ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC POLICY:
DOES CATHOLICISM MAKE A DIFFERENCE?*

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Abstract:

This paper suggests that differences in religious adherence and/or in degrees of secularization as between advanced nations may be as relevant to understanding cross-national variance in a wide range of public policy outcomes as are the impacts of socio-economic and political factors. The *prima facie* evidence for such a thesis is demonstrated in areas as diverse as welfare expenditure, family policy and labour market policy outcomes, and is shown to have a particular salience wherever gender-related outcomes are at issue. On the basis of this evidence, it is suggested that, in policy outcome terms at least, it is possible to identify a distinctive Catholic family of nations consisting of a grouping of core Western European and Southern European countries.

INTRODUCTION

The modern social sciences have been much obsessed with an exploration of the impact of the twin revolutions marking the advent of economic and political modernity: sociology has taken as its theme the unfolding of the processes of socio-economic transformation initiated by the industrial revolution and political science has embraced as its essence the democratic class struggle first manifested in the French Revolution. Nowhere has this obsession been more dramatically evident than in the body of research which is generally described as comparative public policy analysis. This research, which takes as its topic the variety of outcomes of state intervention in different countries, and which has been much the fastest growing branch of comparative studies in the social sciences in recent decades, is a child of both sociology and political science. In consequence, it has been an area of profound contestation, with initial hegemonic claims that only industrialization or politics mattered gradually giving way to an uneasy truce built on the basis of multivariate findings which showed that both could matter simultaneously.

Although I have been as involved as anyone in these debates on the character of the economic, social and political forces impelling public policy development in Western democracies, my intention in this paper is not to take that debate further. Rather my purpose is to suggest that the very focus on processes of economic and political modernization may have diverted our attention away from a source of differentiation of national public policy outcomes at least as important as socio-economic transformation and political struggle. That source of differentiation is religious belief, and my argument is that the great divide between Catholic and Protestant Christendom, the product of revolutionary change long predating the French and industrial revolutions, remains an important factor shaping outcomes across a wide range of policy arenas, including social policy, family policy and labour market policy.

To avoid misunderstanding, I wish to make several things clear. First, I am not trying to assert that religious differences matter and socio-economic and political ones do not. The point being

argued in this paper is that religion may well make a difference in addition to the already demonstrated impact of these factors.

Second, I am not seeking to elaborate a definitive theory of how religion impacts on policy. In what follows, my objective is to show a *prima facie* linkage between measures of Catholic adherence and a wide variety of policy outcomes without any detailed account of the actors involved in the policy-process or the channels through which policy outcomes are determined. Indeed, the only firm conclusion on these matters which I would venture on the basis of the analysis here is that no single account is likely to be adequate and that actors and channels are likely to be very diverse and quite possibly policy area specific. Religious beliefs may influence policy because individuals with such beliefs behave differently from those without them, because interest groups and parties may be formed to promote such beliefs, because the views of those who are influential in policy-making may be shaped by such beliefs, or even, because – in quasi-corporatist mode – the state delegates to the Church the public regulation of certain spheres of social relations. Channels may involve the aggregation of individual decisions, the drafting of laws and the shaping of institutional forms – these latter, possibly, with very long-term effects, so that the impact of the religious cleavage is an historically mediated rather than a contemporary phenomenon.

Third, although I ask the question 'Does Catholicism make a difference?', I do not wish it to be thought that I am necessarily ascribing an uniquely causal role to a particular religious faith. In the context of a study more concerned with policy differences than with the character of religious beliefs, it is wise to leave such issues open. Partly, that is because, leaving the Japanese case aside, the cross-national variance associated with measures of Catholic adherence is more or less the mirror image of the strength of the combined Protestant denominations, and, to the extent that this is so, the primary role of one or the other faith in promoting diverse beliefs, doctrines and practices can only be a matter of opinion. Partly, and perhaps more fundamentally, caution as to the characterization of ultimate causes is justified by the fact that at least a part of the difference between Catholic and

Protestant nations may well be attributable to a general post-war tendency to greater secularization which can be argued to have proceeded rather more rapidly in the nations where Protestantism has been strongest.¹ Moreover, secularization may take many forms, from a general decline in traditional religious beliefs to an organized challenge to a specific subset of such beliefs, such as that represented by the post-war feminist movement.² Given these different possibilities of interpretation, the question 'Does Catholicism make a difference?' simply becomes our shorthand for a wish to characterize the policy consequences of a cleavage in the belief structures of contemporary societies, which, whatever its present implications, clearly does owe its origins to what was once the most fundamental religious divide in Western Christendom. More definitive conclusions – both general and related to specific policy areas – will require more research and more researchers.

Finally, I do not wish it to be thought that I am claiming any degree of originality in asserting a link between religious variance and public policy outcomes. Not only has there been some theoretical speculation on the possibility of a link between types of Christian belief and the character of welfare state development in different nations (see Heidenheimer, 1983), but also – as we shall see in the next section – the idea that social security outcomes may be different in countries in which Catholicism is strong has been around for some time and is now well on the way to being an established finding. Rather the contribution I hope to make is in demonstrating the breadth of the policy impact of the religious factor. Because processes of socio-economic transformation and political struggle have been seen as fundamental, it has been too easy to dismiss the finding of a linkage between religious difference and a particular type of policy outcome as interesting, but of no wider relevance. For instance, in research I have undertaken in recent years, I have pointed to strong relationships between measures of Catholic adherence and a range of policy outcomes, including social security expenditure (Castles, 1990 and 1993a), educational expenditure (Castles, 1989), divorce rates and divorce laws (Castles & Flood, 1991), and unemployment rates (Castles & Mumford, 1992).

