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Catholicism and Democracy

A Reconsideration

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Abstract

An established approach to the emergence and consolidation of secular democracy maintains that democracy requires a supportive culture, and that certain national and religious cultures are better suited to democracy than others. Catholicism (especially pre-Vatican II Catholicism) is typically portrayed by scholars in this school as being inimical to democracy. The rational choice perspective, by contrast, posits that interests, resources, and strategic power relationships drive the democratization process, and that culture is largely irrelevant. This paper examines the historical relationship between the Catholic Church and secular democratic institutions and concludes that the rational choice model offers more insight into that relationship than the cultural model. Specifically, the notion that Catholicism was an impediment to democratization is shown to be problematic.

Introduction

[1] It has long been believed that there is a relationship between a society's culture and its ability to produce and sustain democratic forms of government. The ancient Athenians maintained that their democracy depended, in part, on the fostering of "civic virtue" or democratic culture. Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and J. S. Mill also maintained that culture and democracy were related, and a wide variety of social scientists have come to broadly similar conclusions. For example, the cultural argument appears in S. M. Lipset's highly influential explanation of how democracy arises and is sustained (1959; 1981: chaps. 2-3; 1990; 1994). Lipset claims that democracy "requires a supportive culture, the acceptance by the citizenry and political elites of principles underlying freedom of speech, media, assembly, religion, of the rights of opposition parties, of the rule of law, of human rights, and the like" (1994: 3). He even claims that cultural factors appear to be more important

than economic ones in accounting for the emergence and stability of democracy (1994: 5; see also 1990). Similarly, Almond and Verba argue that a certain "civic culture" is necessary for the establishment of democracy, and that this sort of culture is not easily transferable to non-Western countries (5). Such conclusions have been echoed by many other writers and researchers (e.g., Kennan: 41-43; Bendix: 430; Tumin: 151; Inglehart 1988, 1990, 1997; Putnam; Granato, Inglehart and Leblang; Bova: 115).

[2] It follows from the cultural argument that some national cultures and religions are more conducive to democracy than others. For instance, it is commonly believed that British culture and its derivations are especially supportive of democracy (Weiner: 20; Bova: 120, 124; Lipset, Seong, and Torres: 168; Lipset 1994: 5). Likewise, Protestantism is often thought to be well-suited to democracy, while Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Islam, and Confucianism are frequently seen as being inimical to it (Davis: 240; Lipset 1959: 85, 92-93; Lipset 1990: 82; 1994: 5; Lipset, Seong, and Torres: 169; Almond and Verba: 10; Gellner: 509-10; Lenski, Nolan, and Lenski: 310-11; Waterbury).

[3] A different approach to understanding the emergence and persistence of democracy falls under the heading of rational choice theory. This theory comes in a number of variants, but those who use it share certain basic assumptions, including the notion that people are self-interested, goal-seeking actors who try to maximize their rewards by weighing the costs and benefits of different courses of action. People are said to choose the alternative that provides the greatest reward, given the constraints of the situation and their perception of what is most reasonable. Some varieties of rational choice theory, such as those associated with the prisoner's dilemma, maintain that in situations of conflict or competition, antagonists may maximize their long-term rewards if they compromise by accepting an equal payoff that is less than what one party could get if it were to temporarily gain the upper hand on the others. When applied to democracy and democratization, this approach assumes that groups and organizations in society generally prefer dominance to power sharing or democracy, but settle for democracy as a second-best outcome in situations where domination is impossible or at least very costly due to a relatively even distribution of power and resources. In this view, democracy is a rational choice in that it prevents the mutual annihilation that would occur if one of the contenders were to try to dominate the others. Interests and the balance of resources and power are paramount in the rational choice perspective, but culture is considered to be at most a secondary factor because the making of "rational" choices is not seen to be culture-specific. (For various versions of this approach to democracy, see: Rustow; Dahl: 14-16, chap. 4; Zwaan: 171-73; O'Donnell and Schmitter; Vanhanen 1990, 1997; Olson; Przeworski 1986, 1991: chap. 2; 1998: 134; Waterbury; Kalyvas 1998. For a general introduction to rational choice theory, see: Turner: chap. 24; Stark: 70-73; Allingham.)

