table 3.
TABLE 16: Percentage of the population claiming membership in a church or religious group, U.S. and regions, 1952 and 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1952</th>
<th>1965</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East South Central</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West South Central</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East North Central</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West North Central</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Martin Marty et al., *What Do We Believe?*, 277.

TABLE 17: Percentage of the population claiming church membership, U.S. and regions, 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1954</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Central</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 18: Percentage of the population claiming NOT to have attended Sunday or Sabbath church services during the last 12 weeks, U.S. and regions, 1952 and 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1952</th>
<th>1965</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West North Central</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East North Central</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East South Central</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West South Central</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Martin Marty et.al., *What Do We Believe?*, 214.

TABLE 19: Percentage of the population claiming church attendance, U.S. and regions, selected years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*figures represent an average for the surveys conducted throughout the year

TABLE 20: Percentage of the population claiming church attendance, United States and regions, 1954 and 1964

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1954</th>
<th>1964</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Central</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE 21: Church attendance as percentage of total population, Canada and the United States, selected years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>*1955</th>
<th>1957</th>
<th>*1965</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*figures for U.S. represent average results from surveys conducted throughout the year (single surveys only for Canada)


TABLE 22: Percentage of the population claiming belief in a supreme being, Canada and regions, 1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Did Not State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairies</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 23: Percentage of the population claiming belief in a God, United States and regions, November 1944

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Atlantic</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Central</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE 24: Percentage of the population claiming belief in a God, United States and regions, 1968

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Gallup Opinion Index* (February 1969), 14.
TABLE 25: Percentage of the population claiming belief in a God, and strength of beliefs, United States and regions, 1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Absolutely Certain</th>
<th>Fairly Sure</th>
<th>Quite Sure</th>
<th>Not at all Sure</th>
<th>Do Not Believe</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Atlantic</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-South Central</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West-South Central</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-North Central</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West-North Central</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Martin Marty et.al., *What Do We Believe?*, 216-219.

TABLE 26: Percentage of the population claiming belief in a God, and strength of beliefs, United States and regions, 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Absolutely Certain</th>
<th>Fairly Sure</th>
<th>Quite Sure</th>
<th>Not at all Sure</th>
<th>Do Not Believe</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Atlantic</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-South Central</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West-South Central</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-North Central</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West-North Central</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 27: Percentage of the population claiming to hold “very or somewhat strong religious beliefs,” Canada and regions, 1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairies</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE 28: Percentage of believers who claim that their beliefs were very, fairly, or not very important, United States and regions, 1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Fairly Important</th>
<th>Not Very Important</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-South Central</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West-South Central</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-North Central</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West-North Central</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*less than one percent

Source: Martin Marty et.al., What Do We Believe?, 184-185.
TABLE 29: Percentage of believers who claim that their beliefs were very, fairly, or not very important, United States and regions, 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Fairly Important</th>
<th>Not Very Important</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-South Central</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West-South Central</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-North Central</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West-North Central</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*less than one percent

Source: Martin Marty et.al., What Do We Believe?, 184-185.

TABLE 30: Percentage distribution of the no religion population by ethnicity, BC and Canada, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>British Columbia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Pop.</td>
<td>No Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Isles</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian and Eskimo</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and unknown</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 31: Percentage of the population claiming ‘no religion’ by ethnic groups, BC, Ontario, and Canada, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>B.C.</th>
<th>Ontario</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Isles</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native/Inuit</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 32: Selected characteristics of the population of Washington State and the United States, 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Washington</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population total:</td>
<td>3,409,169</td>
<td>203,211,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons per household:</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median family income:</td>
<td>$10,407</td>
<td>$9,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertility ratio&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;:</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of the population:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban:</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married (males 14 and over):</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movers&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;:</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in state of residence:</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With 4 or more years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of college (25 and over):</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income over $15,000:</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below poverty level:</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 18 years:</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-64 years:</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and over:</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 and over in labour force:</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White:</td>
<td>95.4%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black:</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian:</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese:</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese:</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino:</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other non-white:</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Country of birth of the foreign-born population:

- Foreign born (total): 4.6% 4.7%
- United Kingdom: 10.3% 7.1%
- Ireland: 1.2% 2.6%
- Norway: 7.5% 1.0%
- Sweden: 4.8% 1.3%
- Denmark: 1.5% 0.6%
- Netherlands: 2.5% 1.1%
- Switzerland: 1.1% 0.5%
- France: 0.9% 1.1%
- Germany: 9.0% 8.7%
- Poland: 1.2% 5.7%
- Czechoslovakia: 0.8% 1.7%
- Austria: 1.3% 2.2%
- Hungary: 0.9% 1.9%
- Yugoslavia: 1.2% 1.6%
- U.S.S.R.: 2.7% 4.8%
- Lithuania: 0.2% 0.8%
- Greece: 0.9% 1.8%