Moreover, it is apparent that policy variations in these and other areas are commonly mediated through gender-specific outcomes (for relevant data, see Norris, 1987) stemming from particular conceptions of rights and family roles which are characteristic of societies in which the influence of Catholicism is strong. I no longer see these findings as fortuitous, but rather as evidence of the operation of a factor as important to the determination of the broad pattern of cross-national policy outcomes as any hitherto considered in the literature.

Rather, it now seems to me that the evidence points to the existence of what may be described as a Catholic family of nations quite distinctive in the character of its policy outcomes from other groups of Western democratic nations. The notion of a family of nations suggests the possibility that groups of nations may have common policy outcomes in consequence of shared historical and cultural attributes. Religion is but one possible basis of such commonality. Others may include the diffusion of ideas through a common language, the imposition of common institutions and laws by an imperial power and the coming together of nations for purposes of mutual protection and economic advantage in such arrangements as the European Community and the European Monetary System.³ In a recent research project, the families of nations concept has been shown to explain observed similarities in outcomes across a wide range of policy areas in English-speaking, German-speaking and Scandinavian nations (see Castles 1993b). Here, I seek to demonstrate that religious beliefs characteristic of the Catholic faith have had a major influence in shaping the policy experience of a grouping of core Western European and Southern European nations.

A CATHOLIC WORLD OF WELFARE?

A good starting point for discussing the possible impact of religious belief on modern policy outcomes is to be found in Esping-Andersen's recent work on social policy development, which distinguishes diverse liberal, socialist and conservative 'worlds of welfare' on the basis of the characteristics of the policy instruments through which they deliver social policy outcomes (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In this account, the liberal, socialist and

conservative worlds of welfare correspond almost precisely with the English-speaking, Scandinavian and core Western European nations, with the five most conservative nations being Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy, all of them in the vanguard of social security effort for much the post-war era.

For Esping-Andersen the defining characteristics of the conservative world are the corporatism and etatism manifested by these countries' schemes of social policy provision. Corporatism betokens a high degree of status segregation in the organisation of social policy, operationally defined in terms of the substantial number of occupationally distinct social insurance schemes. Etatism denotes a strong bias in the welfare system in favour of state employees, which is demonstrated by the generosity of welfare schemes directed to this class of employee. Esping-Andersen explicitly links these features of conservative welfare systems to the teaching of the Catholic Church in the Encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadrogesimo Anno* (1931), setting out the Church's opposition to both capitalist and socialist beliefs and advancing the principle of subsidiarity as the basis for state intervention in the field of welfare.

Later work by one of Esping-Andersen's students (van Kersbergen, 1991 and 1992) articulates in greater detail why we might expect to encounter a distinctive Catholic world of welfare or, rather, a world which he identifies as 'social capitalism'. First, subsidiarity directly implies a corporatist approach, since the state is not enjoined to treat all equally, but to work through existing social groups. Of such groupings, the family has doctrinal primacy, and is regarded as the fundamental unit of society in preference to the individual. Nor is equality the watchword of family life, but rather an organic unity and gender-specific division of labour under the leadership of the husband. The vital welfare issue in this conception is not one of citizenship, a concept pertaining to the individual, but of treating existing social groups according to their social worth. Second, subsidiarity involves a reluctance to hand over power to the state, and hence a preference for what is a further highly distinctive feature of Esping-Andersen's conservative type; namely, the funding of social insurance schemes

through employer and employee contributions rather than through direct taxation.⁴ Third, a doctrine of natural inequality reinforces the notion of status, but is counter-posed by the idea of the just wage, which leads to the belief that "benefits for adult male employees...ought to be characterized by a capacity to replace the family income at the level of the present status" (van Kersbergen, 1992, 21). In this last feature of Catholic doctrine, it is possible to locate a potent force leading to gender-specific welfare outcomes, whilst, simultaneously, conducive to the high levels of social spending manifested in the conservative nations.

An interesting test of the robustness of the notion of a Catholic world of welfare is to see whether the concept 'travels' (Sartori, 1970) to predominantly Catholic nations outside the universe of discourse on which Esping-Andersen's and van Kerbergen's conclusions are based. In a recent paper on 'Social Security in Southern Europe' (Castles, 1993a), I have undertaken such a task by exploring whether the social security expenditure performance of Greece,⁵ Portugal and Spain in 1960 and 1990 could be illuminated by considering these countries as members of a Catholic family of nations.

In respect of social security, the *prima facie* evidence for the attribution of a Catholic family of nations including the nations of Southern Europe is, at first sight, somewhat mixed. On the one hand, there is much in the picture of a conservative world of welfare which is redolent of the characteristics of social provision in Southern Europe. Fragmented insurance schemes catering for different social groupings on the basis of status and a strong reliance on insurance contributions are characteristic features of each of these nation's welfare systems (see OECD, 1992a), and this is just as true of Greece (see Kremalis and Yfantopoulos, 1992) as of the Iberian Roman Catholic nations. On the other hand, Southern European social security expenditure levels appear to be very different from those of nations of the conservative type. In 1960, Greece, Portugal and Spain were all close to the bottom of the OECD social security expenditure distribution (OECD, 1992b), whereas the countries identified as conservative by Esping-Andersen and as nations of 'social

capitalism' by van Kersbergen were all amongst the OECD social security leaders. By 1990, the Southern European nations had all experienced a degree of welfare catch-up and were now at or near the middle of an OECD distribution which the conservative nations still headed.

