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RELIGIOUS ECONOMIES AND SACRED CANOPIES: RELIGIOUS MOBILIZATION IN AMERICAN CITIES, 1906*

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For generations, sociologists have believed that cities are less hospitable to religion than are rural areas and that where many faiths compete for followers, the credibility of each is reduced. In this essay we attempt to explain why these received truths are, in fact, nostalgic myths. We try to demonstrate that religious participation is and ought to be higher in cities and that competition among religious bodies increases levels of religious mobilization. Our analysis is based on the 1906 U.S. Census of Religious Bodies, and the units of analysis are the 150 largest cities—all of those having an estimated population of 25,000 or more.

INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of recorded history, the city has been depicted as a precinct of sin and impiety. Whether the cities were Sodom and Gomorrah, Corinth and Rome, or New York and Chicago, observers took it for granted that city life not only encourages vice, but also fosters skepticism and doubt—the pious life is easier in the hinterlands. John Lancaster Spalding wrote in 1880: “In the city neither the rich nor the poor can realize the infinite charm of the Christian ideal. The heart is troubled there, and God is not in the whirlwind of human passion” (Spalding [1880] 1967, p. 8).

Not only prophets and preachers regard the city as wicked and secular. Social scientists also assert that city life is corrosive of the moral order and that urban life is inevitably more permissive than country life. As Gideon Sjoberg (1960, p. 340) explained, urban religion sustains norms that “are generally permissive” because the “divergent, and often contradictory, roles, and the new technology ensures a continuous cycle of change, all of which requires flexibility of norms.” Moreover, from Durkheim on, sociologists have been certain that the unavoidable tendency towards religious pluralism in cities weakens faith. Indeed, Harvey Cox (1965, p. 1) flatly asserted that secularization occurred because the “cosmopolitan confrontations of city living exposed the relativity of the myths and traditions men once thought were unquestionable.” Similar views inspired Peter Berger’s book, *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), one of the more influential recent works in the sociology of religion.

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In this essay, we suggest that the received wisdom about the relationship between cities and religion is a nostalgic myth. We show that urbanites are far more likely than rurals to *actively participate* in religion and that pluralism causes levels of activity and participation to *increase*.

To this end, we examine the religious impact of urbanization in the United States. We also examine the link between the religious pluralism of communities and their degree of religious mobilization. In pursuit of these matters, we journey back to the turn of the century, to a time when urbanization was rapid and the religious diversity of American cities was expanding. But, first let’s clarify the central issues in dispute.

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

It is not surprising that modern sociologists expect the religious pluralism of the city to lead to the decline of religion. In his famous treatise on suicide, Durkheim ([1897] 1951) condemned urban pluralism as both cause and consequence of the breakdown of moral integration. Where multiple religious groups compete, each discredits the other and encourages the view that religion per se is open to question, dispute, and doubt. Durkheim believed that, in pluralistic societies where there are multiple religious options, people are cast adrift in a sea of moral uncertainty, which, in turn, produces all manner of social pathologies.

In similar fashion, Berger (1967) argued that pluralism fractures the “sacred canopy” of a society—a canopy that exists only when all (or nearly all) members of a society assent to “One True Faith.” Although Berger is speaking of religious plausibility structures and not religious institutions, he does not exclude the institutional church from this religious crisis. Indeed, in his more recent book, *The Heretical Imperative*

(1979), Berger clearly states his position: "Modernity has plunged religion into a very specific crisis, characterized by secularity, to be sure, but characterized more importantly by pluralism. In the pluralistic situation, . . . the authority of all religious traditions tends to be undermined (1979, p. xi)." Pluralism forces religious plausibility structures to compete and deprives all religions "of their status as taken-for-granted" (1967, p. 151). For Berger, pluralism forces religions to compete, and this competition forces all religions into a market situation, a situation he views as threatening to the future of religion.

We agree with Berger that pluralism forces religions to compete for adherents. Unlike Berger, however, we view competition as a stimulus for religious growth and not an avenue for its demise.

