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Is Max Weber Newly Relevant?

The Protestant-Catholic Divide in Europe Today

It is often observed that the recent political and economic tensions in Europe have a strong "north-south" dimension. It is equally true that there is a strong "Protestant-Catholic" dimension. Yet, there has been a deep reluctance to even ask the question of whether the roots of recent conflict in Europe may have a basis in the historic religions of European nations and their lasting impact on national cultures and politics. This article will explore this important question.

Max Weber's classic study of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* appeared in two articles in 1904–1905 (followed by a modestly revised edition in 1920).[1] Weber observed in the opening paragraph of Chapter 1 that – as could be seen across Europe in his own day – "business leaders and owners of capital, as well as the higher grades of skilled labour, and even more the higher technically and commercially trained personnel of modern enterprises, are overwhelmingly Protestant." Historically, modern economic patterns of development first appeared in Holland in the seventeenth century, a Protestant country.[2] The leading edge of economic growth and development then shifted in the eighteenth century to England, another Protestant country, culminating in the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century that transformed the material circumstances of the English population – and then spread across Europe, and is now reaching much of Asia, and probably soon the whole world.[3] In 1900, the three leading nations economically were England, the United States, and Germany, all Protestant nations (Germany was then about two thirds Protestant and one third Catholic).

Even within Catholic countries, it was often the minority of Protestants historically who achieved the greatest successes in business. In 1967, the British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper commented that in the sixteenth and seventeenth century "in Catholic countries, like France or Austria, it was Protestants who throve and built up industry. And it is indisputable that extreme forms of Protestantism were popular among industrial workers." Moreover, it was not all Protestants equally but especially Calvinists, the main objects of Weber's attention as well. Thus, in the France of Cardinal Richelieu, he "relied largely on [Protestant] Huguenot men of affairs. His bankers were French Calvinists." The domination by Calvinists "does not appear in France only. We have seen it in Lutheran Denmark and Lutheran Sweden" where Calvinists, although few in number, were economically prominent. All in all, "in Catholic as

in Protestant countries, in the mid-seventeenth century, we find that the Calvinists are indeed the great entrepreneurs. They are an international force, the economic *elite* of Europe. They alone, it seems, can mobilize commerce and industry and, by so doing, command great sums of money, either to finance armies or to reinvest in other great economic undertakings."[4]

The prominent American Catholic theologian Michael Novak in 1984 wrote an introduction to a translation of *Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism*, published in 1935 by Amintore Fanfani who became a leading figure in the Christian Democratic Party in Italy after World War II.[5] For Fanfani, capitalism should be closely controlled by the state or by the church or both working together to serve Catholic beliefs and values, rather than the economy existing as a separate sphere in society. As Novak observed, Fanfani's views were representative of many Catholic writers. Novak commented, however, that Catholic countries had a "record both in democratic institutions and in economic development [that] seemed – – inferior to those of 'Protestant' – – nations" – suggesting that in practice Protestantism and capitalism might ironically achieve much of Fanfani's vision of Catholic goals in a manner superior to Catholic nations themselves. It is difficult to help the poor as individuals when a nation as a whole is poor; material frustrations may also inhibit democratic aspirations. Yet, as Novak noted, in the nineteenth and into the twentieth century "Catholic nations were long retarded in encouraging development, invention, savings, investment, entrepreneurship, and, in general, economic dynamism."[6]

It had been commonly assumed for most of the twentieth century that such economic impacts of religion might once have been important but that they were diminishing and would eventually become mostly irrelevant to modern life.[7] Reflecting the pervasive economic determinism of Marxists and many other prominent intellectuals in the twentieth century, the line of causation was typically seen as running from economics to religion, rather than the other way around. Religion evolved to advance the economic forces of its time. Indeed, Weber's work was attacked by many people who rejected the concept that ideas, and in particular religious ideas, could be decisive influences in shaping the workings of whole societies and their economies.[8] The social sciences emphasized "hard realities" such as capital investment, technology, demography, wealth, and power in seeking to explain "scientifically" the workings of modern nations.

Reflecting such thinking, it was believed that the European Union would no longer experience the kinds of sharp religious divisions – taking a new secular form such as the terrible struggles between communism and fascism in the first half of the twentieth century – that had beset Europe in the past. Instead, a common European culture based in modern rational values, grounded in shared economic objectives, and implemented through new common European political institutions, would provide the foundations for the European future.[9] One might say that a modern "economic religion" was expected to become the common faith of Europe of the future.[10] Europe would be united religiously – if now taking a secular religious form – in a fashion not seen since the medieval Roman Catholic Church, before the Protestant Reformation overthrew its monopoly status. A leading American sociologist of religion Peter Berger described such beliefs as follows:

> There exists an international subculture composed of people with Western-style higher education, especially in the humanities and social sciences, that is indeed secularized. This subculture is the principle "carrier" of progressive, Enlightened beliefs and values. While its members

1 Weber 1958. This translation is based on Weber's 1920 revision.
2 De Vries and van der Woude 1997.
3 Mead 2007.
4 Trevor-Roper 1999, 6, 8, 11–12.
5 Fanfani 1984.
6 Novak 1984, xxxi, xlviii.
7 Bruce 2002.
8 Nelson 2010a.
9 Norman 2002.
10 Nelson 2001.

> are relatively thin on the ground, they are very influential, as they control the institutions that provide the "official" definitions of reality, notably the educational system, the media of mass communication, and the higher reaches of the legal system. They are remarkably similar all over the world today, as they have been for a long time.[11]

As Berger noted, however, such beliefs may have dominated the thinking of a "globalized elite culture," including elites in most European countries, but they were less generally shared among the populations as a whole even of the most developed nations. This is potentially a large complicating factor in democratic societies for whom "the voice of the people" has taken the place of the authority of God as the ultimate source of social legitimacy.[12] Conventional assumptions have been challenged, moreover, by the events of the past few years associated with the worldwide economic downturn and most recently the economic and sovereign debt crisis in many European nations. It has been widely noted that the countries least affected by this crisis tend to be in northern Europe and that the countries whose economies are suffering the most and whose ability to pay their debts has been most in question tend to be in southern Europe – they are often, as it is said, "Mediterranean."

But why would European credit worthiness be divided along north and south lines? Is it simply a random result? Or is there some larger explanation? Conceivably, the explanation could be a matter of the northern climate: The harsher climates might have required closer cooperation of people for survival historically while Mediterranean climates perhaps encouraged less work effort in the tasks of life in general. Or, perhaps it could be locational, that northern European nations might have had easier access to the North Atlantic, giving them an economic advantage. Neither of these seems altogether persuasive, however, considering the vast technological developments of the last two centuries that have mitigated both the climatic and the locational factors.

Simply as a matter of empirical observation of the current sovereign debt crisis, there is obviously a large religious difference in Europe along northern and southern lines. But there has been a typical unwillingness, despite the earlier writings of Max Weber and others, to characterize the current political and economic divisions in Europe in Protestant and Catholic terms. Perhaps this reflects a fear that the assumed common secular religion and culture to sustain European unity in the twenty-first century may be more fragile than previously thought. It may also reflect the lingering memories of a long history of conflict and sometimes even outright warfare between Protestant and Catholic Europe and a strong desire to avoid any such contemporary revivals of the destructive religious animosities of the past.

Given the rise of secularism in Europe, and the low rates of church attendance, it might also be suggested that most of Europe today is neither Protestant nor Catholic.[13] A strong cultural influence of past religious beliefs and practices can persist, however, even when the original Christian source may no longer be present. When Max Weber explored the influence of Calvinism on the rise of capitalism, some of his leading examples were people like Benjamin Franklin in the United States in the late eighteenth century who still exhibited strong Calvinist tendencies even as he was no longer a traditionally devout Christian.[14]

Summarizing the findings of the 1999–2002 World Values Survey, Ronald Inglehart et al. state that even at the beginning of the twenty-first century "there are tremendous cultural differences between Protestant and Catholic societies" in Europe, including among the large "segments of the population [in these countries] who have no contact whatever with the church." These cultural differences based in historic Protestant and Catholic religion have persisted "despite the enormous recent changes linked with economic and social modernization and despite the tremendous sociopolitical changes brought by communist domination of five of these societies throughout the Cold War." For example, "after 45 years under diametrically opposite political and economic institutions, East Germany and West Germany [at the end of the twentieth century] remained more similar to each other [in terms of core values and culture] than the United States and Canada."[15]

In Europe, the 1999–2002 World Values Survey showed that historically Protestant nations were characterized by higher levels of "secular-rational values" and of "self-expression values," as compared with Catholic Europe. Inglehart et al. observe that in European Protestant nations "economic development, rising self-expression values and democratic institutions are so closely linked with each other that these three phenomena reflect a common underlying dimension – human development – to which each of these three components contributes in improving people's ability to exert autonomous choices." Indeed, they argue that the three components occur in a "specific causal sequence." It is "economic development [which] tends to give rise to self expression values, which in turn tend to promote democracy."[16] One would thus expect to find the Protestant nations of Europe clustered together in a cultural and values group defined by higher economic development, greater assertion of personal independence and autonomy, and healthier democracy, as compared with the Catholic nations of Europe. As will be shown in the Figures below, this is in fact the case. It is possible, however, that these are simply three dimensions of culture that emerge jointly and continuously interact, rather than one dimension clearly preceding the others.