In order to test the Catholic hypothesis, it is necessary to devise an operational definition of membership of the Catholic family of nations. In the welfare state literature, the obvious candidate for such a measure is the strength of Catholic or Christian Democratic parties. This was the measure used by Wilensky (1981) in the earliest research demonstrating a linkage between Catholicism and social security expenditure effort. It is also the operational definition preferred by van Kersbergen, who uses the term 'Christian Democratic welfare state' as an alternative formulation for 'social capitalism' (van Kersbergen, 1992)

I have always found this argument concerning the role of Christian parties unconvincing, since it denies the power of the Church in predominantly Catholic societies, such as France and Ireland, to influence politicians of all parties through its role as an elite pressure group and as an influential force shaping the demands of the electorate at the mass level. Clearly, too, it would be absurd to deny that the Church had a major policy-shaping role in the authoritarian conservative regimes of Southern Europe, despite those countries' lack of democratic party competition. Such a view implies, for instance, that Opus Dei had no influence on policy outcomes in Franco's Spain. My view is not that the Church is unable to exercise influence through Christian parties, but rather that, in predominantly Catholic societies where such parties do not exist, it may have avenues of influence open to it which are equally effective.

Starting from this premise, I adopt a very simple operationalization of potential⁶ Catholic policy influence by counting as Catholic polities all those which have a predominantly Catholic population (75 per cent or more of the population baptized into the Church – for data, see Barrett, 1982) or which have experienced a major Christian Democratic presence (ie. at a

minimum, a role pivotal to majority coalition formation) in government for the entire the ten year period proceeding the expenditure point to be analysed. On this criteria, the Catholic family of nations in 1960 consisted of Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. In 1990, Germany failed to satisfy the Christian party cut-off criterion, but all the other nations specified still qualified as members of the grouping.

My test of the Catholic hypothesis consists of a simple multivariate model in which social security transfers expenditure as a percentage of GDP is seen as a function of membership of the Catholic family of nations and of real GDP per capita (data from Summers and Heston, 1991), the latter variable standing as a proxy for the very considerable variation in socio-economic development between the 22 OECD nations for which we have social security data (OECD, 1992a). Results for 1960 and 1990 are shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: 1960 OECD Transfers		
Variable	Coefficient	T-statistic
Intercept	-6.16	
Catholic	4.78	4.36
Log Real GDP	14.61	4.26
Adj R ²	0.52	

Table 2: 1990 OECD Transfers		
Variable	Coefficient	T-statistic
Intercept	-12.21	
Catholic	9.11	4.25
Log Real GDP	21.64	2.55
Adj R ²	0.43	

Clearly, these models are incomplete explanations of expenditure variation, but, nevertheless, they do demonstrate the very strong impact of Catholicism on social policy outcomes.⁷ In 1960, Catholic nations had social security expenditure levels more than

four percentage points of GDP higher than non-Catholic nations and, in 1990, the difference was a massive nine percentage points. Since estimations of the same equations excluding the three Southern European nations produce coefficients for the Catholic variable of comparable magnitude (5.02 for 1960; 8.94 for 1990), we may also reasonably conclude that these nations manifest important features in common with the core conservative countries of Western Europe.⁸ In the earlier period, socio-economic modernization was co-equal in importance to the religious variable; by 1990, although still statistically significant, the real GDP effect had declined appreciably.

Whilst these effects are dramatic enough, the really fascinating point arises from the contrast between the findings for the multivariate model of 1960 expenditure levels and the bivariate relationships between expenditure and Catholicism and between expenditure and real GDP for the same period. In fact, neither of these bivariate relationships is statistically significant at the .05 level, whereas the multivariate findings for both variables are significant at the .01 level. In other words, each of these variables masks the impact of the other and the very substantial impact of each can only be assessed by looking at both in conjunction. By 1990, this situation is modified. Catholicism continues to mask the impact of GDP, when looking at the bivariate relationship between real GDP and expenditure in isolation, but the reverse no longer applies, and the massive substantive impact of Catholicism on expenditure is apparent even from the simple association between the two variables.

There is enough in these findings to vindicate amply the conclusion that, in respect of social security spending at least, the notion of a Catholic world of welfare is a reality. What Esping-Andersen has argued in terms of systematic differences in the character of the instruments of social provision, and van Kersbergen (1991) has illustrated in terms of prevalent patterns of expenditure, I have further demonstrated in terms of the extent of expenditure in the widest available sample of advanced first world nations. Moreover, the existence of a masked interaction between Catholicism and real GDP makes it clear that it is necessary to take account of the

religious influence on expenditure in order to comprehend other processes at work in the determination of policy outcomes. Contrary to the view of the one-time sociological orthodoxy that "economic growth makes countries with contrasting cultural and political traditions more alike in their strategy for constructing the floor below which no one sinks" (Wilensky, 1975, 27), cultural differences, and the families of nations they define, remain the parameters that define social security outcomes. In this area of policy at least, the impact of religion is not just an interesting facet of a larger story, but is the vital key to understanding the story as a whole.

RELIGION, RIGHTS AND FAMILY POLICY

If the linkage between Catholicism and social security is now an established finding of the comparative literature, the notion of a link between family policy and religion is a commonplace of informed commentary, even if, because comparative family policy research is in its infancy, and because religion is an unfashionable variable, there is little in the comparative public policy literature which bears strong witness to such a relationship. Religion obviously ought to matter in the areas of marriage, the family, gender-related issues generally and the rights of women in particular, if only because the Christian churches have historically taken these issues so very seriously. Moreover, one needs to think only of such issues as contraception, abortion, and divorce, and the strong stance taken by the Catholic Church against law reform in these areas in such countries as Ireland and Italy, to understand the contemporary basis for the commonplace view.