<sup>1</sup> Children under 5 years per 1,000 women 15 to 49 years.
<sup>2</sup> Persons who were not living in the same house in the U.S. in 1970 as in 1965.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italy:</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Europe:</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Asia:</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China:</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan:</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asia:</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada:</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico:</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba:</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other America:</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other:</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reported:</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Percent of employed persons by broad occupation group:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Group</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Collar:</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Collar:</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm:</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service:</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Percent distribution of employed persons by occupation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Category</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional total:</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers:</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians &amp; related:</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health workers:</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers:</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians:</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professionals:</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers &amp; administrators total:</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaried:</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed:</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales workers total:</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical total:</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen, foremen, &amp; related total:</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto mechanics:</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics(non-auto):</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinists:</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal craftsmen:</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters:</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction craftsmen:</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other craftsmen:</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operatives total:</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers (non-farm) total:</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers and farm managers:</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm laborers:</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers total:</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private household workers:</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 33: Percentage distribution of the ‘no formal religion’ population by selected categories, U.S. and West, 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>30</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACE</th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade School</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prof. &amp; Business</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical &amp; Sales</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-29</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and over</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCOME</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15,000 &amp; over</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 – 14,999</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,000 – 9,999</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 – 6,999</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 – 4,999</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 3,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY SIZE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000 &amp; over</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500,000 – 999,999</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000 – 499,999</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500 – 49,999</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 2,500, Rural</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These figures are based on interviews with 16,523 people across the nation; while this is a representative sample, the figures differ somewhat from those in the census.

Source: *Gallup Opinion Index*, 70 (April 1971), 57-68.
TABLE 34: Percentage of the population 15 years of age and over by selected religious groups and major occupation groups, Canada, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Group</th>
<th>Anglican</th>
<th>Jewish</th>
<th>Presb.</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
<th>United</th>
<th>No religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial, administrative and related occupations</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences, engineering, mathematics</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences and related fields</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and related occupations</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and related occupations</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service occupations</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, horticultural and animal husbandry</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product fabricating, assembling and repairing occupations</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction trades occupations</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupations not stated or not applicable*</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*includes those not in the labour force, i.e. retired, housewives, students etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Group</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Ontario</th>
<th>Newfoundland</th>
<th>BC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial, administrative, and related occupations</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences, engineering, mathematics</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences and related</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupations in religion</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and related</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine and health</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic, literary, recreational and related occupations</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and related</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales occupations</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service occupations</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, horticultural, and animal husbandry</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing, hunting, trapping, and related occupations</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry and logging</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and quarrying including oil and gas field occupations</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing occupations</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machining and related</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product fabricating, assembling and repairing occupations</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction trades</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport equipment operating</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials handling and related</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other crafts and equipment operating occupations</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupations not elsewhere classified</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupations not stated</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 36: Average and median income for selected religious denominations, by gender, BC and Canada, 1971 (based on persons over 15 years of age reporting an income)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>British Columbia</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avg.</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>5,255</td>
<td>4,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>2,843</td>
<td>1,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>5,290</td>
<td>3,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>2,960</td>
<td>2,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>4,920</td>
<td>3,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>2,745</td>
<td>2,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>8,309</td>
<td>4,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>11,520</td>
<td>7,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>4,397</td>
<td>3,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>5,934</td>
<td>5,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>5,083</td>
<td>3,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>6,818</td>
<td>6,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic:</td>
<td>5,109</td>
<td>4,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>6,652</td>
<td>6,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>2,748</td>
<td>1,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Church:</td>
<td>5,435</td>
<td>4,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>7,512</td>
<td>7,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>2,905</td>
<td>2,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>4,715</td>
<td>3,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>6,192</td>
<td>5,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>5,628</td>
<td>3,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>6,769</td>
<td>6,283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 37: Average income of the 'no religion' population, by gender, Canada and regions, 1971 (based on persons over 15 years of age reporting an income)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average income</th>
<th>Average income of the 'no religion' population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6,538</td>
<td>7,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,883</td>
<td>3,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.C.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6,967</td>
<td>6,769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,843</td>
<td>3,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prairie Provinces</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5,884</td>
<td>6,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,602</td>
<td>2,958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontario</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7,250</td>
<td>7,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3,079</td>
<td>3,641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quebec</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6,288</td>
<td>7,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,971</td>
<td>3,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atlantic Provinces</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5,085</td>
<td>5,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,274</td>
<td>2,689</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 38: Percentage distribution of the ‘no religion’ population by rural and urban areas, Canada, 1961 and 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Rural Population</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural No Religion Population</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Urban Population</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban No Religion Population</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE 39: Percentage of the population claiming ‘no religion’ by urban and rural areas, Canada, Ontario, and British Columbia, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Ontario</th>
<th>British Columbia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 40: Number and percentage of the no religion population by gender, selected census metropolitan areas, Canada, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver (pop. 1,082,355)</td>
<td>163,860</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>95,040</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>68,820</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria (pop. 195,850)</td>
<td>21,185</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12,240</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8,945</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calgary (pop. 403,325)</td>
<td>32,785</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19,830</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12,955</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto (pop. 2,628,130)</td>
<td>159,125</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>95,260</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63,870</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg (pop. 540,260)</td>
<td>29,805</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17,910</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11,900</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London (pop. 286,270)</td>
<td>14,060</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8,505</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5,555</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton (pop. 498,505)</td>
<td>22,490</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13,765</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8,725</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regina (pop. 140,675)</td>
<td>6215</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3,785</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,430</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax (pop. 222,655)</td>
<td>6660</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4,125</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,535</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal (pop. 2,743,235)</td>
<td>58,625</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34,210</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24,410</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 41: Number and percentage of the no religion population by gender for incorporated cities, towns, and other municipal subdivisions of 10,000 and over in British Columbia, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cranbrook (pop.11,995)</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson Creek (pop.11,805)</td>
<td>1220</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamloops (pop.26,250)</td>
<td>2820</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,630</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1,190</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelowna (pop.19,425)</td>
<td>1465</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanaimo (pop.14,955)</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Westminster (pop.42,895)</td>
<td>5015</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2990</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Vancouver (pop.31,860)</td>
<td>4665</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2750</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penticton (pop.18,150)</td>
<td>1625</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Alberni (pop.20,065)</td>
<td>2475</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1395</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Coquitlam (pop.19,560)</td>
<td>2910</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1710</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moody (pop.10,775)</td>
<td>1725</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince George (pop.33,020)</td>
<td>3815</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2260</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1555</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Rupert (pop.15,745)</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1265</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail (pop.11,100)</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver (pop. 426,270)</td>
<td>72,365</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41,495</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30,875</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernon (pop. 13,285)</td>
<td>1265</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>745</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>525</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria (pop. 61,745)</td>
<td>7100</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4090</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3010</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Rock (pop. 10,350)</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>700</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>435</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powell River (pop. 13,735)</td>
<td>1520</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>895</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>625</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Bay (pop. 18,425)</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>955</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>745</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitimat (pop. 11,935)</td>
<td>1055</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>685</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>375</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esquimalt (pop. 12,935)</td>
<td>1190</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>695</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>495</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell River (pop. 10,040)</td>
<td>1420</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>830</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>585</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada total:</td>
<td>929,580</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia total:</td>
<td>287,115</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 42: Sex-ratio of the ‘no formal religion’ population, U.S. and regions, 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Gallup Opinion Index* 70 (April 1971), 57 and 62.