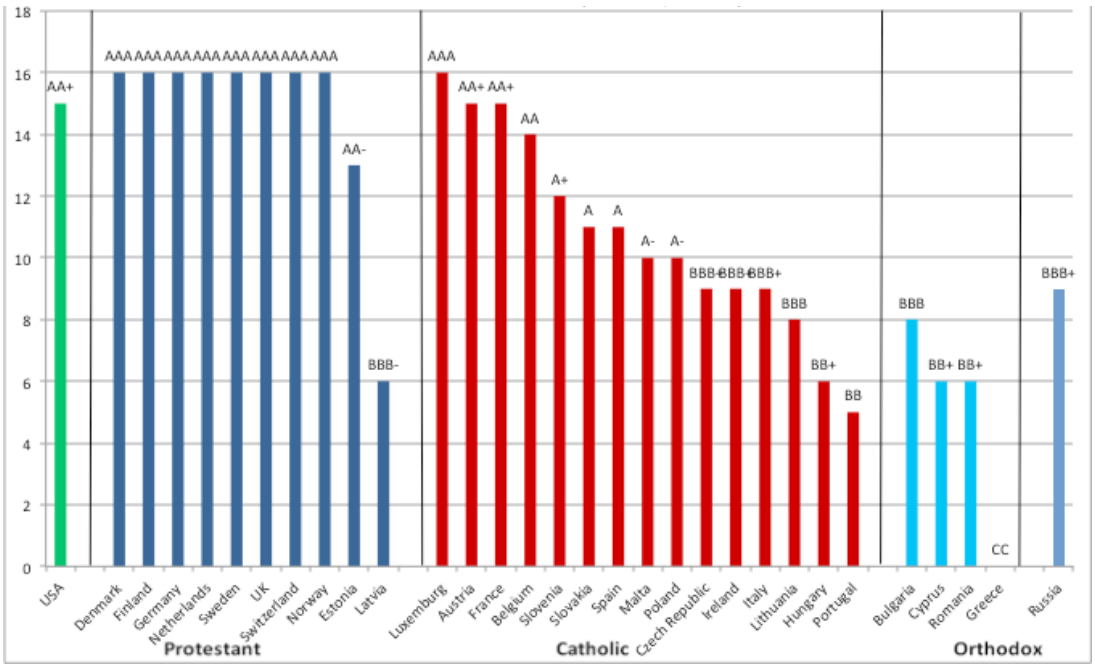
For the purposes of this paper, the "European" countries included in the analysis will be Norway and Switzerland plus the current 27 members of the European Union. Among these 29 European countries in total, the following ten are considered below as "historically Protestant": the United Kingdom, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Estonia, and Latvia. Fifteen countries are "historically Catholic": France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Belgium, Poland, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, and Luxemburg. Four of the European countries are "historically Orthodox": Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Romania. The United States and Russia are also shown for comparative purposes.

Among the historically Protestant countries, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland – reflecting their locations along the geographic border between Protestant and Catholic Europe – have historically had large Catholic minorities. Indeed, in religious surveys today, more people in Switzerland and Holland say they are Catholic than Protestant, and there are similar numbers of Protestants and Catholics in Germany today. These survey results reflect, however, new religious trends in Europe of the second half of the twentieth century. Increasing numbers of Protestants no longer declare in surveys that they are Protestant, instead putting themselves in the category of having no religion at all, or being religious but not affiliated with any particular traditional religion. Catholics also have been strongly influenced by secular trends but are more likely to continue to identify themselves in religious surveys as being "Catholic."

Thus, in 1900, reflecting the long historical importance of Protestantism since the days of Jean Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli and the Protestant Reformation, Switzerland was 60 percent Protestant; it remained about this percentage until as recently as 1950. Roman Catholics in 1900 and in 1950 were about 40 percent of the Swiss population, while those identifying themselves as "without religion" or as believing in some "other" nontraditional religion were negligible in numbers. By 2010, however, self-identified Protestants had fallen to only about 30 percent of the Swiss population. Roman Catholics, in contrast, were still about 40 percent. The numbers with no religion or some "other" religion had risen to about 10 and 15 percent, respectively (Muslims were now another 5 percent). Holland had historically also been about 60 percent Protestant and 40 percent Catholic until the mid-twentieth century but then saw similar religious trends take hold. Moreover, the historically Protestant majority

11 Berger 1999, 10.
12 Berger 1999, 10.
13 Taylor 2007.
14 Weber 1958, 53.
15 Inglehart, Halman, and Welzel 2004, 17.
16 Inglehart, Halman, and Welzel 2004, 12, 18.

Figure 1. Credit Rating: Standard & Poor's (March 2012).



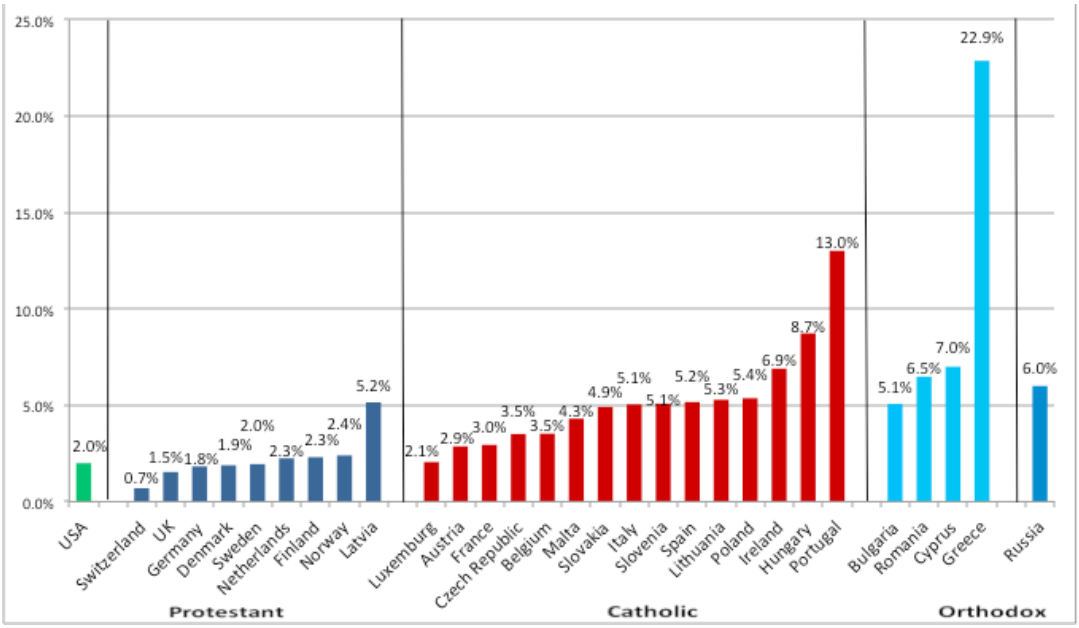
populations of Germany, Holland and Switzerland traditionally exercised a disproportionate influence on national politics and culture, relative to the Catholic minority. For the purposes of this article, therefore, it is assumed that Germany, Holland and Switzerland should be considered "historically Protestant" even when self-identified Protestants may no longer today be numerically dominant.

It should also be noted that Estonia and Latvia, while historically Lutheran Protestant, experienced major population and religious shifts in the twentieth century due to their forced annexation by the former Soviet Union in 1940 and subsequent Soviet efforts to "Russify" both nations, including expulsion of native Estonians and Latvians and the transfer of many Orthodox Russians into Estonia and Latvia. As a result of the latter, there remains today a significant Orthodox population in both countries (by some estimates around 25 percent). In the figures above and below, Estonia and Latvia often show national characteristics and outcomes differing from the other historically Protestant countries of Europe, as this more recent national history partly explains. Yet, one might speculate that Estonia and Latvia will in the future recall and recover important elements of their historically Protestant past, if now adjusted in various ways to reflect the broader forces of secularization throughout Europe of the second half of the twentieth century.

THE PROTESTANT-CATHOLIC (AND ORTHODOX) DIVIDE IN EUROPE

To see the potential importance of religion, consider, for example, the January 2012 downgrading of national credit ratings by Standard and Poor's. The nine countries downgraded were France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Cyprus, and Malta (with Spain further downgraded in April 2012). Ireland and Greece had already been previously downgraded (along with the United States,

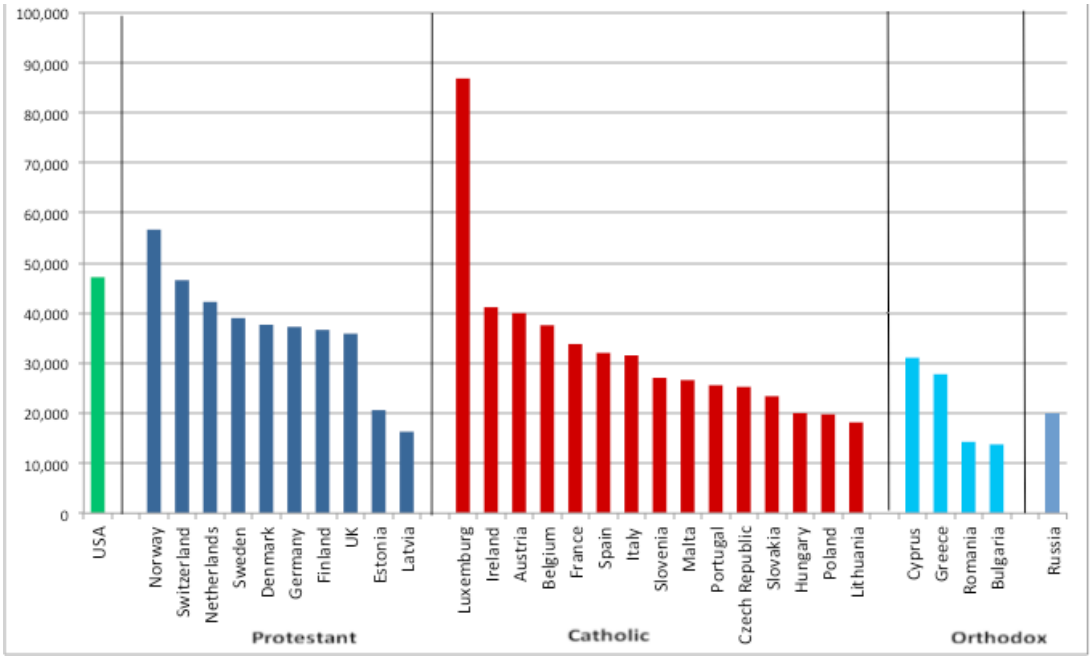
Figure 2. 10 Year Sovereign Bond Interest Rates of European Nations, March 2012. Source: European Central Bank.



interestingly enough). Of these eleven downgraded total countries in Europe, nine are historically Catholic and two are historically Orthodox. None are historically Protestant. Figure 1 shows the Standard and Poor's sovereign credit ratings for the European nations as of March 2012. Among the ten Protestant nations, eight have the highest possible AAA rating; the other two are Estonia with a rating of AA- and Latvia of BB+. Only one of the fifteen Catholic countries, tiny Luxemburg, has an AAA rating. The median Catholic rating is A-. Among Orthodox European nations, none attain higher than a BBB rating. The probabilistic odds of all this being a statistically random result in terms of the role of religion are essentially zero.