Harking back to earlier comments concerning problems in characterizing the nature of the causal role attributed to religious faith, there is, however, more than a little question about how religion matters in this sphere of family and gender-related issues. On the one hand, it is possible to argue that, traditionally, the Protestant denominations have been as opposed to acts interpreted as destructive of family life as has the Catholic Church and, hence, that emergent cross-national differences coincident with the religious cleavage must be attributable to the greater degree of secularization in those nations in which the

Protestant faith was once dominant. On the other hand, in respect of certain gender-related rights, it seems arguable that differences between Catholic and Protestant nations emerged appreciably before secularization, in the sense of declining religiosity, became anything like as significant as it now is. This appears to be true, for instance, of the extension of the female suffrage prior to 1917⁹ and, still more so, of the rights of children prior to World War II.¹⁰ In both instances, the granting of rights before these dates was exclusively a phenomenon of nations in which Protestantism was the dominant Christian faith.¹¹

Rights are, of course, frequently legally codified, and, with only a few exceptions (see, in particular, Kamerman and Kahn, 1978), it has been the sub-discipline of comparative law which has provided us with what research there has been on cross-national variance in the area of family policy and the extension of rights more generally. In this field of scholarship, the concern has been not so much with the outcomes of policy, but rather with a classification of legal systems. A traditional basis of differentiation has been between Anglo-American, Nordic and Romano-Germanic legal systems, and recent research by Glendon (1987) has shown that these distinctions remain highly relevant to both divorce and abortion legislation, with contemporary Romano-Germanic law on both issues being far more restrictive than either Anglo-American or Nordic law. Whilst the notion of families of nations may be new to the social sciences disciplines informing comparative public policy analysis, such a conception has always been to the forefront in the legal disciplines.

Clearly, Glendon's classification of types of legal system is relevant to the theme of this paper, since the divide between Romano-Germanic systems and the rest is virtually identical to the distinction between Catholic and Protestant Christendom.¹² However, from a public policy perspective, the finding is only weak evidence for the impact of religion on policy outcomes. In order firmly to establish a linkage between outcomes (the incidence of divorce or abortion) and Catholicism, it is necessary to ask, first, whether differences in the character of the law actually result in differences in outcomes and, second, whether the seeming

correspondence between religious adherence and the character of the law might not be a spurious finding based on a correspondence of socio-economic modernization and religious belief.

These are issues examined in recent research I have undertaken with a colleague on the determinants of divorce rates in advanced Western nations (Castles and Flood, 1991). The first and major task of that research was to use a wide range of historical and contemporary sources to establish a scale measuring the liberality of Western divorce laws both before and after the major series of divorce law reforms which took place in many of these countries in the course of the 1960s and the early 1970s. This scaling was then compared with divorce outcomes in 16 countries,¹³ with the liberality of divorce law in 1960 being used as a predictor of the average incidence of divorce in the period 1961-68 and the liberality of the law in 1976 serving as a predictor of average divorce rates from 1976-83. Data for divorce rates were measured as divorces per thousand of the population and come from the United Nations Demographic Yearbook. The two major exclusions from the countries normally included in OECD policy comparisons were Japan, on grounds of non-Christian culture, and the USA. This latter country is a massive outlier, for which there exists a very substantial literature explaining exceptionally high divorce rates in terms of features unique to that country, most of them related to an equally exceptional degree of individualism that is, perhaps, a concomitant of that country's historical origins in Protestant fundamentalism (see, for instance, Rheinstein, 1972, Weiss, 1975 and Phillips, 1988). Unfortunately, in this research, Greece, Spain and Portugal had to be excluded on grounds of missing data. One must, however, presume that the low divorce rates of the Southern European countries – particularly in Portugal and Spain – would serve to reinforce any findings supportive of a Catholic family of nations interpretation.

The findings suggest an extremely strong link between the liberality of the law and the incidence of divorce. For the 1961-68 divorce rate the correlation is 0.85 and for 1976-83 it is 0.91. The association between the provisions of the law and outcomes is quite clear, but does not prove the causal impact of religion. To

demonstrate that, we need to show that the apparent link between legal families of nations and religious belief is not an artifact of other factors, a possibility very strongly suggested by the views of leading theorists of comparative law, such as Rheinstein (1970), who suggest that the law is ultimately a reflection of its social context and is either reinterpreted or swept away where it remains too long incongruent with that context.

Apart from Catholicism, the models we elaborate to account for variation in the liberality of the law include non-agricultural employment as a percentage of total employment (OECD, 1992b) used as a proxy for socio-economic modernisation and female labour force participation (OECD, 1992b) used as a proxy for female emancipation (for a discussion of the impact of these factors, see Phillips, 1988; Price and McKenry, 1988 and Halem, 1980).¹⁴ In this study, where the ultimate object of concern is the incidence of divorce rather than the character of the law regulating its availability, the potential influence of Catholicism is measured as the percentage of Catholics in the population (Barrett, 1982). This is, arguably, a more appropriate measure than the earlier Catholic family of nations variable for assessing the determinants of a decision – whether or not to seek legal termination of a marriage – which is made by individuals rather than by governments.¹⁵

Findings for the two periods are reported in Tables 3 and 4. The results for 1960 show that female labour force participation was a minor positive influence on the liberality of the law and that Catholicism had a much more substantial negative impact. Somewhat surprisingly, and totally contrary to prevalent sociological and comparative law theorizing, socio-economic modernization had no discernible impact. However, this was no longer the case in 1976, when the size of the non-agricultural labour force had as strong an impact as Catholicism and female labour force participation had ceased to be a significant predictor of divorce outcomes.

Table 3: 1960 Liberal Divorce Law		
Variable	Coefficient	T-statistic
Intercept	0.74	
Catholic	-0.02	3.89
Female Labour Force	0.04	2.13
Non-Agricultural	0.02	0.07
Adj R ²	0.60	

Table 4: 1976 Liberal Divorce Law		
Variable	Coefficient	T-statistic
Intercept	-5.26	
Catholic	-.02	4.37
Female Labour Force	-0.00	0.13
Non-Agricultural	0.09	4.45
Adj R ²	0.82	

The unexpected absence of a socio-economic effect in 1960 is related to the fact that, in the period prior to the major divorce law reforms of the 1960s, the socio-economically advanced Anglo-American nations (other than the United States) had relatively low divorce rates. This finding diverges from the later strong coincidence of high divorce rates with Anglo-American and Nordic legal systems noted by Glendon (1987). It is, however, very far from being incompatible with a Catholic family of nations interpretation, since the Anglo-American nations (again excepting the United States) inherited from the United Kingdom a divorce law which had its immediate origins many centuries earlier in Catholic Canon Law, prohibiting divorce on all grounds bar those of adultery (see Kitchin 1912, 231–33 and Phillips, 1988, 436). As a result, in 1960, Australia, Canada (and particularly Quebec), Ireland, England and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand had as restrictive divorce laws as any then in force in Western Europe.

