Chapter 24

Other Considerations

24.1 The Institutional and Cultural (Adherents) Influence of Religion¹

Institutional factors related to religion exert a stronger structural and long-term influence on prosperity (competitiveness and corruption) than the cultural influence of religion (adherents). Several pieces of evidence corroborate this conclusion: (1) the abundant historical, theological, and theoretical information; (2) the empirical results on *State religion*, *Concordats*, and *Legal origin*; (3) the analysis of specific cases.

Models 1 and 3 (Sect. 15.3.1) confirmed empirically that the influence of Protestant state religion almost twice exceeds that of adherents, for instance. Further, seriously considering the role of the Roman Catholic Church as a state actor has profound implications. The importance of Roman Catholicism is based more on its institutional and political ideology, rather than on its belief system (although religious belief is also necessary for maintaining political ideology and the *status quo*). However, empirical works considering religion and prosperity variables have mostly concentrated solely on the influence of religious adherents. This has resulted in a minimisation paradigm that disregards the institutional influence of religion. Therefore, the relationships between prosperity and religion have tended to be trivialised or misunderstood when analysing religion as a background prosperity factor.

Incorporating the institutional influence of religion allows understanding, for example, why Switzerland has lower levels of corruption (and higher prosperity)

¹Some parts of this chapter were originally published as “General Conclusions” in: Garcia Portilla, J. (2019). “Ye Shall Know Them by Their Fruits”: Prosperity and Institutional Religion in Europe and the Americas. *Religions*, 10(6), 362. MDPI AG. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10060362>

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when the majority of its population is currently Roman Catholic (i.e. given its 1848 anticlerical, liberal, and Protestant-friendly federal constitution). Uruguay is a similar case to some extent. The majority of Uruguay's population is Roman Catholic (although Uruguay is the most secular country in Latin America) (Pew Research Center, 2014) and one of the least corrupt (and with the highest social progress) in the region. Uruguay's constitution is markedly anticlerical.

The opposite case is Colombia, where the still valid and modified Concordat (1887), pre-1991 constitution, and other arrangements represent a classical Catholic Christendom prototype of a full state-church fusion (Levine, 1981, p. 71). These arrangements have meant that the high proportion of Roman Catholics in Colombia resulted naturally from such restrictive conservative policies and legal instruments. In Switzerland, Protestant-liberals won the *Sonderbund* war, thus paving the way for the 1848 anticlerical constitution. In Colombia, the opposite happened: Conservative-Catholics won the war that led to the 1886 Constitution. In 1991, the new constitution included some liberal elements after a peace process with liberal guerrillas.

A key to understanding the pervasively negative influence of Roman Catholicism on state relations/performance is hierarchy. Hierarchy in church and state is opposed to democracy and transparency, thus promoting power abuse from the higher echelons down.

Thus, the historical institutional influence of Roman Catholicism or Protestantism affects corruption/prosperity rates more directly than the current proportion of believers (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Nonetheless, institutional religion and the proportion of believers are well connected empirically (Barro & McCleary, 2005). The cases of Switzerland, Colombia, and Uruguay show that the current population adherents result visibly from the historical institutional influence of religion.

24.2 Models

The models developed and applied in this study allow analysing determining factors layer by layer. For example, geography and environment are the first determinants. However, variation within zones may be mediated (or moduled) not only by environment, latitude, topography, and climate but also by institutional background, as best represented by legal traditions. Moreover, legal traditions have a direct historical relationship with the successive legal revolutions against the *status quo* (Roman and canon law part of Roman Catholicism or Orthodoxism). The crucial role of Protestantism (and anticlericalism) in such legal revolutions paved the path for modernity and democratic institutions.

This fresh perspective enables us to understand why countries in similar geographic and environment settings exhibit marked differences. For instance, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay share similar environmental and geographical conditions, and yet Argentina is less prosperous (i.e. more corrupt) than Chile and Uruguay. The reason being that Argentina is far more clerical than the other countries

(i.e. Argentina has a Concordat) (see Truth Tables 1 and 3 in Appendix 4.3.1). The same consideration of multiple causalities, given in Sect. 23.5, applies here. The Argentinian Concordat indicates direct interference of the Roman Catholic Church-State in the secular affairs of Argentina, and the presence of a more clerical society than in Uruguay and Chile.²

24.3 Returning to the General Research Interest: “*Ye Shall Know Them By Their Fruits*” (*The Social Experiments*)

24.3.1 *The Roman and Catholic Ancien Régime*

Roman Catholicism has had more than enough time to enforce its Aquinian-Aristotelian social experiment through applying the corresponding theological concepts to politics, law, and social organisation. Romanism has deployed its *ancien régime* for over a millennium, from the European Middle Ages to the present (especially in several Latin American countries).