[4] Another important difference between the two perspectives on democracy is that the rational choice approach essentially reverses the direction of causation implied in the cultural theory. Rather than democratic culture giving rise to democratic institutions, as in the cultural theory, democratic institutions are seen as producing democratic culture. According to the latter rendering, the contending parties do not need to begin with a democratic ideology because democratic norms and beliefs can develop after the democratic compromise has been reached (Kalyvas 2000: 385; Waterbury 1997: 390). The model

predicts that under the right conditions, democracy may even develop in cultural milieux that are openly hostile to it. As Weffort puts it:

> Even when theory shows real progress toward freedom and popular participation as a general trend, most cases of democratic transition, in fact, boast a democratic leadership that obviously was not born democratic. If democracies are born out of conflict and violence, most of their leaders are born out of dictatorship. In this sense, Czechoslovakia's Havel and Poland's Walesa are exceptions in the East, while the general rule is given by Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and others. Other than a few very well-known cases of previous dissidents who became leaders, most transition leaders become democratic during the transition process itself. That is the hope, at least (12).

The rational choice perspective on democracy is expressed in stark terms by Josep Colomer, who writes that although the road to hell may be paved with good intentions, "the heaven of democracy seems frequently asphalted with bad intentions, base passions and self-interested calculations" (4).

[5] The two approaches, then, offer rather different accounts of the role of culture in the establishment and maintenance of democracy. One holds that democracy requires a supportive culture, and that certain cultures are more conducive to democracy than others. The other claims that under the right conditions, democracy may develop under any cultural circumstances.

[6] This paper will focus on one cultural orientation that is said to have been inimical to the development of democracy: that of the Roman Catholic Church. After reviewing the claim of the cultural theorists that Catholicism has been an impediment to democracy, it will examine in broad outline the historical relationship between the Church and secular democratic institutions. The two perspectives examined here provide very different "predictions" as to how that historic relationship played out. The cultural model would posit a consistently anti- or non-democratic position on the part of the Catholic authorities (at least prior to the Second Vatican Council, 1962-65), one that was instrumental in impeding the evolution of democracy in Catholic regions of the world. The rational choice perspective, on the other hand, would analyze the Church as it would any other social actor competing for power and resources, and thus would view its stance on democracy as strategically driven and hence variable. Specifically, it would predict that the Church's position on democracy evolved in a manner similar to that of any other political contender in that it was shaped by the balance of power and resources and by its experiences with secular democracy, not by its *a priori* philosophical or theological positions, i.e. its culture. I conclude that the cultural theory as applied to Catholicism is highly problematic, in particular that Catholicism was not incompatible with democracy, and that the rational choice model offers greater insight into the relationship between Catholicism and democracy than the cultural approach.

[7] The discussion begins with a review of the claims of the cultural theorists regarding Catholicism's alleged antagonism toward secular democratic institutions.

The Cultural Theorists on Catholicism and Democracy

[8] There are two, related aspects to the cultural theory as it pertains to Catholicism and democracy. One concerns "political Catholicism," the actions and words of the Catholic clergy and other Church officials that are designed directly to influence political outcomes. The other involves the claim that the acceptance of Catholic faith and doctrines predispose one to reject or at least seriously question democratic principles. Examples of both are given below.

[9] In a piece written in 1942, Kingsley Davis states that a Catholic state church tends to be irreconcilable with democracy because "Catholicism attempts to control so many aspects of life, to encourage so much fixity of status and submission to authority, and to remain so independent of secular authority that it invariably clashes with the liberalism, individualism, freedom, mobility and sovereignty of the democratic nation" (240). Later in that decade, Gabriel Almond, in an article on the Christian parties of western Europe, concluded: "Before World War II a very large proportion of Western European Catholics were deeply distrustful of democracy if not explicitly anti-democratic" (33).

[10] S. M. Lipset, whose early work on this topic was influenced by Davis, also postulates a link between Catholicism and non- or anti-democratic belief and practice. He points out that in Protestant countries, the church's influence in secular matters declined in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the point where it no longer figured in politics. In Catholic nations, by contrast, the church remained a political force into the twentieth century. Its continued presence gave conflicts such as those surrounding class issues a religious hue, making "the fight against Socialists . . . not simply an economic struggle, or a controversy over social institutions, but a deep-rooted conflict between God and Satan, between good and evil" (1959: 92).

[11] A second aspect of Lipset's argument maintains that Catholicism itself is inherently incompatible with democracy.

> The linkage between democratic instability and Catholicism may also be accounted for by elements inherent in Catholicism as a religious system. Democracy requires a universalistic political belief system in the sense that it legitimates different ideologies. And it might be assumed that religious value systems which are more universalistic in the sense of placing less stress on being the only true church will be more compatible with democracy than those which assume that they have the only truth. The latter belief, held much more strongly by the Catholic than by most other Christian churches, makes it difficult for the religious value system to help legitimate a political system which requires, as part of its basic value system, the belief that "good" is served best through conflict among opposing beliefs (1959: 92-93, n. 40).