Credit ratings have significant impacts but do not by themselves drive market rates of interest. For one thing, the credit rating agencies have obviously made large mistakes, having rated many mortgage backed securities in the United States, for example, as essentially riskless until overwhelming empirical evidence in 2007 and 2008 showed the folly of such ratings. France and the United States in March 2012 had the same AA+ credit rating, but the United States 10-year treasury bonds were selling for about 2 percent while ten-year French bonds with the same AA+ rating were selling for about 3 percent. Nevertheless, as Figure 2 shows, national credit ratings and sovereign debt interest rates remain closely correlated. The 10-year interest rates on sovereign bonds of Protestant countries tend to be significantly lower than the 10-year interest rates on sovereign bonds of Catholic countries. The harsh realities of the bond market are in effect saying that the economic prospects of historically Protestant countries are significantly better than for historically Catholic countries over the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Figure 3. GDP (PPP) Per Capita (Intl $). Source: World Bank Database 2010.

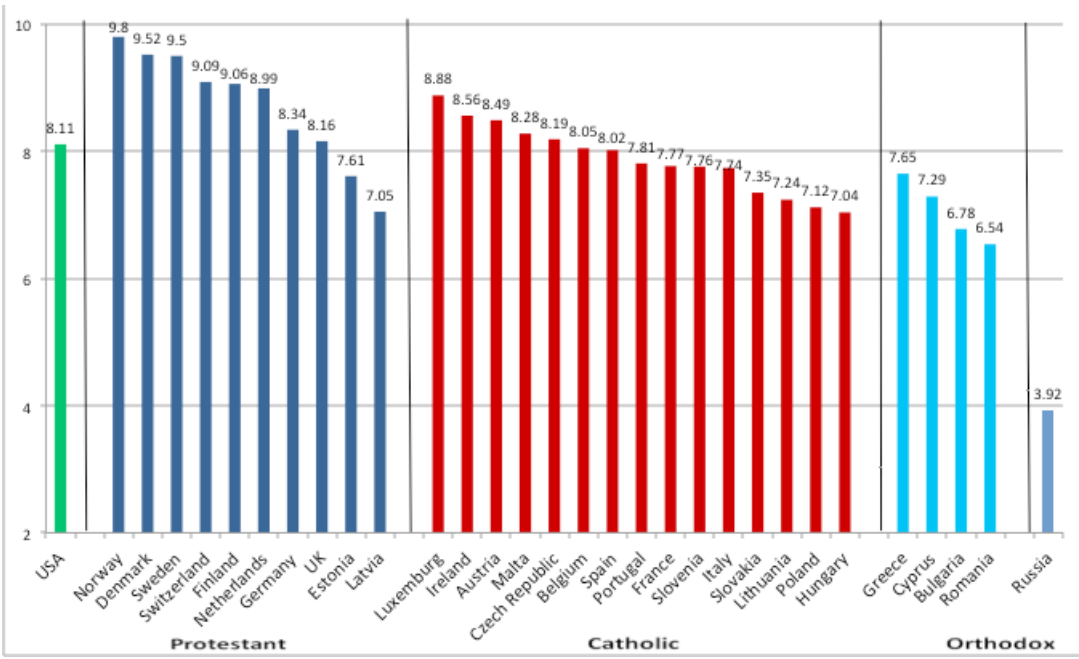


As shown in Figure 3, the Protestant-Catholic differences in national incomes per capita in Europe are not as stark as the differences in national credit ratings and interest rates but are still notable. In part, these lower incomes per capita admittedly reflect the larger number of historically Catholic countries that were once part of the Soviet Union itself (Lithuania), part of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic) or part of communist Yugoslavia (Slovenia). However, many of the historically Catholic nations that never experienced communist rule also have lower incomes per capita than their Protestant counterparts. The incomes per capita of France, Italy, Spain and Portugal exceed only Estonia and Latvia among historically Protestant countries. In per capita terms, among the economically highest ranked countries of Europe, only tiny Luxemburg is historically Catholic. Orthodox nations, including Greece and Cyprus, lag further behind most Protestant and Catholic countries that also did not experience communist rule.

These Protestant-Catholic differences in current economic status are mirrored in the political realm. The *Economist* magazine publishes a "democracy index" that rates the relative presence or absence of a healthy democracy among the nations of the world. As shown in Figure 4, the same Protestant countries that lead Europe economically are the leading countries in terms of the rated success of their democracies. Among the historically Catholic countries of Europe, France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal are ranked below every historically Protestant country of Europe, again except for Estonia and Latvia. The only Catholic countries of Europe comparable to Protestant countries in terms of a high rated quality of their democracy are Luxemburg, Ireland, Austria, Malta, and the Czech Republic, all of them small countries containing in total a small part of the Catholic population of Europe.

It is thus clear that even in the twenty-first century there remain significant divisions among European countries in both political and economic outcomes along historic religious lines. The question is

Figure 4. Democracy Index, 2011. Source: Economist Intelligence Unit.



why these divisions still persist today. Devout belief in the historically most important forms of Protestantism and Catholicism declined sharply over the course of the twentieth century.[17] It might be more accurate to say that "secularism" is the common religion of Europe today – especially among the elites – more than any traditional forms of Christianity.[18] The European Union has extended common institutions of governance and public policy across Europe. Modern transportation and communications have made all of Europe a part of a global community that exerts powerful cultural and economic influences that are felt almost everywhere on earth, and throughout all of Europe. The impact of historic religious differences, it would seem, should be declining across Europe, rather than apparently reappearing in the current sovereign debt crisis of Europe, as illustrated by the national credit ratings and related sovereign debt interest rates in Figures 1 and 2.

Not all forms of secularization, however, are alike. Even in France, typically regarded as one of the most secular nations of Europe, the large majority, while very seldom attending church, still declare that they are "Catholic." William Safran comments that "in many respects, France – – [still] manages to be a thoroughly Catholic country. The town cathedral remains in subtle ways a focal point of French culture."[19] Two other contemporary observers find that "Catholicism in France is not disappearing but rather is presently evolving into a new form."[20] In Sweden, only about 5 percent attend church regularly but 63 percent state that they are Christian "in their way."[21] In seemingly "secular" Finland, almost 80 percent of the population still belongs to the

17 Taylor 2007.
18 Bruce 2011; Voas 2009.
19 Safran 2003, 33.
20 Sahakian-Marcellin and Fregosi 1997, quoted in Manuel and Mott 2006, 63.
21 Hervieu-Leger 2000, 189.

Lutheran Church, thus incurring a State-enforced obligation to pay on average more than one percent of their income for Church support, funds collected through the national tax system.

My own studies over the past twenty years have shown that secular religions often draw heavily on the Judeo-Christian tradition. Moreover, different forms of secular religion may be derived from different parts of Christianity. In my 1991 book, *Reaching for Heaven on Earth: The Theological Meaning of Economics*, I wrote of historic "Protestant" and "Roman" traditions in Christian religion being revived among the various secular forms of "economic religion" in the modern age.[22] In my 2010 book, *The New Holy Wars: Economic Religion versus Environmental Religion in Contemporary America*, I find that environmental religion in the United States has a distinctly Protestant – especially Calvinist – quality.[23] Indeed, Part II of the book is titled "Calvinism minus God," referring to the core messages of American environmentalism today. The enthusiastic reception for environmentalism in the United States is partially explainable by the original Puritan heritage of the nation and the continuing strong hold of a Puritan mentality on American thinking even today. Puritanism was the English branch of Calvinism.[24]

But American environmentalists are more comfortable with a new kind of Puritanism in which the older religious elements have been disguised. As Stephan Faris writes, "in western society, where the Bible's authority has long been in decline, wonder and awe of nature remain undiminished. And the natural world makes a commanding case that there are things greater than man" – as environmental religion now teaches, following in the path of much older religious traditions.[25] Despite many assertions to the contrary, the fact that Europe has become more secular does not necessarily mean that it has become less religious; it may simply mean that the form of religion has been changing significantly.

As in the United States, the distinguished British sociologist of religion David Martin similarly finds a large historic influence of Protestantism in shaping many modern European nations. Indeed, he writes that "had the Reformation triumphed in France, as it almost did, the sociological and historical consequences for European history and development would have been fantastically different." Historically Catholic countries were characterized both by their traditional Catholic faith and by the presence of a religious monopoly as found in the Catholic Church itself. This Catholic combination, Martin finds, produced a distinctly Catholic national pattern of church/secular conflict in the twentieth century in Europe. It was characterized by "exacerbated class conflict" and other "types of fissure [that] are more intense than in Protestant societies," carrying over into modes of governance that have often been complicated and weakened by the high degree of political polarization within the historically Catholic nations of Europe. As Martin explains, pluralist Anglo-Saxon and other historically "Protestant societies do not breed militant secularism, or indeed a militant left. It is monopoly, above all Catholic monopoly, which ensures abrasive division and militant secularism" within a nation.[26] In an extreme case, as a recent book carefully documents, as many as 200,000 Spaniards were deliberately killed – 50,000 by the "left," and 150,000 by Francisco Franco and others on the "right" – in the civil war fought in Spain from 1936 to 1939.[27]

Partly because the Catholic Church has asserted and vigorously defended its exclusive religious prerogatives wherever and however it could, it has often allied itself historically with the state and otherwise sought to exclude religious competitors – as was the case in Spain in the late 1930s where it was typically allied with the Franco forces. As has been said, Catholic governance historically has often lacked Protestant efficiency except when it has come to uncovering and eliminating heresy. But ultimately in the nineteenth and twentieth century the emergence of powerful secular religions could not be blocked. In Catholic countries, these secular competitors ironically proved in many cases to be no less intolerant of religious competition (traditional or secular). Martin comments that the "large scale social and philosophical systems parallel to and in rivalry with Catholicism" amounted in such countries to a new secular "inverted form" of Catholicism itself.