Indeed, the conclusion that can be derived from this study of divorce rates is very much the same as that of the research on the social security performance of the Southern European nations: that a families of nations approach is the crucial key to understanding the emerging pattern of policy outcomes in the latter half of the

twentieth century. In the case of divorce, legal families of nations shaped by the historical experience of the Reformation and later the French Revolution were sufficiently strong to hold back the forces of socio-economic modernization until the 1960s. Moreover, just as was true of the trajectory of social security transformation in the post-war decades, the vast changes in post-war divorce legislation did nothing to undermine cultural divisions based on religious differences. Indeed, the substantial transformation of this period was from laws which reflected the religious cleavages of centuries past to laws which better reflected the existence of contemporary cultural divisions. Such an interpretation suggests that religion has been, and continues to be, the dominant factor impacting on policy outcomes in at least one important sphere of family policy.

RELIGION AND THE LABOUR MARKET

The sphere of labour market policy is, of course, the province of economics, and economics does not merely neglect the role of social factors, like religion, but rather, generally, treats them as by definition irrelevant. Sociologically speaking, that is absurd, for (at least) one major parameter of labour market behaviour, the desire to participate in gainful employment, is clearly, in some measure, determined by attitudinal variables. Moreover, since those attitudinal variables are manifestly shaped by norms of behaviour concerning the domestic division of labour and appropriate codes of family life, there is every reason, given the conclusions of our previous analysis, to suspect that religious differences might play a major role.

As previously noted, the Catholic Church still seeks to uphold a distinct set of doctrines concerning the family, and those doctrines have traditionally included a belief that women's primary focus of activity should be in the home and not in the workplace. However, it is also true that the vast majority of Protestant denominations at one time emphasized a similar gender segregation, and that religiosity irrespective of denomination is frequently associated with traditional beliefs concerning the appropriate domestic division of labour. This being so, it would appear that any impact of the religious cleavage on labour market

behaviour is likely, *prima facie*, to reflect a greater pace of secularization in the Protestant nations in the post-war period. In consequence, one might expect that, in recent decades, the marked discrepancy between male and female levels of labour supply, which is a feature of all advanced nations, would have become less pronounced amongst Protestant than amongst Catholic populations.

The most straight-forward explanation of the emergence of such a religiously-based difference is a simple demographic one, with an increasingly greater tendency in Protestant than in Catholic countries for older cohorts of women to return to the labour market after the birth of children.¹⁶ Moreover, it is quite possible that such an increased propensity for women to seek employment in Protestant countries could also impact on other aspects of labour market behaviour. A higher level of labour supply induced by a decline in traditional family values might well lead to demands on politicians to expand state employment and to pressures on employers to provide jobs more suited to women's needs.

However, despite the obviousness of such hypotheses, and a broad awareness of very substantial differences in female participation between countries, there has been almost no systematic research into the determinants of cross-national variation in labour market outcomes. Indeed, as far as I am aware, the only major cross-national study of gendered labour markets has been undertaken by Manfred Schmidt as his contribution to the families of nations project (Schmidt, 1993). His analysis confirms that the Catholic/Protestant cleavage is one of the more important factors influencing change in female labour force participation in the post-war decades.

In the context of an exploratory study such as this, it is not possible to provide an in-depth analysis of the determinants of labour market policy. Here, my intention is simply to show that a rather convincing case can be made for a strong – and over time, increasingly strong – association between religion and a much wider range of labour market outcomes than that analysed in Schmidt's research. Tables 5 and 6 below report the bivariate relationships between Catholicism, measured again by the percentage of adherents in the population, and labour force

participation and employment, both measured as a percentage of the population from 15 to 64, and unemployment as a percentage of the total labour force. In each case, and necessarily so in an account where the hypothetical causal mechanism is gender-specific, the analysis is presented separately for males and females, as well as being aggregated in terms of total labour supply, employment and unemployment. All the labour force data is from (or calculated from) OECD 1992b and the data-set includes all the OECD nations other than New Zealand and Turkey. There are, however, some missing data for particular countries in respect of particular variables, with the relevant number of cases for each variable shown in parentheses in the final columns of Tables 5 and 6.

Apart from correlation coefficients, T-statistics and numbers of cases, these tables each have a column which reports unstandardized regression coefficients multiplied by 75, the cut-off percentage of Catholic adherence qualifying a country as a member of the Catholic family of nations in our earlier discussion of social security outcomes. Since a number of the Protestant nations of Northern Europe and Japan have virtually no Catholic population, this figure may be interpreted as the percentage points difference in labour market performance of nations at opposite extremes in terms of the religious persuasions of their populations.