To underscore this notion, Lipset concludes that "Catholics may accept the assumptions of political democracy, but never those of religious tolerance," adding that "where the conflict between religion and irreligion is viewed as salient by Catholics or other believers in a one true church, then a real dilemma exists for the democratic process" (1959: 95).

[12] In a more recent article, Lipset writes that "long-enduring democracies are disproportionately to be found among the wealthier and more Protestant nations. The 'Fourth' or very undeveloped world apart, Catholic and poorer countries have been less stably democratic" (1990: 82). However, in his more recent work he also argues that Catholicism and democracy are now better suited to each other, noting that Catholic countries were a major part of the third wave of democratization that arrived in the 1970s and 1980s (1994: 5). He attributes the new affinity between Catholicism and democracy to the transformations that took place in the Church in the 1960s and 1970s. He contends that those changes resulted mainly from "the delegitimation of so-called ultra-rightist or clerical fascism in Catholic thought and politics, an outgrowth of the defeat of fascism in Europe, and considerable economic growth in many major Catholic lands in post-war decades" (1994: 5-6).

[13] Although Lipset acknowledges the changes that have occurred in the Church, he does not entirely abandon his earlier position, as he contends that the deleterious effect of Catholicism is still evident in some parts of the world. After noting that the Church played a decisive role in the downfall of communism in Poland, he states that "Poland is now troubled by conflicts flowing from increasing church efforts to affect politics in Eastern Europe even as it relaxes its policies in Western Europe and most of the Americas" (1994: 7). He goes on to make a connection between Catholicism (and the Orthodox Church) and the proto-fascism currently popular in the Ukraine; he suggests that recent Catholic influences in the former Yugoslavia have been harmful; and he offers an exhortation regarding the "continuing dysfunctional effects of a number of cultural values and the institutions linked to them" (1994: 7).

[14] Pierre Trudeau, himself a Catholic, wrote on the topic of Catholicism and democracy in 1960. He penned the oft-quoted statement that "Catholic nations have not always been ardent supporters of democracy. They are authoritarian in spiritual matters; and since the dividing line between the spiritual and the temporal may be very fine or even confused, they are often disinclined to seek solutions in temporal affairs through the mere counting of heads" (245). Similarly, Wiarda maintains that Catholicism has been an impediment to democracy, claiming that the non-democratic aspects of Latin American political culture have their origins, in part, in Catholic ideology (345). Catholic scholar Michael Novak writes:

> By and large, Catholic cultures have not been leaders in discovering and designing the institutions of democracy or the protection of human rights, but have come rather late to these traditions. Further, Catholic cultures seem on the whole rather more vulnerable to the traditional style of single-person leadership, as in the monarchies of old and in the dictatorships of today. Again, Catholic cultures – and not solely Latin ones – seem especially vulnerable to extremist and terrorist forms of political romanticism, neither much admiring pragmatism nor much committed to the arts of compromise and the habits of a loyal opposition (30).

Huntington claims that the "social scientists of the 1950s were right: Catholicism then was an obstacle to democracy," although he also suggests that after 1970 the Church began to foster rather than hinder democratic development (77).

[15] One finds in the literature on democracy, then, the view that Catholicism (especially pre-Vatican II Catholicism) was not compatible with the advancement of democratic institutions. But was Catholicism in fact an impediment to democracy?

The Catholic Church as Historical Actor

[16] From the beginnings of Christianity, Christian organizations have sought some form of entente with secular authorities. With the exception of its administration of the Papal States, the Roman Catholic Church did not endeavor to rule societies in the manner of a king or president, choosing instead to render unto Caesar that which was Caesar's. But the Church did venture into territory claimed by both Caesar and itself in its desire to collect revenues, in asserting its dominance over other religions, and in projecting its influence in matters of morals, education, and culture.

[17] Through its dealings with various states, the Catholic Church has long known that governments cannot act against its wishes with impunity. The deference offered the pope by millions the world over, the respect accorded bishops, priests, and religious among certain sectors of the population, and most importantly, the Church's potential to shape public opinion on political matters, have for centuries given rulers pause. As Lord Lansdowne put it in 1840, the pope "possesses, whether you like it or not, immense power over men's minds" (quoted in Rhodes 1983: 160). A vast network of Catholic diplomatic missions, schools, universities, religious orders, trade unions, political parties, media outlets, and of course churches made Catholicism a formidable force in the modern world. Given these realities, the Church has entered into what may be described as exchange relationships with various states, examples of which are given below.