RELIGIOUS ECONOMIES

Berger is one of very few social scientists to apply an explicit market model to religious organizations. The immense advantage of this approach is that it permits examination of the extent to which particular religious organizations are shaped by external imperatives.¹ In pursuit of powerful theoretical propositions about religious movements, we have developed the notion of the *religious economy* (Stark 1985; Stark and Bainbridge 1985, 1987; Finke and Stark 1986; Stark and Finke forthcoming).

Religious economies are like commercial economies. They consist of a market and a set of firms seeking to serve that market. Like all market economies, a major consideration is their degree of regulation. Some religious economies are virtually unregulated, while others are restricted to state-imposed monopolies. Deductions from a general theory of religion (Stark and Bainbridge 1987) suggest that, to the degree a religious market is unregulated, pluralism will thrive. That is, the "natural" state of religious economies is one in which a variety of religious groups successfully cater to the special interests of specific market segments. This arises because of the inherent inability of a single religious organization to be at once worldly and other-worldly, while the market will always contain distinct consumer segments seeking more and less worldly versions of faith. Indeed, because of this underlying differentiation of consumer preferences, religious economies never can be successfully monopolized, even when a reli-

gious organization is backed by the state. Even at the height of its temporal power, the medieval church was surrounded by heresy and dissent (Johnson 1976; Stark and Bainbridge 1985). Of course, when repression is great, religions competing with the state-sponsored monopoly will be forced to operate underground. But whenever and wherever repression falters, lush pluralism breaks through.

We part company with Berger on the consequences of outbreaks of pluralism. Along with most sociologists, he believes in the superior organizational power of monopoly faiths: by providing the people with a single plausibility structure, the monopoly religion can inspire the kind of deep faith we often associate with the medieval village. Here is precisely where we think the nostalgic errors enter. There is ample evidence that in societies with at least a putative monopoly faith, religious indifference is rife. Our contrary conceptions of religious commitment in earlier eras are simply wrong. In the Puritan Commonwealth of Massachusetts on the eve of the Revolution, the rate of religious adherence was about 16 percent, compared with better than 60 percent today (Stark and Finke forthcoming). Historians of the medieval church now recognize that huge areas often were nearly untouched by church influence (Johnson 1976). And today, close inspection of the religious situation in most nations where "everyone" is a Roman Catholic reveals levels of religious participation that are astoundingly low compared with the United States and Canada. Ireland, Poland, and Quebec have long been exceptions to this pattern. However, in each instance the church has served as the primary institution of political resistance to external domination. In effect, religious participation in these societies proves commitment to nationalism.

The inability of the monopoly church to mobilize massive commitment is inherent in the segmentation of any religious market. The fact is that a single faith cannot shape its appeal to precisely suit the needs of one market segment, without sacrificing its appeal to another. In contrast, where many faiths function within a religious economy, a high degree of specialization occurs. It follows that many religious bodies will, together, be able to meet the demands of a much larger proportion of a population than can be the case where only one or very few faiths have free access. Moreover, in faith as in finance, monopoly firms will be lazy. Since religious monopolies can only exist as creatures of state power, monopoly faiths are not exposed to market forces. In contrast, in an unregulated religious economy, faiths seek to maximize their efforts to attract and to hold members—those that can't compete will disap-

¹ The literature on religious movements is dominated by case studies that stress the importance of *internal* factors in shaping events. Viewed in context, however, it often is clear that the fate of many groups is determined almost entirely by external factors beyond their control.

pear. *The more pluralism, the greater the religious mobilization of the population—the more people there are who will be committed to a faith.* Put another way, the more highly specialized and aggressive the churches are, the greater the odds that any given individual will be activated.

Some will object that this is participation, not faith, and that full and active churches are not the same thing as a society in which all partake of a unitary sacred canopy. But that line of thought implies that religion is stronger where it is neglected than where members are willing to commit much time, money, and attention.

Our disagreement with the traditional sociological position on the impact of urbanism and pluralism on religion is summed up by the following propositions. Other things being equal, (1) Urbanization increases levels of religious mobilization; and (2) Pluralism increases levels of religious mobilization.