Table 5: Catholicism and 1960 Labour Market Outcomes			
Variable	Coefficient x 75	Correlation	T-value Cases
Male Labour Force	-0.15	-.03	0.1 (22)
Female Labour Force	-9.83	-0.46	2.3 (22)
Total Labour Force	-5.63	-0.55	2.9 (22)
Male Employment	-2.55	-0.28	1.2 (18)
Female Employment	-9.53	-0.47	2.1 (18)
Total Employment	-6.52	-0.59	3.2 (22)
Male Unemployment	1.80	0.46	2.1 (18)
Female Unemployment	2.03	0.46	2.0 (18)
Unemployment	1.65	0.45	2.1 (19)

Table 6: Catholicism and 1985 Labour Market Outcomes			
Variable	Coefficient x 75	Correlation	T-value Cases
Male Labour Force	-5.10	-0.53	2.8 (22)
Female Labour Force	-19.58	-0.81	6.2 (22)
Total Labour Force	-12.52	-0.83	6.6 (22)
Male Employment	-8.30	-0.58	3.0 (20)
Female Employment	-21.83	-0.82	6.0 (20)
Total Employment	-14.92	-0.79	5.8 (22)
Male Unemployment	4.05	0.42	2.0 (20)
Female Unemployment	7.65	0.65	3.7 (20)
Unemployment	5.40	0.55	2.8 (20)

There are five immediate points to note in looking at these tables. The first is the virtual ubiquity of the Catholic association with labour market outcomes. Apart from male labour force participation and male employment in 1960, in respect of every other category of outcomes at both dates, the findings are at or below the .05 level of significance. The second point is that, whilst the relationships with employment and participation are negative, those with unemployment are positive. In other words, less people work or seek work in Catholic countries and, of those who do seek work, less find it.

The third point is the very considerable substantive impact implied by the figures in the first column of each table. Whatever the ultimate determinant(s) of the differences in labour market performance between Scandinavia and Japan on the one hand and Catholic Western and Southern Europe on the other, the sheer magnitude of the differences is extraordinarily large and the case for a distinctive Catholic family of nations very strong. The fourth point is the very considerable increase in the substantive impact of the Catholic variable over time, with the difference between Catholic and non-Catholic nations in respect of each aspect of labour market performance more than doubling between 1960 and 1985. Moreover, the relationships between Catholicism and both participation and employment outcomes become markedly more statistically significant over time. The final point is the gender bias revealed in the findings. In every case, the effects of the religious cleavage are far greater for women than for men. In 1960, the significance of the total labour force and total employment findings is solely a consequence of the inclusion of data concerning female labour market activity. In 1985, both male and female outcomes are significant, but the first column of Table 6 shows that the substantive impact on women's participation and employment is more than twice as great as on men's participation and employment.

These findings are quite fascinating, but can hardly be regarded as definitive. What is reported in these tables are associations which clearly warrant much further research, but which do not, in themselves, constitute adequate explanations of labour market

behaviour and certainly do not justify the assertion that religious differences are the only or even the main determinants of labour market outcomes. To establish the explanatory status of differences in religious faith or of different degrees of secularization requires that we seek to elaborate more fully specified models of each of these aspects of labour market behaviour and demonstrate that, even when we take into account the numerous other factors impacting on this area, the religious variable still retains its power to predict outcomes.

This is clearly beyond the brief of a paper which seeks only to present existing evidence suggestive of a link between religion and public policy outcomes. However, in concluding this section, I wish to touch on a number of obvious anomalies that emerge from the findings in Tables 5 and 6. These anomalies do not put in doubt the reality of a linkage between religion and labour market outcomes, but they do raise some questions about the nature of a causal mechanism which was conceptualized in terms of a greater and increasing propensity for women in Protestant and more secularized societies to return to the labour force after having had children.

The real problem is that the religious linkage works far too well. It accounts for the gender-related character of labour market outcomes in exactly the manner predicted – female labour supply, and hence employment, is much lower in Catholic countries and, over time, the difference between Catholic and Protestant countries increases – but it is also manifest in areas in which it is difficult to see how traditional family attitudes could be the determining factor. If the interaction between child-rearing and labour market behaviour is the mechanism of difference, why is it that males are also significantly less likely to seek work or to be employed in Catholic nations by the mid-1980s? Moreover, if the presumed impact of Catholicism is purely through the supply side of the labour market, why is unemployment higher in countries where, all other things being equal, a lesser propensity to seek work should make it lower? Finally, why is it that by the end of the period, although not at the beginning, the impact of Catholicism on female unemployment is greater than on male

unemployment and that, although not shown in the figures here, women in Catholic countries tend to have higher unemployment rates than men and vice versa in Protestant countries?

Although necessarily somewhat speculatively in terms of the kind of analysis that can be deployed here, it is arguable that a major component of the answer to each of these questions lies in the diversity of labour market strategies that have characterized Catholic and Protestant nations, and, in particular, in the very different ways in which social policy and labour market policies have interacted in these nations. A number of recent studies have shown that certain nations deliberately responded to the economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s by taking steps to decrease the supply of labour and, hence, indirectly to reduce unemployment. The primary instrument of such a strategy was the use of social insurance transfer expenditures to provide a means of early retirement from the labour force and/or to subsidize job-sharing arrangements. That being so, it is scarcely surprising to discover that it was precisely that core group of Catholic nations, shown by our previous analysis to have manifested higher transfer expenditures and to have increased such expenditures very markedly over this period, which used this strategy to its fullest extent (see Esping-Andersen and Sonnberger, 1989, von Rhein-Kress, 1993 and Schmidt, 1993). In other words, the greater reduction of the male labour force and of male employment in these countries was largely a function of the utilization by their governments of a policy instrument already well developed in, and much in tune with the dominant policy culture of, the Catholic family of nations.

The explanation of the higher levels of unemployment experienced in these same nations also, arguably, owes something to another aspect of the interaction of labour market and social policy strategies. In the earlier discussion of Catholic social policy doctrines conducive to higher transfers expenditure, it was noted that this preference was the reverse side of the coin of a reluctance to hand over power to the state. In the labour market, this meant that Catholic countries did not, as in Protestant Scandinavia, adopt policies of direct intervention to enhance

employment levels, either by fostering the growth of public employment (usually in the area of welfare provision, so that, in effect, differences in labour market policy and in social policy amounted to the same thing) or by what has come to be called active labour market policy.¹⁷ According to this interpretation, the higher levels of both female and male unemployment experienced in Catholic countries stem from a cultural aversion to policy initiatives that directly increase employment through state action and a preference for the more indirect route of labour supply reduction through financial (social policy) incentives to individuals.