[18] Historically, where governments attempted to destroy the Church or lessen its influence in society, or threatened the religious rights of the faithful, Church leaders have encouraged their charges to defy the powers that be, even to the point of supporting tyrannicide. For example, St. Thomas Aquinas and other medieval scholastics, as well as Catholic theologians writing at the time of the Counter Reformation, endorsed the right to resist tyranny, even the right to kill a tyrant who had illegitimately seized power (Lewy: 332-33). These views were propounded in times of severe conflict, times in which the Church's power and influence were challenged by the state.

[19] The Church's reaction to these predicaments illustrates how its position on secular political matters was related to its struggle for survival, an issue that must be taken into consideration when assessing its political decisions. Often the issue of Catholicism and democracy is viewed from a single vantage point, a perspective that shows how the Church acted at a particular time; the attention is on the Church and its attitudes and actions. What often goes missing is the polity's treatment of the Church. This is like watching a soccer match on television with the ball and all the players on one team digitally removed from the picture. But as in soccer, where the choice of plays depends on what the other side is doing, the actions of the Church have often been a reaction to a particular political situation. A major weakness of the cultural approach to Catholicism and democracy is that it often fails to take the political context into consideration. A related issue, as we shall see, is that the proponents of the cultural theory have a tendency to ignore or downplay the actions of non-Catholics, in particular Protestants, when they are in comparable situations. Rational choice

theory, on the other hand, views social action as strategic, i.e. it sees human behavior as goal oriented and acknowledges that actors base their choice of actions in large measure on what the other participants are doing and on how they would respond to a particular course of action. Some historical examples will illustrate these points.

[20] One example of how the quest for survival influenced the Church's stance on secular political matters concerns Catholicism in Quebec after the British conquest of 1760. A *modus vivendi* evolved between the Church and the newly established British authorities whereby the Church promoted loyalty to the Crown ostensibly in return for the Crown not interfering in the Church's activities. The Quebec Act of 1774 affirmed the Church's right to remain in the province, and even established in law its prerogative to collect tithes from all Catholics (McInnis: 142). The following year Quebec's Bishop Briand condemned the incipient American Revolution against British rule and exhorted his following to be loyal to the despised British authorities in Quebec. "Your oaths, your religion lay upon you the unavoidable duty of defending your country and your king with all the strength you possess," he told them (150). Briand may simply have seen greater survival potential for the Church under British rule in Quebec than in a Protestant-dominated, secular American state.

[21] After the conquest, English-speaking merchants demanded an elected assembly in which only Protestants could be members, even though the vast majority of the population was Catholic and French-speaking (McInnis: 138). Their demand illustrates a phenomenon that has come to light many times over the centuries, but which bears repeating here because it runs counter to the cultural theory – those who enjoy democratic rights may not be eager to extend those rights to others. Such actions make no sense if democracy results from the adoption of democratic culture and values; after all, those with particular cultural proclivities – a love of opera, for example – usually do not prevent others from adopting their cultural traits. Why, then, would democrats not want the other people in their midst to have democratic values and rights? But the actions of people like the English merchants make perfect sense from a strategic perspective: they allow the actors to maximize their power and influence. It is worth noting that this episode also contradicts the cultural theory as it pertains to Catholicism – Catholics, not Protestants, are supposed to be on the anti-democratic side in historical struggles.

[22] Another example of this phenomenon can be found in the attitudes of Winston Churchill. Early in his career he was in favor of democracy in the U.K., but he did not want it to spread to certain colonies. In a letter written in 1897 he stated that east of Suez, "democratic reins are impossible. India must be governed on old principles." He summarized his views as follows: "There! That is the creed of Tory Democracy. Peace & power abroad – prosperity and progress at home" (Gilbert: 69, quoted in Lakoff: 331 n.6). Again, this makes no sense from the perspective of the cultural theory, but in terms of doing what is feasible to maximize power and influence, this is "rational" strategic behavior. A contemporary illustration is found in the British policy on Hong Kong, a jurisdiction the U.K. ruled from 1842 to 1997. British authorities made no effort to introduce electoral democracy there until reforms were implemented in 1994 and 1995, by which time the U.K. had nothing to lose since the reversion to Chinese rule was scheduled to take place shortly thereafter. One could add that colonization itself violates democratic principles insofar as the subject peoples oppose it.

[23] Another example comes from Italy. Around 1909 the Italian parliament was considering extending the franchise to people who could not read or write, a group that made up a sizable proportion of the population at the time. Liberal and socialist politicians, who had previously been supportive of allowing greater numbers of Italians to vote, vehemently opposed this proposal on the grounds that illiterate peasants were "under the thumb of the priests" (Rhodes 1983: 190), i.e., they would probably not vote liberal or socialist.