THE DATA

Unlike today, religious statistics for American cities were plentiful at the turn of the century. The U.S. Census Office (1910) compiled a special report entitled *Religious Bodies: 1906* that reported on 14 items of information about religious bodies and their individual churches.² These items included such gems of information as the number of members by sex, the year the church was established, the number of Sunday schools and Sunday school teachers, the language in which services were conducted, as well as the number of and salary of ministers. Many of these items were summarized by denomination and broken down by county, state, and the major cities of the United States.

Although it has seldom been used for research, the 1906 special report is one of the most complete censuses ever conducted on the religious bodies of America. It provides religious statistics on 186 denominations, as well as numerous independent churches throughout the United States—an increase of 41 denominations over the 1890 report. Of these 186 denominations, the census reports that “three bodies made

a full report, while the majority made a report for from 99.2 to 99.9 per cent of the total number of organizations (U.S. Census 1910, p. 24).” Only 1 of the 186 religious bodies reported on less than 90 percent of their organizations; only 65.1 percent of the Jewish congregations gave a full report. In addition to its very thorough and effective methods for collecting the data, the Census Bureau reported making great efforts to verify the data. “The returns . . . were carefully compared with the yearbooks and minutes of the various bodies, and with all other available sources of information, and supplemental information was obtained by special correspondence, wherever this was found necessary (U.S. Census 1910, p. 11).” The Census Bureau concluded that its religion statistics were “very thorough and complete.”

We make only one revision to the statistics the census provides: we *standardize* the definition of membership across denominations. Since some denominations count children as members (e.g., Catholics and Lutherans) while others do not (e.g., Baptists and Methodists), we base our statistics on the *total number of adherents* to a religious group—a measure that includes children as well as adults (Johnson, Picard, and Quinn 1974). For denominations that did not count children, we simply inflated their reported membership by factoring in the local ratio of children 13 and under to the total population.³ The result is a standardized measure of church adherents, or an *adherence rate*, for all denominations. These rates, based on the excellent statistics of the *Religious Bodies: 1906*, give us an opportunity to look at the level of religious mobilization, as well as the extent of religious pluralism, of major American cities at the start of the 20th century .

URBANIZATION AND RELIGIOUS MOBILIZATION

At the turn of the century, American cities had experienced several decades of explosive growth. Some of this growth was the result of immigration, but there also was a growing torrent of migrants from rural America. Did these migrants leave their church affiliation behind as they fled the quiet piety of rural life for the worldliness of the city?

Data in Table 1 reveal that religious participation was *higher* in the cities than in the surrounding small villages and hinterlands. For cities with a population of 25,000 or more, the adherence rate was six percentage points higher

² A complete listing of the information collected from each church is as follows: (1) Denomination; (2) Division (ecclesiastical); (3) Organization; (4) Location (city, town, or village; county; state); (5) Year in which established; (6) Number of church edifices; (7) Seating capacity; (8) Value of church property; (9) Amount of debt on church; (10) Value of parsonage, if any; (11) Language in which services are conducted; (12) Ministers (number of; salary); (13) Communicants or members (total number; males; females); (14) Sunday schools conducted by church organization (number of schools; number of officers and teachers; number of scholars).

³ The exact formula used to convert adult membership into total adherents is: (Adult Members * (Total Population / (Total Population—Children 13 and under)).

Table 1. Percent Church Adherents for Cities of over 25,000, for Rural Areas, and for the Nation

	% of Population Church Adherents
All cities 25,000 + (<i>N</i> = 150)	56
Cities 25,000–50,000 (<i>N</i> = 65)	60
Cities 50,000 + (<i>N</i> = 85)	55
Rural areas (nation minus cities)	50
National rate	51

than for the remainder of the nation. The rate for small cities (25,000 to 50,000) might be slightly inflated, since people from the surrounding areas might attend church in the city, but even for the large cities (50,000+), the rate of adherents was higher than for the nation as a whole. Cities, in general, had a higher rate of religious involvement than the surrounding small towns and the hinterland.