In France, such secular forms of what Martin labels ”Catholicism without Christianity” included in the nineteenth century Marxism, Saint-Simonianism, and Comteanism, the secular religious wellsprings of the radical communist and socialist left that was so influential in France during the twentieth century.[28] Another leading British sociologist of religion Steve Bruce similarly observes that ”as Catholic countries modernized, they split into the religious and the secular: in the twentieth century, Italy, Spain and France had conservative Catholic traditions and powerful Communist parties,” the two often at virtual war with one another.[29] As suggested in the Figures above, and to the surprise of many, such legacies of historical religion, while often taking new forms, are exerting a continuing powerful influence even in ”secular” Europe in the twenty-first century.

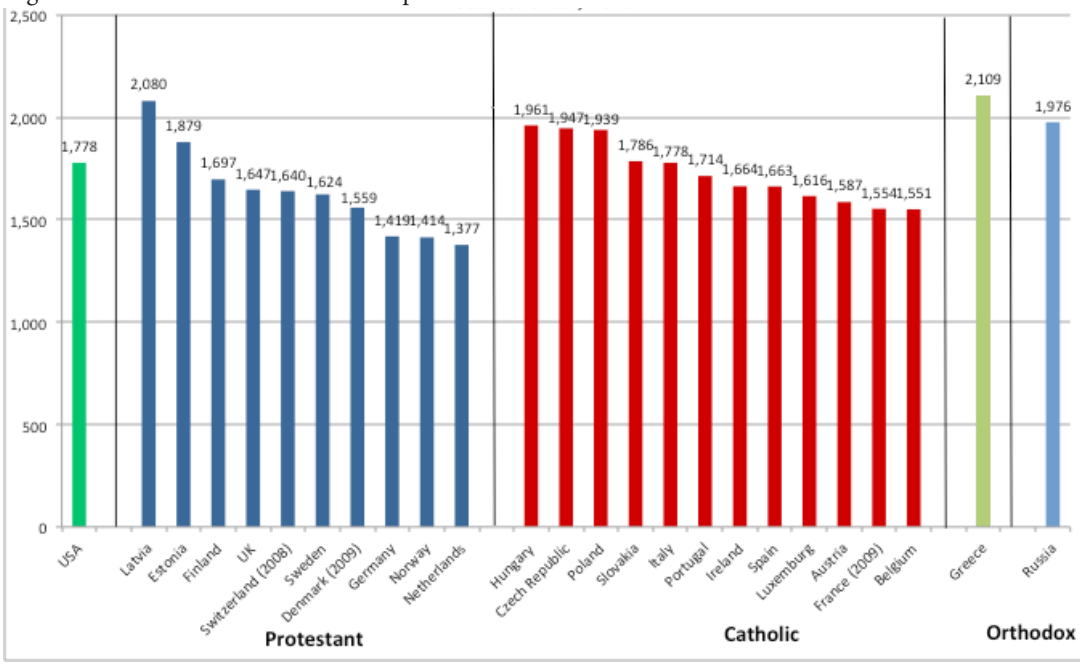
It is a large mistake to think of western secular religion as a total rejection of Christianity. Indeed, secular religion borrows heavily from Christianity (and Judaism). Walter Mead writes that ”secular modernism is the youngest member of the family of Abraham” – a new ”fourth faith,” as Mead calls it, following after Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Modern secular religion ”downplays or eliminates the idea of a personal God but otherwise it faithfully reproduces the most important pieces of the Abrahamic paradigm.”[30] One might think of secular religion in three possible ways: (1) as a new version of Christianity (as Protestantism was once a new version); (2) as a new Christian heresy; or (3) in the manner of Mead, as a brand new religion altogether (a ”fourth faith”) that draws heavily on Jewish and Christian sources (in this respect following the example of Islam).[31] The manner of accommodation of traditional religion to secular religion and other modern trends had a large impact on the twentieth century histories of European nations, as seen in a variety of important social and economic indicators above and below.

RELIGION AND WORK EFFORT TODAY

In earlier centuries, a large number of religious holidays and other factors may have diminished work effort in many Catholic nations but this is not the case today as Catholics show no lesser degree of motivation to work hard and to do well in business and other commercial pursuits. As shown in Figure 5, the people living in historically Catholic countries today work longer hours than the populations of historically Protestant countries in Europe – on average about 100 hours more per year. This is partly because the Protestant countries tend to be richer and can afford greater leisure to enjoy their incomes – thus being fortunate enough to be advantaged in both income and leisure respects. For example, the average hours of work in the historically Protestant Netherlands is 1,377 hours per year compared with 1,551 hours in historically Catholic Belgium; yet, income per capita in 2010 was $42,165 in the Netherlands and $37,631 in Belgium. Instead of work effort, any explanations for the current differences in Protestant-Catholic economic success thus must lie in the broader political and economic systems within which the work forces of historically Protestant and Catholic nations exert their efforts. Historically Catholic nations, simply put, offer a legal and institutional setting that on average somehow offers less encouragement to individual and overall economic success. Individual Catholics work harder but they are poorer and less productive and can afford less leisure than the workers in Protestant nations. The Protestant nations, as one might say, make better use of the physical capital and also the ”human capital” of their nations. At the extreme, remarkably enough, the workers of Orthodox Greece spend more hours per year on the job than the workers of

22 Nelson 1991.
23 Nelson 2010b.
24 Bercovitch 1975.
25 Faris 2011, 17.
26 Martin 1978, 38, 40, 19.
27 Preston 2012.
28 Martin 1978, 24, 39.
29 Bruce 2011, 31.
30 Mead 2007, 282.
31 Nelson 2010b, 344.

Figure 5. Annual Hours Worked Per Capita. Source: OECD 2010.



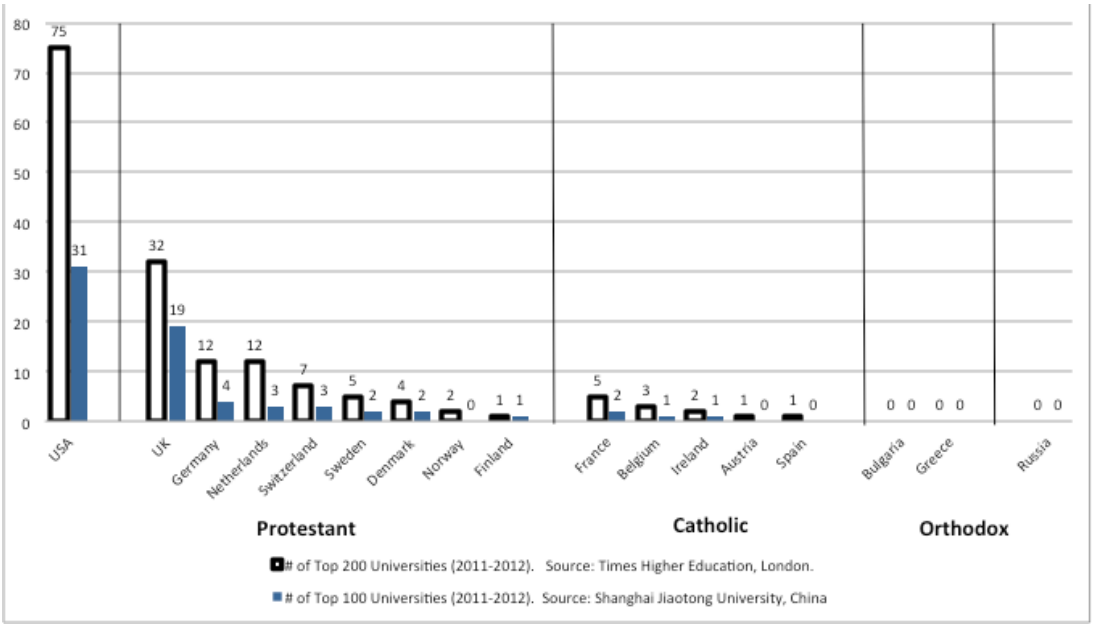
any of the historically Protestant and Catholic nations of Europe shown in Figure 5.

HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY: THE SURPRISINGLY LARGE IMPACT OF RELIGION

Reflecting the importance for Protestants of being able to read the Bible and in general to study religious subjects, Protestant countries historically achieved higher levels of literacy earlier than Catholic countries in Europe. But there are no longer significant differences in basic literacy between Protestant and Catholic countries. There does, however, remain a surprisingly large Protestant-Catholic divide in the area of higher education. For example, there are two leading rankings of world universities, one done by Shanghai Jiaotong University in China and the other by the Times Education Supplement in London. As shown in Figure 6, according to the Shanghai Jiaotong rankings, 31 European universities ranked among the top 100 universities in the world in 2011–2012. Only four of these universities, however, were located in a historically Catholic country in Europe, two in France and one each in Belgium and Ireland. There are no top 100 universities in Latin America or any other historically Catholic nations outside Europe. Thus, remarkably enough, there were many more top 100 ranked universities in the United Kingdom alone, and equally many top 100 ranked universities in Germany alone, as in all the historically Catholic nations of the world.

The Jiaotong university rankings put a greater emphasis on relative accomplishments of universities worldwide in the natural sciences and other technical fields. The Times Higher Education rankings give greater weight across a wider range of subject areas such as humanities and the social sciences. As shown in Figure 6, using the London rankings for 2011–2012, 12 European universities in historically Catholic countries can be found among the top 200 universities – 5 in France, 3 in Belgium, 2 in Ireland, and one each in Austria and Spain. But there are 86 universities in Europe in total among the top 200. The 12 universities in historically Catholic countries represent only 14 percent of the European to-

Figure 6. Number of Universities Ranked in Intl. Top 200 & Top 100.



tal. Given that Catholics represent 55 percent of the total population of western Europe, and 38 percent of the total population of all of Europe, it is still the case that among top-200 universities the historically Catholic countries are severely underrepresented.

Why would this be the case? It seems to violate the assumptions of cultural and religious convergence so commonly made across Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. Yet, for a modern secular university, the overthrowing of a previous core orthodoxy would historically be an occasion for celebration of its intellectual success; for the Catholic Church, however, it would historically be a problem and perhaps even a crisis. One might even say that in this respect the modern university is Protestant in its basic character; each Protestant must study the Bible on his or her own to verify the most important religious "truth" individually. Group discussion and debate among both the leadership and the ordinary people are an expected and normal part of the Protestant practice of religion. Protestantism thus favors constant challenging of received wisdom with open and vigorous competition among all parties as the path to knowledge. It is not a system of authoritative instruction by higher experts in established truth, religious or otherwise.