Finally, we come to the question of why Catholicism has, in the more recent period, been associated with higher female than male unemployment. Social policy again provides part of the answer insofar as the earned social insurance entitlements on which Catholic social policy rests could only be used to retire workers early, if those workers were already in the labour force and had already accumulated substantial entitlements. In other words, the strategy of confronting the post-war crisis in employment which was utilized in the Catholic family of nations was one which only reduced unemployment amongst men, since it was, for the most part, only men who had a major stake in the existing social policy system.

Employment structure, and particularly the extent of part-time employment, is almost certainly another crucial factor helping to explain the relative levels of female and male unemployment. Part-time employment frequently offers the only viable entry route for married women to return to the labour market, and women often remain unemployed despite the existence of full-time job opportunities. Religion also appears to play a role here. Protestant countries are generally characterized by higher levels of part-time employment than Catholic countries, a difference which has tended to become greater over the past two decades (see data in OECD, 1992c). This, the last of the very many major differences between Catholic and Protestant nations to be mentioned in this paper, could have a variety of causes, including possible structural adjustment problems involved in the initial shift to from full-time

to part-time working, the relative lack of appeal of part-time employment in the context of the earnings-related social policy systems typical of the Catholic family of nations and, possibly, stronger feminist pressures on both employers and politicians to provide part-time employment in Protestant countries.

There is much in this account which is speculative, but it does make sense of a substantial number of the observed associations between Catholicism and labour market outcomes. Most particularly, it suggests that the anomalies in Tables 5 and 6 should be seen less as undermining the postulated linkage between religion and labour market outcomes and more as evidence for the variety of the mechanisms through which that linkage is established. Labour market outcomes in the Catholic family of nations differ from those in Protestant nations not merely because individual women make different choices about labour market participation, but also because both women and men confront different employment structures and social policy institutions. More complex analysis and modelling will, almost certainly, modify some aspects of the conclusions reached here, but what is undoubted is the need to undertake a program of research which does take seriously the possibility that religious beliefs may interact with other factors to shape outcomes in respect to both the supply and demand for labour.

Conclusion

In the course of this paper I have sought to demonstrate that there is a very strong *prima facie* case that religious differences are an important factor in determining contemporary public policy outcomes across a very range of areas and that religious doctrines, beliefs and traditions, and their crystallization in laws and social institutions, constitute the basis of a Catholic family of nations with public policies quite different from those of national groupings with other historical and cultural antecedents. Considerations of space have precluded a rehearsal of all the evidence that can be garnered from comparative research. The possibility that the character of taxation systems as much as the welfare systems they finance may reflect similar forces has been relegated to a footnote (see footnote 3). The impact of Catholicism

on educational expenditure, which has elsewhere (Castles, 1989) been shown to have been negative in the early 1960s but transformed to a positive influence by the early 1980s, has gone undiscussed. Only the briefest mention has been made of the evidence which suggests negative relationships between the degree of Catholic adherence and both the early extension of female suffrage and the development of the rights of children.

Even so, I hope that sufficient evidence has been provided to promote debate on a facet of contemporary societies which appears to have a profound effect on how governments define the appropriate limits of state intervention, influences the character of the legislation they are willing to enact, shapes the demands individuals and groups make of government and their willingness and opportunity to participate in the economy and, to a very considerable degree, determines the character of gender-specific outcomes in Western societies. It is, moreover, a body of evidence which helps us to comprehend the singularity of a group or family of nations, the common features of which have been obscured by a fascination with explaining the economic problems of the English-speaking nations and the welfare superiority of Scandinavia. That fascination has been an artifact of the comparative public policy discipline's obsession with the supposedly mutually exclusive duality of economic modernization and political reformism. It is time that this duality was superseded by a recognition of the influence of religion in shaping a Catholic family of nations.

Footnotes:

¹ Reliable cross-national data on secularization processes are hard to come by. The best available source (Halman and Vloet, 1992) provides a variety of measures of religious versus secular values for 16 nations for the years 1981 and 1990. These include religiosity, religious orthodoxy, confidence in the church, a typology of church and unchurched people and a measure of Christian world views. Interestingly, none of these measures is significantly associated with either nominal Catholic adherence or any of the policy outcomes shown to be associated with such adherence in the analysis below.

This suggests that these differences in policy outcomes are either genuinely a function of differences between religious faiths or that there is some other dimension of secularization, coincident with the Catholic/Protestant divide, to which such outcomes are attributable. Obviously, to the degree that it is possible to demonstrate why Protestant rather than Catholic beliefs are more susceptible to secularizing impulses, it would remain reasonable to attribute differences in policy outcomes to the ultimate impact of religious faith.

2 Reasons why Protestantism may be particularly conducive to the emergence and success of movements asserting female rights are rehearsed briefly in the subsequent discussion of the impact of religion on women's rights and family policy and addressed explicitly in footnote 11 below.

3 Göran Therborn has made an analytical distinction between four bases of familial likeness: "lineages, held together by descent from a common origin, separated siblings, kindred nations kept apart by state boundaries, or more concretely, non-state-bound social units with significant similarities between them, irreducible to common ancestry, (elective) affinity, connected by processes of diffusion, of imitation or avoidance (negative affinity), freely elected or established by pressure and partnerships, the unions of deliberate coordination" (see Therborn, 1993a).