This result may appear surprising, but it can readily be explained. From a practical standpoint, it was much easier to attend church in an urban area than in a rural area. All cities had churches, but the lower population density of rural areas often made it hard to sustain churches. Even when there were rural churches, people often had to travel relatively long distances to reach them. We also must keep in mind the degree to which rural residents formed small, relatively closed networks impervious to social pressures or outside attachments. These closed networks often sustained various forms of quiet deviance, lack of religion being among the least serious. An additional factor is, of course, pluralism. Americans in cities always had a much greater range of available choices, and urbanites have always been exposed to more intensive recruitment efforts.

A third aspect of the urban community that might have increased religious participation was Catholicism. At the turn of the century, the Catholic Church had become the largest single Christian body in the nation, was undergoing the most rapid growth (primarily through immigration), and was centered in the major urban areas of the nation. In this setting, the Catholic Church not only was discovering its ability to compete in a religious economy, it added a new competitive intensity to the religious market:

Table 2. Percent Roman Catholic for Cities of over 25,000, for Rural Areas, and for the Nation

	% of Population Catholic	% of Adherents Catholic
All cities 25,000 + (<i>N</i> = 150)	33	60
Rural areas (nation minus cities)	11	22
National rate	17	32

fear and prejudice. In the United States of the late 19th and early 20th century, Catholics weren't just another Christian firm active in the marketplace. Seen through many Protestant eyes, they were the dreaded monopolists, the bloody foes of the Reformation and a potential threat to a Protestant status quo. As Catholicism grew, Protestantism grew anxious. By 1906, the Catholic segment had become large throughout the nation, but it was most dominant in the cities (see Table 2). Approximately one third of all urban residents were Catholic. Catholicism had become a prominent force in the religious market of urban America.

THE EFFECTS OF PLURALISM

To measure the level of religious pluralism, we have used a religious diversity index that accounts for both the *number* of different denominations and *size* of each denomination in a given city. This index is based on a probability equation commonly used to measure linguistic diversity (Greenberg 1956; Lieberman 1964). The basic equation is:

$$1 - \frac{(a/z)^2 + (b/z)^2 + (c/z)^2 + (d/z)^2 + \dots}{z^2}$$

Where *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, and so forth, each represents the number of adherents in a particular denomination and *z* represents the total number of adherents. Therefore, if all adherents of a given city were from one denomination the diversity score would be zero, but if they were spread evenly across the 98 major denominations used to compute the diversity index, the score would approach unity. As it turned out, the actual range of scores was between .27 and .90.⁴ This index provides a summary measure of religious pluralism for each of the major cities in 1906.

⁴ The number of denominational categories included in the equation was reduced from the original 186 to 98 because many of the denominations (which were extremely small [approximately 1,000 members or less] and widely dispersed across cities) were often combined with other closely affiliated denominations and then entered into the diversity index. For example, the census included 10 denominations in the denominational family Evangelistic Associations. Yet, the largest denomination had only 403 members and all 10 denominations had a total of only 1,699 members in the cities. The membership for all 10 denominations, classified as Evangelistic Associations, was totaled and entered into the diversity index for each city. In a similar fashion, the 22 Lutheran denominations were reduced to 16 denominational categories, the four Mennonite denominations were combined into one denominational category (total 1,176), the three Theosophical Societies were combined into one denominational category (total 2,065), and so forth.

Table 3. Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for Religious Diversity, Percent Catholic, and Population Growth, with Rate of Church Adherents as the Dependent Variable

	Rate of Church Adherents			
	Equation 1		Equation 2	
	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>
Religious diversity	.84	.76**	.79	.72**
% Catholic	1.40	1.23**	1.35	1.19**
Population growth			-.12	-.04*
<i>R</i> ² =	.60		.62	

* At least twice its standard error.
 ** At least three times its standard error.

Equation 1 of Table 3 shows that both religious diversity and the percent of Catholics in the population are strong predictors of religious participation.⁵ These two variables explain 60 percent of the variance and the beta for each variable is strongly positive and highly significant. As expected, the presence of Catholics and the diversity of the religious market both increase the rate of adherents in a given city.