The Catholic Church, by contrast, has historically had particular difficulty in accepting the legitimacy even of active discussion and debate of many modern ideas and trends. In 1832, Pope Gregory XVI issued an encyclical "that placed the [Catholic] Church firmly in opposition to elected assemblies, freedom of the press, freedom of conscience and the separation of Church and State." He described proposals for representative democratic government as a "pernicious opinion."[32] As Jose Casanova writes, Catholicism in its official teachings "has been the paradigmatic form of anti-modern public religion."[33] Peter Berger similarly observes that there has historically been an intense "struggle

32 Manuel, Reardon and Wilcox 2006, 7.
33 Casanova 1993, 9, quoted in Manuel, Reardon and Wilcox 2006, 7.

with modernity in the Roman Catholic Church." It dates to "the Enlightenment and its multiple revolutions, [and] the initial response by the Church was militant and then defiant rejection. Perhaps the most magnificent moment of that defiance came in 1870, when the First Vatican Council solemnly proclaimed the infallibility of the Pope and the immaculate conception of Mary, literally in the face of the Enlightenment about to occupy Rome in the shape of the army of Victor Emmanuel I."[34]

Protestantism lacks a single hierarchy of religious authority to seek to fend off the advances of secular religion and other modern trends. Partly because there have always been many branches of Protestantism in competition with one another, religious adaptation is more easily accomplished within Protestant pluralism. It was not necessary that all Protestant churches follow a path of adapting rapidly to secular trends (many did not) but merely a sufficient number. In Protestant countries, secular themes such as nationalism and a devotion to economic progress thus could be reconciled more easily with the historic Christian heritage – not always with good results, as illustrated in Nazi Germany in the 1930s where surprisingly many Protestant Church leaders actively supported the Nazi cause. As a leading British sociologist of religion Grace Davie comments, "Protestant Europe is undoubtedly more secular," as compared with Catholic Europe, for better or for worse.[35]

So if modern secular universities are in some sense a historically "Protestant" enterprise in their fundamental aspirations and orientation, it perhaps should not be surprising that the highest ranked universities in the world are less likely to be found in historically Catholic nations. The advancements of modern science and other features of the modern university occurred with less religious tension in the more secular and pluralistic national cultures of the historically Protestant nations of Europe. To be sure, if Catholic criteria for purposes of higher education were applied – the degree to which a university advances established Catholic truths and values and the mission of the Catholic Church – the rankings of leading universities in the world would no doubt look much different.

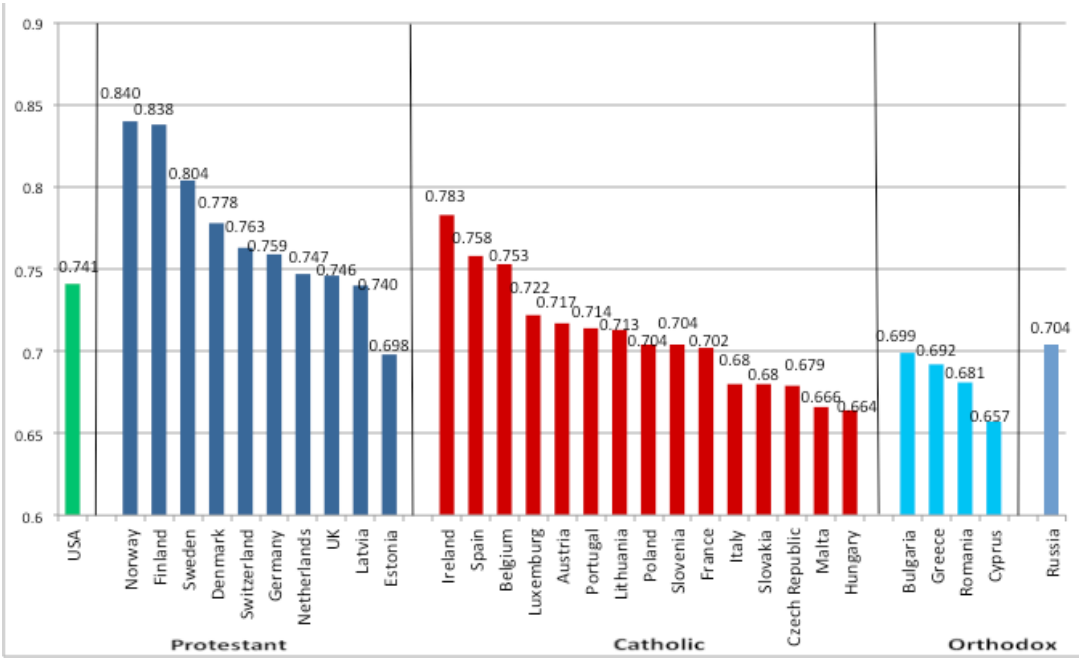
The Catholic Church finally took action to make peace with modernizing trends with the Second Vatican Council called by Pope John XXIII in the early 1960s. It can take as much as a century or more, however, to make a great university. Even after Vatican II, moreover, the Catholic Church often remained ambivalent in its attitudes to modern developments. Pope Paul VI early on signaled some degree of backtracking with his 1967 encyclical *Humanae vitae* rejecting the use of modern means of birth control. The French sociologist Daniele Hervieu-Leger writes that Pope John Paul II, in giving powerful expression to a continuing "markedly anti-modernist intransigence of Rome," helped in the 1980s to make the Polish Catholic Church the leading voice of opposition to the Polish communist regime and its Soviet overseers.[36]

Despite its own claims and its outwardly modernist appearance, admittedly, communism was itself ultimately a rejection of modernizing trends. Indeed, in rejecting many key modern trends communism was a competitor of the Catholic Church. In the former Soviet Union, communism under Lenin and Stalin in effect reinstituted many older Czarist patterns of governance just as buds of democracy and free markets had been appearing in early twentieth century Russia.[37] Nations that were both historically Catholic and then experienced significant periods of communist rule were thus doubly disadvantaged in terms of their ability to adapt with less strain to modern trends such as the routine practice of democracy and the development of great secular universities.

RELIGION AND GENDER EQUALITY

One of the greatest social changes of the twentieth century in Europe was the increasing acceptance of an equal role for women in governance, the work force, and indeed almost every area of life – perhaps the most truly revolutionary modern development of all, and the one most likely to endure (unlike, for example, communism). Historically Catholic (and Orthodox) nations, however, have again had more difficulty in adapting to this fundamental modern development. Given the glacial pace at which it normally works, and the unwillingness to concede

Figure 7. Gender Gap Index (0 = inequality, 1 = equality) 2011. Source: World Economic Forum.



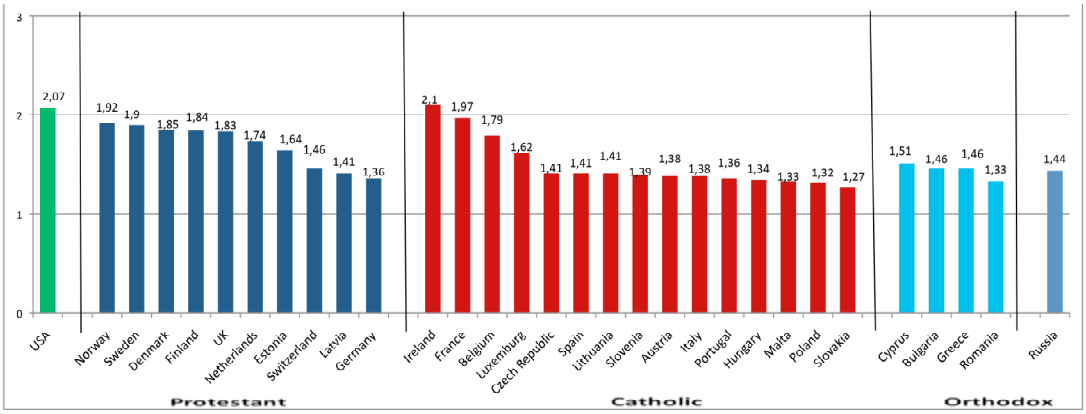
past errors in its official teachings and policies, the Catholic Church itself has been among the slowest of modern institutions in advancing women into positions of top leadership and full equality. There have now been many female European heads of state but there is no prospect any time soon of a woman as Pope or as a cardinal, bishop or parish priest of the Church.

As in other areas, the historic influence of the Catholic Church and its values, beliefs and organization inevitably extend in society well beyond matters of religion alone. The World Economic Forum recently published an index of the overall level of gender equality by nation in 2011. As shown in Figure 7, the historically Protestant nations of Europe are ranked well above the historically Catholic nations in terms of the degree of gender equality. Only Ireland, Spain and Belgium among the 15 historically Catholic nations are comparable to an average historically Protestant nation in Europe. The other 12 historically Catholic nations of Europe all rank below the historically Protestant nations, except for Estonia. Orthodox nations are similar to Catholic nations, including Cyprus which has the lowest level on the index of gender equality of any nation in Europe.

In 1999, British sociologist Catherine Rodgers observed that "politics, and nowhere more so in the developed world than in France, has proved to be an extremely misogynist domain." In historically Catholic France, women did not gain the right to vote until 1944; women were still only 6 percent of the National Assembly as late as 1993 and 5 percent of the Senate; even in the "higher echelons of the public service," the number of women in the 1990s was less than 10 percent. Rogers writes that "political power in France is especially conservative: it is a masculine area *par excellence*."[38] Despite the seeming secular character of French society, the role of women in politics in France still reflects assump-

34 Berger 1999, 4.
35 Davie 2000, 11 n. 6.
36 Hervieu-Leger 2000, 114.
37 Berdyaev 1960.
38 Rodgers 1999, 66.

Figure 8. Total Fertility Rate 2010. Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.