TABLE 43: Number and percentage of those claiming no religion by gender, BC, Ontario, Canada, 1951

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>17,991</td>
<td>7,405</td>
<td>25,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>9,532</td>
<td>4,411</td>
<td>13,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>41,330</td>
<td>18,349</td>
<td>59,679</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Census of Canada*, Volume 1, Table 38, 1951.

TABLE 44: Number and percentage of those claiming no religion by gender, BC, Ontario, and Canada, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>169,240</td>
<td>117,875</td>
<td>287,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>209,265</td>
<td>134,420</td>
<td>368,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>561,250</td>
<td>368,325</td>
<td>929,580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Census of Canada*, Volume 1, Table 10, 1971.
### TABLE 45: Number and percentage of those claiming no religion by gender, BC, Ontario, and Canada, 1951 (percentages based on total no religion population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>British Columbia</th>
<th></th>
<th>Ontario</th>
<th></th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17,991</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>9,532</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>41,330</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7,405</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>4,411</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>18,349</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE 46: Number and percentage of those claiming no religion by gender, BC, Ontario, and Canada, 1971 (percentages based on total no religion population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>British Columbia</th>
<th></th>
<th>Ontario</th>
<th></th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>169,240</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>209,265</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>561,250</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>117,875</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>134,420</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>368,325</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE 47: Percentage of the male population claiming no religion by selected age groups, BC, Ontario, Canada, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>15-19</th>
<th>20-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65-69</th>
<th>70+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Census of Canada*, Vol.1, Part 4, Table 7 and Table 8, 1971.
TABLE 48: Percentage of the female population claiming no religion by selected age groups, BC, Ontario, Canada, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>15-19</th>
<th>20-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65-69</th>
<th>70+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Canada, Vol.1, Part 4, Table 7 and Table 8, 1971.

TABLE 49: Percentage of the male population claiming no religion by ethnicity, BC, Ontario, Canada, 1971 (percentages based on ethnic group totals)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B.C.</th>
<th>Ontario</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Groups</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian and Eskimo</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and Unknown</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Canada, Vol.1, Part 4, Bulletin 7, Table 18 and Table 19, 1971.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>Ontario</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Groups</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian and Eskimo</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and Unknown</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>