Yet, current research suggests that religious adherence in a community is also influenced by the social context of the religious market. For example, Welch (1983) has shown that in current SMSAs, migration is an important determinant of church membership and helps to explain regional differences in the rate of church membership. This finding is consistent with numerous studies that have found migration to have negative effects on all forms of religious participation (Wuthnow and Christiano 1979; Welch and Baltzell 1983; Finke 1987). Hence, in equation 2 of Table 3 we added a measure of migration. Although we were unable to attain a

⁵ Despite the high correlation between the independent variables, religious diversity and percent Catholic, the question of multicollinearity does not arise. Multicollinearity results when two independent variables hold a nearly fixed relationship and lack independent variation with the dependent variable. This lack of independent, or unique, variation then reduces the precision of the coefficients by increasing the standard error, producing insignificant coefficients (Kennedy 1979; Rao and Miller 1971). Multicollinearity obscures relationships; it does not create false, strong relationships. In this case, despite high correlations among the variables, the coefficients for religious diversity and percent Catholic are highly significant. In fact, the unstandardized coefficient for religious diversity is more than six times its standard error and for percent Catholic, the unstandardized coefficient is more than nine times its standard error. While the simple correlation between religious diversity and percent Catholic is high, the pair have sufficient independent variation to allow the OLS procedure to calculate precise coefficients.

measure of residential stability, we were able to compute the rate of population growth from 1890 to 1906. Clearly, the rate of population growth adds little to the explained variance and does not alter the coefficients for percent Catholic or religious diversity. The beta is a negative, as would be expected, and significant at the .05 level, but the strength of the beta for population growth is relatively weak. When compared to the percent Catholic and the religious diversity of a city, the rate of population growth has only a modest effect on the rate of adherents. The effects of religious diversity and the percent Catholic dominate the equation.

But how does religious diversity increase the rate of adherents? If we were studying the mid-19th century, revival meetings would be the most apparent answer, for Protestants and Catholics alike (Dolan 1978; McLoughlin 1978). But after the Civil War, revivals were not the only evangelical tool used for recruitment. As Winthrop Hudson explains, “the other great evangelistic enterprise of the Protestant churches . . . was the Sunday school movement . . . within a very brief time, the Sunday school—benefiting from its surge of popularity—had begun to replace revivalism as the primary recruiting device of the churches (1981, pp. 236–37).” By 1906, the Sunday school movement was not merely an educational program for small children, but a movement designed to recruit new adult members and renew the commitment of the current membership.

How was this movement influenced by the religious pluralism of the city? Table 4 reveals the powerful effects of religious diversity on the Sunday school movement. As the pluralism of the religious market increases, the rate of Sunday school activity also increases. And, even though the Catholic church did not become active in the Sunday school movement—as can be seen by its negative correlation with the Sunday school rate—the percent of Catholics still has a positive effect on the rate of Sunday schools when we control

Table 4. Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for Religious Diversity, Percent Catholic, and Population Growth with the Rate of Sunday Schools as the Dependent Variable

	Rate of Sunday Schools	
	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>
Religious diversity	.98	2.50**
% Catholics	.41	.99**
Population growth	.03	.03
<i>R</i> ²	.43	

* At least twice its standard error.
 ** At least three times its standard error.

Table 5. Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for Religious Diversity, Percent Catholic, Population Growth, and the Rate of Sunday Schools, with Rate of Church Adherents as the Dependent Variable (Includes Indirect Effects)

	Rate of Church Adherents		
	Direct Effects		Indirect Effects Through Sunday Schools
	B	b	
Religious diversity	.29	.26*	.50
% Catholic	1.14	1.01**	.21
Population growth	-.14	-.04**	.02
Sunday school	.51	.18**	
R ² =	.76		

* At least twice its standard error.
 ** At least three times its standard error.

for religious diversity.⁶ Hence, while Catholics did not develop a strong Sunday school program, their presence stimulated the growth of Protestant Sunday schools. Even though the effect of Catholics was much less than that of religious diversity, the coefficient was still highly significant. Once again, this suggests a powerful Protestant reaction to their perceptions of the Catholic threat. When the competition provided by religious pluralism and the threat of Catholics increased, the evangelical efforts of the Protestants—via their Sunday schools—also increased.