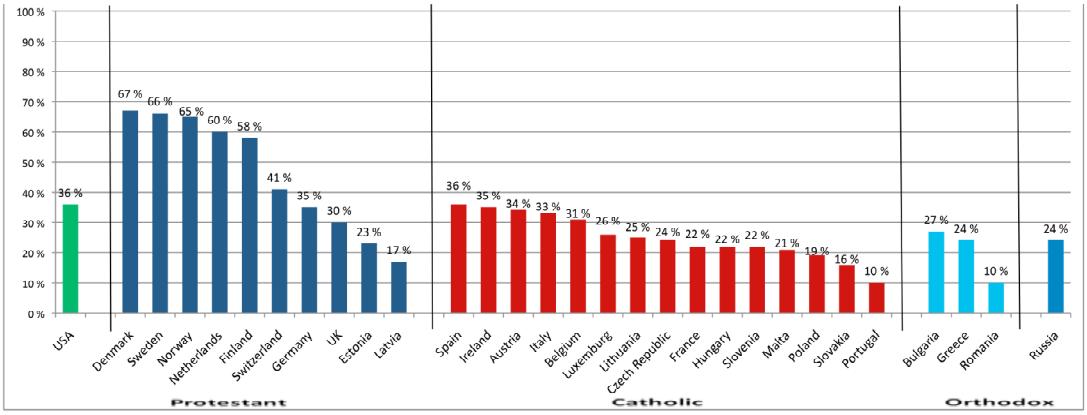
tions about the role of women in leadership positions that have been prominent historically in the Catholic Church.

It is not only in France but in most of historically Catholic Europe that women are underrepresented in politics. In 2012, the percentage of women in the lower houses of the legislature was lower in the historically Catholic Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, France, Slovakia, Ireland, Hungary, and Malta (as well as in the four historically Orthodox countries of Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Cyprus) than in any historically Protestant Country, except for Latvia. The lower house of historically Protestant Sweden consisted of 45 percent women, compared with 15 percent for a similarly small and northern country, but in this case historically Catholic, Ireland. Beyond issues of basic civil rights, the levels of gender equality have large practical implications reaching into economics and many other areas of society. In the twentieth century, mental activities increasingly replaced the hard physical labor of the old fashioned workplace. In the new European world of work, failing to make full use of the intellectual abilities and the social skills of women is an especially large economic liability, likely one of the factors in the weaker economic performance of historically Catholic nations relative to historically Protestant nations in Europe, as shown in the credit ratings and other figures above. The lack of Catholic representation in the world rankings of top universities, as seen above in Figure 6, may similarly reflect a lesser role for women in higher education in historically Catholic nations.

Yet another area where large gender-related differences still exist today between historically Protestant and historically Catholic Europe is in the fertility rate of women. Somewhat surprisingly, as shown in Figure 8, the historically Catholic (and Orthodox) nations of Europe tend to have lower fertility rates than the historically Protestant nations. Ireland, France, Belgium, and Luxembourg are similar to most of the historically Protestant nations (in the case of France partly due to the large Muslim population). Germany is anomalous among historically Protestant nations in now having a fertility rate comparable to Catholic countries. Other than Germany and Latvia, however, there are 11 historically Catholic countries with lower fertility rates than any of the other 8 historically Protestant countries of Europe. The lowest fertility rates in Europe, below 1.35 children per woman (over the course of a lifetime), are found in the historically Catholic nations of Hungary, Malta, Poland, and Slovakia (and also in Orthodox Romania).

Given Catholic teachings concerning contraception, abortion, prohibitions on divorce, and other areas of family life, one might well have expected Catholic nations to have higher fertility rates than Protestant nations. But the lower levels of national income per capita and lower levels of gender equality in a historically Catholic nation may be having a

Figure 9. Percent Saying Yes, Most People Can Be Trusted. Source: 1999–2002 World Values Survey.



greater influence on national fertility rates than the current messages of official Catholic teachings. Two of the main exceptions among Catholic countries in terms of having higher fertility rates are Ireland and Belgium, also exceptions in terms of having higher incomes per capita and greater overall gender equality, as shown in Figures 3 and 7. When modern Catholic women are confronted today with circumstances of greater economic uncertainty and a lower degree of gender equality in their nation, it seems that they often respond by reducing the number of children they have and the associated economic and family burdens. A low birth rate can then compound the economic problems of historically Catholic nations, as the active work force dwindles relative to a burgeoning population of senior citizens who must now be supported by a relatively diminishing number of younger workers.

RELIGION AND NATIONAL LEVELS OF TRUST

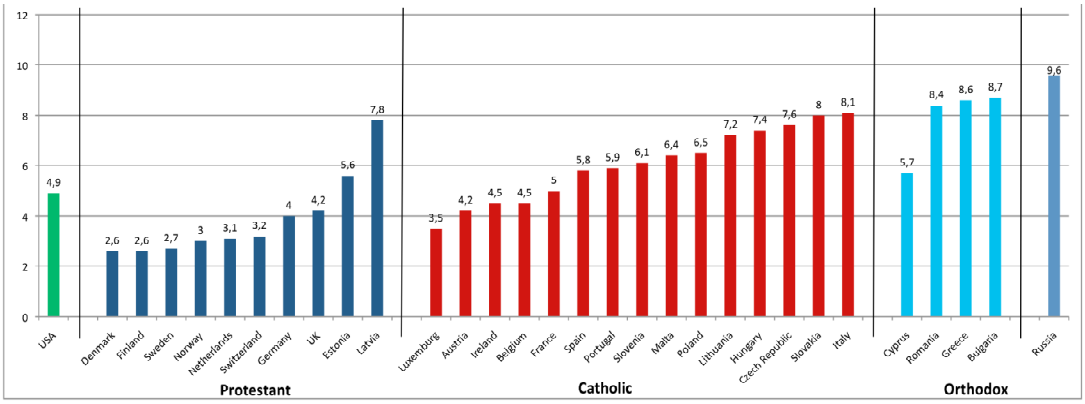
Another area in which there remains a strong connection to the historic religion of a nation in Europe is in the level of trust in other people. As shown in Figure 9, according to the 1999–2002 World Values Survey, people in historically Protestant nations typically say that they are more trusting of other people than in historically Catholic (and Orthodox) nations of Europe. With levels of trust in the range of almost 60 percent and above, the Scandinavian nations and the Netherlands are in a high-trust category by themselves, not only for Europe but for the entire world. One might conjecture that trust in these historically Protestant countries is a result of their smaller populations which encourage a stronger sense of national unity and community. But Catholic nations of Europe with similarly (or even smaller) populations such as Luxembourg, Malta and Portugal have lower levels of trust shown in other people.

Admittedly, another important factor is that a larger number of historically Catholic European nations became part of the former Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe. For many reasons, a communist national history discourages the development of national attitudes of trust among its people. But Catholic countries that never experienced communism such as France, Italy, Austria, and Belgium also have trust levels well below most Protestant countries of Europe. Among the countries in historically Catholic Latin America, levels of trust are typically even lower, including Brazil (3 percent) – the lowest in the world according to the 1999–2002 World Values Survey.[39]

A high level of trust can be a large political and economic asset for a nation. It is almost a require-

39 Inglehart, Basanez, Diez-Medrano, Halman, and Luijkx, 2004.

Figure 10. Corruption Perception Index Rank 2011 (lower score = less corrupt). Source: Transparency International.



ment for a healthy democratic system. Effective participation in politics requires that people vote and that they join voluntarily in groups in civil society to influence the political process. Yet, such voluntary actions must overcome what economists describe as the "free rider" incentive – the fact that it is not individually rational to contribute to collective action, when the actions of any individual will not have any practical significance by themselves for the overall result.[40] Overcoming the free rider effect requires that most people trust other people to all make a fair individual contribution to the desired collective action of the whole group. The level of trust is one of the key elements in what economists have come to call the level of "social capital" of a country – yet another form of capital along with the more traditional forms of physical capital and human capital.[41]

Trust, moreover, is a circular process. Higher levels of trust promote political and economic success, but it is also true that political and economic success promotes greater trust among the citizens of a nation. It is not always clear why a Protestant nation has attained a higher level of trust. But once this has occurred, in some cases perhaps even as much as a few centuries ago, it has worked in a self-reinforcing way. The relative lack of mutual trust in the historically Catholic nations of Europe (and Latin America) is yet another negative factor for their less successful political and economic development, relative to historically Protestant nations.

LEVELS OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION

As shown in Figure 10, the level of corruption is yet another part of the contemporary divide separating historically Protestant from historically Catholic (and Orthodox) Europe. With some limited exceptions such as Luxemburg, Ireland and Austria, the historically Catholic nations of Europe are seen as having more corruption than any historically Protestant nation of Europe (other than Estonia and Latvia which themselves suffered in this respect from many decades as Republics of the former Soviet Union). Italy is rated by Transparency International as exceeding not only all historically Protestant countries but all other historically Catholic countries in Europe in the degree of corruption. Only historically Orthodox Romania, Bulgaria and Greece have higher levels of corruption than Italy. Historically Orthodox Russia, to be sure, is the overall corruption prize winner among the nations shown in Figure 10.

Corruption both undermines government effectiveness and is an indication in itself of a lack of public trust and confidence in the political system. Citizens in corrupt nations feel that they are helpless to do anything about it because the core legal and political institutions of the nation are the prob-

lem to begin with. It becomes a circular process because many people then do not bother to try to do anything about corruption. The rule of law, another important factor in national economic development, is undermined by corruption. All such factors negatively affect the economic side of life as well as the political. American economists George Akerlof (winner of the Nobel prize in economics in 2001) and Robert Schiller thus explained recently that "some economic fluctuations may be traced to changes over time in the prominence, and the acceptability, of outright corruption."[42]

All forms of Christianity teach forgiveness of sins – a matter at the very heart of the Christian message. But the manner in which sins are forgiven can vary among Christian religions, a potentially significant factor in explaining the differences in levels of corruption (a form of "sin") among historically Protestant and historically Catholic nations in Europe. In Protestantism, a person is saved "by faith alone." This is not simply a matter of making an outward profession of faith, however. Verifying the presence or absence of true faith often requires deep individual introspection and examination of all aspects of a person's life, an intense process that can last over the course of a whole lifetime. In Calvinism, for example, individual success in a worldly calling offers a strong sign that a person is in God's good grace. Protestantism taught that continuing strong individual efforts at self control may be necessary to block any wayward impulses or other temptations – such as the potential gains from the corrupt behavior of a public official. A public official who continued to behave corruptly would deserve the strongest moral condemnation in the view of the Protestant Church and community.