4 Although I do not explore the notion further in this paper, there are very strong reasons for believing that this aspect of the tax system is a key mechanism for translating Catholic social policy ideas into policy outcomes. Social security contributions are inherently productive of higher levels of expenditure, since (a) they confer rights to benefit and (b) are less conducive to taxpayer backlash than other forms of financing. The association between the measure of membership of the Catholic family of nations employed below and the social security contribution share of total taxation is rather strong, being more than 0.70 in the mid-1960s (the earliest date for which tax data are available) and 0.55 in 1990. Moreover, cross-national research on types of tax systems (Peters, 1991, 60-64) has identified four distinctive systems, of which two are exclusively composed of countries which are members of the Catholic family of nations. On this basis, a case could almost certainly be mounted that taxation, just as much as social security expenditure, is a facet of public policy that is strongly influenced by religious factors. Finally, it is worth noting that the relationship between the social security contribution share of total taxation and social

security expenditure outcomes has been confirmed in a pooled time-series analysis of the standard 18-nation OECD sample (Castles, 1990).

5 Greece is, of course, an Orthodox Catholic rather than a Roman Catholic nation and, arguably, might be excluded from the sample on the ground of neither being influenced by Roman Catholic nor by Protestant doctrine. Neither excluding it from the sample nor, indeed, re-scoring it as a non-Catholic nation make any major difference to the findings reported below.

6 Despite my insistence that Catholic influence may take many forms, it is important to emphasize that, ultimately, the existence of such an influence needs to be demonstrated empirically for each particular case. It could well be, for instance, that the Irish case cannot properly be subsumed as part of an argument that explicit Catholic doctrines of subsidiarity lead to higher transfer expenditure, since (a) Irish Catholicism has assumed more of a moral than a social character, (b) the shaping of the Irish social security system owes much to the legacy of English rule in the formative period of welfare formation (which is, of course, an assertion that Ireland was once a member of a quite different family of nations) and (c) that the very substantial expansion of Irish welfare expenditure since the early 1970s owes most to that country's very high levels of unemployment. In general, on the role of the Irish Catholic Church in a variety of the policy areas discussed in this paper, see Lee, 1991.

7 Fuller models are to be found in the paper on Southern Europe referred to in the text (Castles, 1993a), which also assesses the expenditure impact of age structure, socialist incumbency and democratization. However, nothing reported in the fuller model involves any substantial modification of our findings concerning the explanatory role of membership in the Catholic family of nations.

8 Given the relative novelty of including both Germany and the Netherlands as members of a Catholic family of nations, and the subsequent exclusion of the German case in 1990, it is worth reporting the effects of these operational decisions on the multivariate findings reported here. Excluding Germany and the Netherlands from the samples in both 1960 and 1990 does somewhat reduce the levels of explained variance, but both variables clearly remain statistically significant and the unstandardized coefficients for the Catholic dummy variable are only marginally altered. Including Germany as a member of the Catholic family of nations in 1990 also

only makes the most marginal of differences, with the unstandardized coefficient declining to 8.44 from the 9.11 reported in Table 2.

9 Before 1917, the only nations to have conceded universal suffrage were New Zealand (1893), Australia (1902), Finland (1906), Norway (1913) and Denmark (1915). All other primarily Protestant nations gave women the vote before 1930, whilst a significant number of Catholic nations had to wait for female suffrage until after World War II, including France (1944), Italy (1946), Belgium (1948) and Portugal (1976). For the 22 nation OECD sample (excluding Japan and Turkey on grounds of non-Christianity), there is, according to my calculations, a statistically significant negative relationship between the date of the extension of universal suffrage and the extent of Catholic adherence circa 1900 (see Barrett, 1982). For the dates at which female suffrage was enacted in advanced Western nations and an analysis of that chronology based on factors other than religion, see Therborn, 1977.

10 For a categorization of the historical development of the rights of children, which corresponds almost precisely with the religious cleavage of advanced Western societies, see Therborn, 1993b. I should, however, make it clear that, whilst Therborn notes this coincidence himself, he is at pains to deny its significance (pp. 267 ff.).

11 This is one of the few instances where it is possible to fashion an argument based on the determinative influence of Protestant rather than Catholic ideas. It follows quite naturally from the Protestant belief that all persons relate to God as individuals that all individuals (whether male or female and irrespective of age) are, in some relevant sense, equals before God. Such an argument – ultimately, if not immediately – contains a challenge to the patriarchal subordination of women and children to the authority of the husband and father.

12 If we leave out Japan of the normal OECD sample on the ground of its lack of a Christian culture, the only difference between our operationalization of the Catholic family of nations and Glendon's Romano-Germanic type is Switzerland. In fact, the evolution of Swiss divorce law over the centuries (see Castles and Flood, 1991) has combined Catholic and Protestant elements with seemingly indigenous legal developments. Some countries, of course, conspicuously including Switzerland, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands, sit on the borderline between and juxtapose elements of

more than one family of nations (cf. Therborn's (1993a) separated siblings variant of familial likeness).

13 The countries included are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

14 These models were empirically derived after first assessing the strength of a large number of variables suggested in the sociological literature to be associated with the incidence of divorce. Amongst these variables were GDP per capita, service sector employment, urbanization, fertility, transfer expenditures on families, marriage and early marriage rates (see Castles and Flood, 1991).

15 Where the locus of a decision is individual rather than collective, variance should be manifest not merely through cross-national analysis, but also at a disaggregated micro level. In the case of divorce, a variety of national studies demonstrate that, within a given nation, Catholics are less likely than Protestants to seek the remedy of divorce and that, in some instances, divorce rates in Catholic regions of a nation are lower than in Protestant regions (see Chester, 1977).

16 Charts offering country-by-country age-cohort analysis of female labour force participation clearly illustrate this demographic mechanism. Whereas female labour force participation in Protestant nations approximates to an M shape, as women of child-bearing age leave and then return to the labour force; the curve in Catholic countries approximates more closely to a J shape, since many women do not return to the labour force after child-bearing (see OECD, 1989, 71-78).

17 Austria, perhaps because of its exceptionally strong labour movement, is at least a partial exception to this generalization, but then it is also an exception to the generalization that Catholic countries have high levels of unemployment.

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