When the rate of Sunday schools is combined with the other variables previously used to explain church participation, the results are reassuring (Table 5). As expected, the coefficient for the rate of Sunday schools is strong, positive, and highly significant. Also, as expected, the coefficient for Catholics remains strongly positive, and the coefficient for population growth is still weakly negative. Yet the coefficient for religious diversity is still strong and significant even when the rate of Sunday schools is entered into the equation. Moreover, both religious diversity and percent Catholic have strong indirect effects on the rate of adherents. Therefore, religious diversity and percent Catholic have indirect effects on the rate of adherents by increasing the rate of Sunday schools, as well as a direct effect on religious participation.

The path diagram in Figure 1 presents both the direct and indirect effects of religious

diversity and Catholics. As the level of diversity and percent of Catholics increase, the rate of adherents also increases. Yet the effects are not only direct ones; increases in each of the variables also leads to a sharp increase in the evangelical efforts of Protestant Sunday schools. In turn, the strength of the cities' Protestant Sunday schools has a strong effect on the level of religious participation. Thus, religious diversity not only increases religious participation by appealing to a broader segment of the market, it also increases competition and forces churches to develop effective membership recruitment and retention techniques, such as the Sunday school. Likewise, the Catholics were not only effective at recruiting the new immigrants into their churches and retaining their membership, they also threatened the Protestant status quo. This threat stimulated the growth of the Protestant churches in urban America. Regardless of their direct effects or indirect effects, both religious diversity and the percent Catholic contributed to the high level of religious involvement in urban America at the turn of the century.

DISCUSSION

Our results strongly suggest that the received wisdom about the effects of urbanism and pluralism on religion may be wrong. If so, the question arises as to how these views became enshrined as self-evident truths? We suggest this occurred because the myth of pastoral piety served the interests of both Catholic and radical European intellectuals. For a long time, Catholic writers presented the Reformation as a terrible catastrophe that shattered the moral integration of Western Civilization, eventually giving rise to such subsequent catastrophes as the French Revolution and the rise of Marxism. Implicit is the assumption that a universal church is not only theologically preferable, but also socially necessary. Explicit is the claim that faith has crumbled since the golden days of the High Renaissance when all Europeans walked secure in faith and grace. Similarly, the notion of decline fits with radical claims that the rise of science and rationalism is breaking the mystical spell that has held humanity in thrall. As the

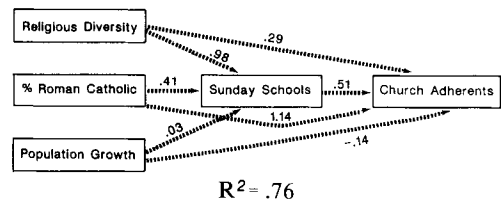


Fig. 1. Path Diagram of the Model of the 1906 Religious Economy

⁶ In fact, the Catholic equivalent of the Sunday School, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD), did not become active in the United States until two decades later. While the first established unit of the CCD began in 1902 in New York City, few parish and diocesan CCD units began prior to the 1920s (Bryce 1986).

modern world unfolds, radical theorists propose, religion soon will disappear. These claims are enhanced if it can be shown that a lot of disappearing has already occurred; to this end it is much easier to overstate the piety of the past than to minimize the piety of the present.

From the start, the social sciences have taken for granted the decline and eventual disappearance of religion. Perhaps no single social science thesis has come as close to universal acceptance as the belief that modernism dooms faith. The distinguished Anthony F.C. Wallace undoubtedly spoke for most of his colleagues when he confidently wrote in his celebrated book on the anthropology of religion that ". . . the evolutionary future of religion is extinction . . . belief in supernatural powers is doomed to die out, all over the world as a result of the increasing adequacy and diffusion of scientific knowledge . . . the process is inevitable" (1966, p. 265).