Political corruption is equally a sin for Catholics. The Catholic Church, however, tends to be more easily forgiving and less harshly condemning of sins in general. In matters of salvation, it is possible to make up for past misdeeds by the later "good works" of an individual, following the rules of the Church. In matters of confession ("penance" in the language of Catholic theology), Martin Luther rejected historic Catholic practices because there was "an abiding danger of regarding the works of the penitent as more important than faith in God's mercy." The Catholic response, given at the Council of Trent in 1551, was that "the three acts of the penitent are contribution, confession of all serious sins in number and kind, and satisfaction [by individual actions under priestly instruction]; that absolution is reserved to priests alone; and that the priest must have jurisdiction, since absolution is a juridical act."[43]

Indeed, while the Protestant Reformers reduced – or abandoned altogether – the role of individual confession to a priest, it has continued to be a prominent part of Catholic religious practice (if diminishing recently in importance). A whole lifetime of deep sinning could in concept be absolved by an appropriate deathbed confession to a Catholic priest. Such ways of thinking, it would seem, will work to diminish the Catholic sense of moral urgency in the conduct of daily life, as compared with the Protestant way of thinking. A greater Catholic tolerance of human frailties may extend to the judgments of the Church and society concerning the actions of corrupt public officials. Figure 10 offers empirical support for this thesis. In this respect, as in others, the specific character of a religion can have significant consequences for political and economic results as well as for the directly religious side of life.

Italy illustrates the greater potential for corruption in historically Catholic countries in an exaggerated form among European nations. Luigi Zingales grew up in Italy before coming to the United States where he is now an economist at the University of Chicago. Zingales wrote in 2012 of his country of birth that "Italy invented the term nepotism and perfected the concept of cronyism, and it still lives by both." It is a country where "young people, rather than being told to study, are urged to 'carry the bag' (*fare il portaborse*) for powerful people, in the hope of getting back some favors." For all too many Ital-

40 Olson 1965.
41 Fukuyama 1995.
42 Akerlof and Schiller 2009, 26.
43 McBrien 1994, 840.

ians, even today "there is virtually no meritocracy and competition is considered a sin." Business practice as well as the conduct of government are affected: "Until 1990, companies in Italy could openly and legally collude to defraud their customers; they still collude today, but they are less open about it. The best way to get rich is to be politically connected and receive a government contract."[44]

RELIGION AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE

Reflecting the widespread economic determinism of the twentieth century, the usual line of causation assumed in the social sciences ran from economics to politics.[45] According to this thinking, nations first developed economically and then, as material problems were solved, the external preconditions were satisfied for improvements in political, moral, spiritual and other noneconomic domains. If economics saves the world, it will bring about more democratic forms of governance along with many other large human benefits. Modern economic progress, many of the intellectual leaders of the twentieth century were convinced, will free us from the old constraints of material deprivation that for so long stunted human lives and limited human options, causing so many people in the past to behave so badly (so "sinfully"). In this modern way of thinking, for example, most past wars were seen as having been fought among nations for the control of scarce natural resources.

Leading theorists of European economic history and of modern economic development more recently, however, have been considering other possibilities.[46] Economic growth and development seems to require first a predictable legal structure, sensible government regulations, effective limits on corruption, and other cultural and institutional preconditions.[47] It may be, surprisingly enough, that politics has to precede economics. A sound political system may have to create the necessary legal and institutional setting for modern growth in the first place.[48] A leading MIT economist Darren Acemoglu and Harvard political scientist James Robinson write that "traditionally economics has ignored politics, but understanding politics is crucial for understanding world inequality" and other economic outcomes. This is because "it is the political process that determines what economic institutions people live under" and the character of the economic institutions of a nation is especially "critical for determining whether a country is poor or prosperous."[49]

The political system, moreover, is in some sense the voice of "the people." Politics is inevitably shaped in significant part by the level of education, the knowledge, and the cultural beliefs of the population of a nation. Here, religion may turn out to be especially important; economic development may thus even have to begin with religion, rather than the other way around, as so many economists have long thought. If that is the case, promoting economic development may depend critically on a widespread conversion process of a nation to new religious beliefs and practices more congenial to effective governance and hence to greater economic success.[50] Such a process need not necessarily involve conversion to a traditional Christian religion but could perhaps be to a new secular form of religion (if itself often a newly "implicit Christianity").

If a successful politics is a prerequisite for a successful economic system, this has been a greater problem for the historically Catholic (and Orthodox) nations of Europe. Although a strong defender of historic Catholic values and religion, the Italian Amintore Fanfani acknowledged in 1935 that the politics of many historically Catholic nations had long left much to be desired. As Fanfani wrote,

> The history of Europe in modern times shows us that in the Catholic countries we find weak or small States, which are therefore powerless to bridle, direct, and support the energies of their subjects. And when there was a strong and powerful State, it used its strength and power not for the achievement of better economic prospects, but frittered them away in political struggles. Spain is an example of this in one respect, and France in another. When Northern Europe saw the power of its states increasing, the States of Southern Europe were in decadence, or else, as in Italy, their development was arrested.
>
> Politics, in the strict sense, dominate the public life of the Southern European States. Economics, in the broad sense, direct the public life of the Northern European States. There is therefore no cause to wonder, and no need

> to seek for mysterious influences, if after three centuries of such life, in the nineteenth century, it becomes plain to all that the Nordic States are at the head of economic progress, while among those of the South there are a few trying to discover how to follow their example.[51]

As a cultural basis for a political system, and especially for a democratic system, a historically Protestant religion – and above all a historically Calvinist or "Reformed" religion – has some major advantages (even when it may have more recently taken on "secular Protestant" characteristics). The minister of a Reformed Protestant church is closer to a discussion leader and church administrator than to a religious expert who will instruct the masses of the faithful in matters of religious truth and practice. In Calvinist churches, the minister is chosen from the bottom up by the congregation, not top-down through a selection mechanism based on a system of church hierarchy. Indeed, voting is a common method of Protestant church decision making, not only in Calvinist but in Methodist, Baptist and many other Protestant denominations. Even in the Lutheran state churches of Scandinavia, there is no single central figure of authority such as the Catholic Pope.

Starting with the original example of Martin Luther, Protestant churches also have asserted a fierce commitment to religious freedom of expression against any church or state infringements. In England, when Charles I went too far in seeking to repress the Puritan Calvinists of the nation, it cost him his life in 1649. In the United States, a skepticism of central government dating to the founding of the nation is a product in significant part of the nation's long Protestant heritage.[52] Rather than a high level of religious control over large areas of public life, the historically Protestant United States takes matters to an opposite extreme, demanding a complete separation of church and state. The Catholic Church for its part historically has been skeptical of the very idea of separation of church and state – believing, logically enough in light of its official teachings, that every realm of society must be guided by the uniquely revealed truths of God, as found in the Church.

All these features of Protestantism are obviously congenial with and will be supportive of a democratic system of government. Democracy assumes that it is "the people" rather than any divinely revealed truths of God that are the ultimate source of authority in society. Large numbers of individuals seeking to understand national issues and to contribute to democratic debate will improve the quality of public decision making – and of informed voting for candidates for office. Protestant culture survived in the twentieth century, even when many people stopped going to Protestant churches. Intense discussion and debate are nevertheless still to be expected, leading to a final democratically resolved decision. There is thus a strong cultural foundation in a historically Protestant nation for an effective democratic system of governance today. Even in Scandinavia, where Lutheran state churches were found, the British sociologist of religion Steve Bruce writes that "despite dissent being largely contained within the Lutheran tradition, the introduction of representative democracy in the Nordic countries was accompanied by the gradual acceptance of the idea of religious liberty" as a core foundation for pluralism in matters of both religion and politics.[53]

It was often surprisingly otherwise in a historically Catholic country. The Catholic Church historically often even discouraged the faithful from reading the Bible. Individual interpretation of the Bible might too easily lead to religious confusion and even to heretical belief. It was the role of the Roman Catholic priesthood, based on long study in Catholic institutions of higher learning, drawing on a rich Catholic intellectual heritage of many centuries, to instruct the faithful in the truths of the Catholic – the Christian, as Catholics saw matters – religion.

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44 Zingales 2012, x–xi.
45 See Nelson 2001, also Sedlacek 2011.
46 McCloskey 2007; 2011.
47 World Development Report 2005.
48 World Development Report 2002.
49 Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, 68, 42, 43.
50 Inglehart and Welzel 2005.
51 Fanfani 1984, 214–215.
52 Fischer 1989.
53 Bruce 2011, 39.

Too much independence of individual thought was often something to be distrusted and even feared in the history of Catholicism. In contrast to the typical competitive squabbling among Protestant denominations, there ideally should be only one Christian Church, historically located in Rome, to spread the one correct Christian truth of the world. The Catholic Church extended such thinking into the political realm as well, long showing a deep skepticism that any nation could trust its governance to the messy workings of a popular democratic process.

Bruce thus writes that "in the early phases of democratization in the Catholic states of Europe and of Central and South America, the Church has to be stripped of its power." It is only since 1945 that, reflecting the lessons of the undemocratic disasters of the first half of the twentieth century, "the Catholic Church has accepted the principles of liberal democracy." As Bruce concludes, although it may not have been the specific intent of reformers such as Luther and Calvin, "the Reformation played a major part in laying the foundations for liberal democracy," a religious foundation that did not exist in European Catholic countries until recently, and even now is still not fully resolved. In abortion and other matters of basic moral principle, for example, the Catholic view is that natural law must dominate over any democratic referendum of the people.

Even when historically Catholic nations were increasingly influenced by secular trends, they tended to pursue their secular politics in a historically Catholic way. For the secular economic religions of the twentieth century, economics in Catholic countries often replaced God and the state replaced the church.[54] As it had previously been necessary for the Catholic Church to combat Christian heresy, the state in historically Catholic countries now often acted to limit new versions of "economic heresy" among the citizenry. Benito Mussolini was dictator of Italy from 1922 to 1943, acting in the name of a secular fascist religion whose core values were to be imposed throughout all areas of Italian public life. Francisco Franco was dictator of Spain from 1936 to 1975; and Antonio Salazar of Portugal from 1932 to 1974. In Latin America, military dictatorships governed many countries for significant periods in the second half of the twentieth century. Among historically Protestant countries, only Germany has had a similarly strained relationship with political democracy.