The Roman and Catholic experiment shows that applying Aquinian-Aristotelian principles creates undesirable prosperity scenarios in wider society (while maximising the power and prosperity of the Church). These principles contrast sharply with what Roman Catholicism claims would make a society prosperous and harmonious (Ratzinger & Pera, 2006; Restrepo, 1939). This, as shown, is a medieval society of greatest benefit of the Catholic Church.

It remains debatable (as during the Reformation) the “natural law” that the Roman Church-State bases on the human capacity discerning between right or wrong. The Roman Church-State has adopted natural law as the foundation for its teachings on sexual behaviour, freedom of religion, justice, fair societies, human life, medical practice, and the connection between societal morals and civil law (Gula, 2002, pp. 120–121). In practice, the application of Roman Catholic “natural law” has often produced the opposite to its intended principles: centuries-long hegemony and—to this day—corruption and low competitiveness. In the end, the legitimacy of the Roman Catholic Church-State has not been reliant on the capacity of its “truth” to persuade, but on its legal right as the bearer of authority to subordinate and command (Sanks, 1974, pp. 11–13).

Thousands of years of hegemony characterise the Roman Catholic Church as a global political-religious institution. The associated corruption in all the countries under its influence may well be related to the corrupt fruits for which “we shall know

²For instance, Gill (1998) explained that Chile and Argentina are the two Latin American cases that more appropriately resemble a scientifically controlled experiment, since they share many constant variables (within acceptable limits). The Chilean episcopate became an ardent opponent of the Pinochet dictatorship, even at the cost of the extreme repression of its clergy. On the contrary, the Argentine bishops are recognised not only for ignoring the military’s violations but also for engaging effectively in public administration (Gill, 1998, p. 121).

them” in the parable of Jesus (*King James Bible*, 1769, Matthew 7:15–23). Among others, these fruits have also been the abuse scandals, maintenance of ignorance, and persecution of God’s Word, in the name of Jesus Christ.

24.3.2 Protestant Reformation

The application of Protestant (i.e. biblical) principles (Fig. 8.4) on law instead of relativism has produced an ethical code that enhances trust, transparency, and prosperity (see Sects. 8.3, 9.1.2, 10.3, 15.3, 16.3.1, Fig. 8.3, Appendix 4.3; and Supplementary Materials). The influence of biblical principles in the legislation of Protestant countries also concurs with the following verse of the Scriptures:

And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (*King James Bible*, 1769, Deuteronomy 4: 8).

Prosperity and educational differences between Protestants (higher) and Roman Catholics (lower) are still evident in Germany and Switzerland. Such differences are even higher comparing national levels (cross-country). Scandinavian countries are all prosperous and have embraced Lutheranism even more strongly than Germany to the point of making it their state religion (see Sect. 8.3.4.1 and Chap. 9).

However, the present and future do not seem encouraging as the world progressively returns to Rome. On the one hand, many historical strands of Protestantism that previously resisted the Catholic hegemony have now relinquished their founding principles and accept ecumenism in “Rome terms”. On the other, the Pentecostalist trend within Protestantism has weakened the latter’s historical socio-political impact (Sect. 10.4.1.3).

24.3.3 The French Revolution

An experiment similar to (and deriving from) the various Protestant revolutions was the French Revolution. This, too, diminished the hegemonic power of the Church and its associated aristocratic-oligarchic-elitist privileges. Such privileges were curbed in France and Belgium, for instance. Nevertheless, this trend continued in Spain and Portugal, although in weaker form, and has been almost inexistent in most of Latin America (Sects. 8.3.4.5, 8.3.4.6, 8.3.5).

24.3.4 Communism

Nor have the social experiments of communism (e.g. seizing the liberties and property of ordinary people in the Soviet Union and Cuba) produced ideal results

either. In contrast, the social experiment of the Protestant revolutions (or of the French Revolution) initiated positive social developments in the long term (e.g. seizing the privileges and properties of the Roman Church-State, not of those of common people). Unlike the *ancien régime*, all the other social experiments have invested more in human capital building through making education public and state-controlled. On balance, the Protestant Reformation has produced the highest prosperity for society as a whole.

24.4 Suggestions for Future Research

The results of this study open up various avenues for future research. The QCA evidence generated here allows further analysis of every country in Europe and the Americas. Future research might also continue to apply the vast amount of information collected and already codified in this study.

Further research on the institutional influence of religion could complement the present analysis through (quantitative) time series and (qualitative) cases studies (e.g. Venezuela and the USA). Other indicators of potential value for further qualitative and quantitative analyses might include the number of years since officialising relations with the Roman See per country, the number of dioceses, diocesan priests, persons per diocesan priests, the total number of priests, and the total number of persons per priest/per year/per country.

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