This dire prediction seemed almost inevitable as urban centers grew and religious pluralism mushroomed. Yet, our results indicate that both urbanism and pluralism contributed to an increase in religious mobilization.

Our results are not the first to dispute the secularization thesis. An unbiased examination of the empirical findings reported during the past decade does not support claims about the great decline in piety (Bell 1980; Stark 1981; Bahr 1982; Perkins 1984; Robertson and Chirico 1985; Hammond 1985; Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Hadden 1987). Simply because piety varies by time and place does not mean that the past was more pious than the present. Mass attendance probably was not high in medieval times. Illegitimacy was rife in communities said to be unanimously Catholic and pious (Wrigley 1969). Puritan Boston in the time of Cotton Mather had a far lower rate of church membership and attendance than it does today—far lower even than modern Las Vegas or San Francisco. And, as far as we can tell from our data on American church membership in various eras, at no time was rural America as religious as urban America (Finke and Stark 1986; Stark and Finke forthcoming).

Undoubtedly, some scholars may claim that attendance and membership are not proof of piety, and that many who didn't belong to or attend a church believed. We agree. But this may be as true today as it was in the past. Polls show that a great majority of people living in the Pacific region of the United States say they pray and claim to believe basic Christian tenets. But only about a third of the population belongs to a church, compared to more than 60 percent in most other states (Stark and Bainbridge 1985). In addition, the lower membership rates in the West are not the result of a decline. Membership

there, like membership in the rest of the nation, has risen steadily throughout the century (Finke and Stark 1986).

Bahr (1982) reports that in 1931 there was one church for every 763 residents of Muncie, Indiana (sociology's famous Middletown). By 1970 there was one church for every 473 residents—a pattern of growth that applies across the nation. This growth was not simply the result of established denominations founding new congregations, in most communities there are many more denominations than there used to be. Moreover, all through the decades when no one challenged the secularization thesis, an unbiased observer would have noticed that, somehow, the more conservative and evangelical denominations were taking over the market and causing religious participation rates to rise. For example, between 1776 and 1850 the Congregationalists saw their market share decline from nearly 21 percent to only 4, while the Baptist share rose from 17 to 21 percent, and the Methodists' (still a conservative sect movement in those days) soared from 2.5 to almost 35 percent (Stark and Finke forthcoming). The same trend of rapid evangelical growth has continued throughout this century and recently has produced a literature devoted to explaining why the conservative churches are growing as the liberal churches decline (Kelley 1972; Bibby 1978; Hoge and Roozen 1979; Warner 1983).

SUMMARY

Contrary to the pleas of the clergy and the pronouncements of social scientists, the city is surprisingly sacred and pluralism is friend, not foe, to religious mobilization. Using census data on the religious life of cities in 1906, we found them to have a higher rate of religious adherence than did the countryside. We have argued that the city not only offers easy access to churches, it also offers a variety of churches, all competing for adherents. Some sociologists have suggested that the competition of an open religious economy will undermine all forms of religious commitment, but we have argued that this competition has facilitated religious mobilization. The results support our argument. Both religious diversity and the presence of Catholics increased the rate of adherence in a city. Not only did each factor have a direct effect on the rate of adherence, they also had indirect effects by increasing the evangelical efforts of Protestant Sunday schools. Thus, a natural consequence of an open religious economy is a religious pluralism that forces each religious body to appeal successfully to some segment of the religious market, or to slide into oblivion.

Appendix. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Variables used in Regression Equations

	Rate of Adherents	Rel. Diversity	% Catholic	Pop. Growth	Sunday ^a Schools
Religious Diversity	-.40**				
% Catholic	.66**	-.88**			
Pop. growth	-.25**	-.03	-.08		
Sunday Sch.	.16*	.63**	-.46**	-.02	
Mean	.59	.67	.30	.66	1.09
Stand dev.	.15	.17	.17	.54	.43
N = 150					

* Significance level .05.

** Significance level .01.

^a The rate of Sunday schools per person times 1,000.

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