Orthodox religion was similar to Catholic religion in this regard; the violent repression of independent opinion in the former Soviet Union illustrated the potential danger of authoritarian outcomes. Replacing the old monopoly of the Orthodox Church, the new monopoly of communism in Russia became an all encompassing Marxist theocracy, tightly enforced by the coercive powers of the Soviet state.[55] Moscow in communist eyes was still the "Third Rome," if now evangelizing a secular economic form of religion to the whole world. In Catholic France and Italy, strong communist parties that supported Soviet actions continued to play an important role in national politics long after such parties had ceased to have any significant political influence in Protestant countries.

Even when governments have been more genuinely democratic, the political systems in historically Catholic countries have often provided erratic national leadership. The many military dictatorships in Latin America often resulted from deep popular discontent with the large failures – sometimes creating virtual national political and economic chaos – of preceding democratic civilian regimes. The politics of democratic France was turbulent for decades until Charles de Gaulle led the writing of a new constitution in the 1950s with an unusually powerful elected president. Italy still has not adequately resolved the problem of its strong tendencies towards political instability.

From the Catholic viewpoint, the cacophony of Protestant religions posed a threat to the very legitimacy of the Christian religion itself. It all too easily turned religion into a form of marketable commodity in which Protestant churches competed to meet the emotional and other personal needs of their members, rather than instructing them in the eternal truths of the one God above. As Edward Norman writes, "in most modern Protestant ecclesiologies a kind of free market in theological and ecclesiastical concepts is envisioned."[56] If a Protestant member of a particular local church decided

that he or she wanted something else religiously, it was easy enough to switch to another more satisfactory Protestant local church. The result was that, in effect, from the Catholic perspective, ultimate religious truth in Protestantism was left to each individual to decide for his or her self. Religion was effectively privatized. For a good Catholic, this was an altogether unacceptable outcome in the practice of a monotheistic Christian religion in which there can be only one divine truth that must eventually prevail.

In the modern era, such Catholic habits of religious thought were easily extended from the religious domain to the secular domain of politics. A history of Catholic faith and practice thus are not as congenial with democracy. Indeed, one might even say that democracy is an extension of Protestant religious practices into the secular realm of the political system. One might also say this of the free market in economics, recognizing that the design of economic systems can also implicitly expresses religious convictions.[57] Historically, the Catholic hierarchy often cooperated closely with state authority, both the church and the state seeking stability and order over the dangers of excessive religious and economic competition.

Owing to the twentieth-century general skepticism in the social sciences about the role of religion as an important explanatory factor in society, few rigorous statistical analyses of the relationship of religion and democracy have been conducted. Fortunately, this has begun to change in recent years. In an important 2012 article in the *American Political Science Review*, Robert Woodberry probes the historic connections between numbers of Protestant missionaries and the spread of democracy in developing nations around the world, finding a strong correlation. Indeed, he concludes that "in statistical analyses, Protestant missions explain about half the variation in democracy in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania and make most of the [traditional economic and other] variables that [still] dominate current [democracy] research statistically insignificant."[58]

Despite the continuing resistance within mainstream social science, there is a growing body of writings about the significant impact of religion in general on social development and democratic practice throughout the world. As Woodberry summarizes the conclusions of such writings, "Western modernity, in its current form, is profoundly shaped by religious factors." In particular, in Europe, "current statistical evidence of an association between Protestantism and democracy matches [more conventional] historical evidence that Protestantism facilitates the development of modern representative democracy." By contrast, "democracy lagged in Catholic and Orthodox parts of Southern and Eastern Europe where Protestants had little influence. A similar pattern existed outside Europe."[59]

In the formation of the modern world, as Woodberry writes, "the ideas that shaped the first successful democratic movements were heavily influenced by Protestantism, not just by 'secular' classical and Enlightenment thought." This was not only a matter of the impact of religious ideas in and of themselves but also partly because a Protestant national history "fostered greater separation between church and state, dispersed power, and helped create conditions under which stable democratic transitions were more likely to occur." A national history of Calvinism was especially important.[60] Woodberry writes that "most Enlightenment democratic theorists came from Calvinist families or had a Calvinist education, even if they were either not theologically orthodox or personally religious (e.g., John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Hugo Grotius, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Patrick Henry, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton)."[61] As Woodberry summarizes the overall findings of his research, "a century ago Max Weber argued that Protestantism helped spur the rise of capitalism. Some of his causal mechanisms may be wrong, but his main intuition seems right: Religious beliefs and institutions

54 Nelson 2001.
55 Halfin 2000.
56 Norman 2002, 84.
57 Troeltsch 1958.
58 Woodberry 2012, 245.
59 Woodberry 2012, 244–245.
60 See also Stackhouse forthcoming 2013.
61 Woodberry 2012, 248.

matter" a great deal. As a result, "what we consider modernity was not the inevitable result of economic development, urbanization, industrialization, secularization, or the Enlightenment, but a far more contingent process profoundly shaped by activist religion" of a Protestant character.[62]

As this article has explored, the impact of religion remains surprisingly important even today. The historically Catholic countries of Europe in 2000 were much different places than the same countries in 1900. But Figures 1 to 10 above suggest that less changed over that period than most Europeans would have predicted. Economic progress does less to change a national culture and character than the true believers in economic religion would have ever imaged. If anything, it may be a persisting national culture that shapes the specific course of economic progress.[63] A nation's historic religion is more persistent, continuing to exert a powerful influence on political and economic events, even when the outward expressions of religion may be shifting from traditionally Christian to newly secular forms.[64]

THE RELIGIOUS FUTURE OF EUROPE?

The creators of the European Union implicitly took for granted that a significant degree of common culture would be found across Europe. This would be required even for the maintenance of a common trading union, the original main purpose of the EU. Over time, the EU began pursuing more ambitious forms of unification, including the regulation and management of important parts of national economic activity from Brussels and, most ambitious of all, the creation of a common currency for the 17 members of the Eurozone. Even greater cultural unification was implicitly assumed in these later efforts.

At the heart of a culture is usually religion. In the case of the EU, the assumed common culture was based on an expectation of a spreading common religion of Europe. This religion would not be explicitly Christian. For one thing, divisions within Christianity had often disturbed the peace and prosperity of Europe in the past; Christianity had too often divided Europe, rather than unifying it. For another, many Europeans no longer believed in any traditional form of Christianity. Their values remained in significant part Judeo-Christian but they were now often given secular expression through new religions that did not say anything explicitly about God.

The expected unifying secular religion of Europe was a form of what I have called "economic religion."[65] In economic religion, economic progress is the path of the secular salvation of the world. Economic progress is not only about material gains in goods and services; it is also about the moral and spiritual improvement of human beings in the world. Relieved of the pressures of severe material deprivation, the members of society will be freed to discover their inner and better selves, to live in harmony with their truer natures. Economic progress will lead to a new heaven on earth. Brought together for the first time in one large trading unit, the EU – perhaps with the United States and other English speaking nations such as Australia – will be the vanguard of the economic salvation of the world.

This secular economic religion was in fact widely accepted in Europe, especially among the European elites, as it was widely accepted among American elites. It was not only a faith in economic progress but in modern rational values and science and in the ability of governments to serve these values through the scientific management of whole societies. In the United States such a faith is often described as "progressive"; in Europe it is typically labeled as "democratic socialist." The most successful countries in Europe in realizing such social values and goals in practice were the historically Protestant nations. The EU thus implicitly also believed in a growing "Protestantization" of Europe, as a new level of political and economic freedom spread across the continent, encouraged by EU influence and authorities. Brussels, one might say, would become the new Rome of a secular Europe.

Below the modern elites, however, traditional European religious and cultural forms proved surprisingly resistant to change. Many EU countries experienced rapid economic growth and development and most of Europe became more secular, rejecting traditional Christianity, and increasingly adopt-

ing new forms of secular economic religion. But the practice of the new secular religion of a nation often turned out to reflect in significant part the traditional practice of Christianity of that same nation. In historically Protestant nations, new secular religions showed a surprisingly "Protestant" character; in historically Catholic nations, they remained surprisingly "Catholic" – and this applied to historically Orthodox nations as well. In part for this reason, the rate of political change across Europe was less rapid than the rate of economic change. In historically Catholic and Orthodox countries, the domestic political systems limited the full extent that these countries could participate in modern economic trends. The EU sought to offer a historically "Protestant" counterweight to domestic political and cultural liabilities in historically Catholic and Orthodox nations but inevitably could not succeed altogether.

It may be that the current sovereign debt crisis and associated political and economic stresses and strains within the EU of the last few years will be a passing phase. While there will be steps backwards as well as forwards, the long run trend may be towards an increasingly united Europe that is bound together under a secular religion – presumably some version of the religion of economic progress – that is increasingly found across all of Europe. Modern rational values will prevail everywhere. Such common values will be the religious and cultural foundation for a successful EU future.

It is also possible, however, that the influence of modern progressive values is waning. In the Muslim world, Islam fundamentalism is growing in strength, as scientific socialism loses the allure it formerly held even for Muslim elites. In the United States, the mainstream Protestant churches had by the 1960s incorporated many of the secular messages of economic progress and scientific management into their messages. These churches as recently as the 1960s had confidently expected to be the religious vanguard of a progressive future. But to their great surprise, the past 40 years have been a period of significant decline in mainstream Protestantism. Instead, it has been more evangelical and fundamentalist forms of Protestantism, including Pentecostal religion, that have been the most rapidly growing parts of Protestant religion in the United States. Even among the secular elites, the rise of a fundamentalist "environmental religion" has increasingly challenged the twentieth century worship of economic progress.[66]

The future of the EU thus may depend on the future of religion in Europe. Religion is not merely a byproduct of larger and more fundamental economic and political forces. Rather, as surprising as it might have seemed to many leading twentieth century intellectuals of Europe, religion may itself even be the driving force of the future. Much more than most Europeans thought at least until recently, culture drives politics and economics, and it is religion that really drives culture.[67] The Protestant-Catholic divide in Europe may not disappear any time soon. Max Weber, it seems, is still relevant. If that is the case, it will continue to be a large problem for the EU.

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