[24] A corollary of this phenomenon is that disenfranchised groups in a particular society will lobby for the spread of democracy more vociferously than those who already enjoy democratic privileges. An example of this can be found in the Dutch Catholic experience. In the Netherlands in the nineteenth century, rights to suffrage were denied Catholics (but not Protestants) by a Calvinist-dominated government. For years, Dutch Catholics clamored for a more inclusive democratic system, one that did not exclude them on the basis of their religious affiliation; they finally won their rights in the 1870s (Tumin: 156-57). In a commentary on the evolution of democracy in the Netherlands, Ton Zwann observes, "there is a good deal of evidence that authoritarian, anti-democratic sentiment has persisted among politicians and the general public well into the twentieth century. . . If there is a principle that history illustrates, it is not the autonomous power of democratic values . . . but the simple rule that people favor democracy when it suits their interests, and recoil from it when it threatens their power and position" (173).

Anti-Clericalism in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

[25] In order to understand the Church's attitudes toward democracy in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, when democracy was gaining increasing acceptance in the West, it would be useful to consider the nature of the "democracy" that was being offered. Several European states at this time embarked on campaigns of strident anti-clericalism. For example, under the slogan "*Le Cléricalisme voilà l'ennemi*" (clericalism is the enemy), French liberal politicians enacted a series of punitive measures against the Church from 1879 to 1905 (Kalyvas 1996: 122-23). The Jesuits were forcibly dissolved, their colleges given to secular priests or laymen, and members of other orders were expelled from their respective organizations. Religious congregations were forbidden to teach in public elementary schools. All religious orders had to have the approval of parliament to operate; eventually most applications were denied, which resulted in the closing of over 10,000 schools run by orders. By 1904 religious congregations were not allowed to offer any educational services of any kind, and their property was to be confiscated and sold. The next year the Church lost its official status and its state subsidies (Kalyvas 1996: 122-23).

[26] The anti-clerical republican left, which ruled France from 1879 to 1914, undertook these measures primarily to eliminate the Church's influence in education; the fist loyalty of a French citizen, they believed, should be to the secular republic. The liberal attitude of the day, which was inspired by the Revolution, was that in the age of progress Catholicism should be rooted out in order to give science and reason full sway in improving the human condition. The anti-clericals found female piety to be particularly bothersome in this regard. Jules Ferry, the author of an 1879 anti-clerical bill, stated emphatically that "democracy must wean women from Religion" (quoted in Rhodes 1983: 114).

[27] Anti-Catholic storm clouds also gathered in Bismarck's newly-united Germany, where liberals feared that bringing Bavaria into the national fold would lead to a resurgence of Catholic power and influence. The ensuing *Kulturkampf* produced a series of attacks by the German state on the Catholic Church that was even harsher than the blows received in France. The measures included censoring sermons and Church documents, attempts to control the appointment of clergy, the closing of churches, and the forcible dissolution of every religious order except one (Kalyvas 1996: 213). Those who refused to comply with the new laws, including priests and bishops, were expelled from their positions, put in jail, or sent out of the country; it is estimated that about 1800 priests were removed from their posts (Cornwell: 194). The expulsions were so extensive that by 1879 only three of twelve Prussian dioceses had a bishop, while 955 of the state's parishes had no priest (Kalyvas 1996: 213).

[28] The *Kulturkampf* provoked a fierce Catholic resistance that was so successful that most of the acts were rescinded by 1887, although the laws suppressing the Jesuits were not fully repealed until 1917. The successful mobilization strengthened Catholic resolve and launched the Zentrum party, formed in 1871, into a powerful position in the Reichstag. The Zentrum later formed part of the Weimar coalition, a republican alliance that also included the Social Democratic Party and the Democrats, which ruled Germany for much of the inter-war period.

[29] In Belgium in 1878, an anti-clerical program was instigated by the Liberal party that led to a mass Catholic counter-movement. In 1884, the Catholic party won the national elections, an outcome that some had feared would result in the subversion of the country's fledgling democratic institutions because the Catholic political movement included an extremist, anti-liberal (ultramontane) faction as well as a moderate, parliamentary wing. Stepping into the breach before the election, the Church hierarchy "repeatedly and explicitly condemned [Catholic] radical criticism of liberal institutions and silenced radical leaders who were expelled from the party" (Kalyvas 2000: 389). Five years before the election, Pope Leo XIII had implored Catholics in Belgium to end their opposition to the Belgian constitution. This signaling of moderation on the part of the Church and its support for secular democratic institutions convinced the incumbents that it was safe to relinquish power to the Catholic party, thus avoiding a preemptive coup on the part of Liberal supporters. The Catholic party kept its promise of moderation, and Belgian democratization continued apace (Kalyvas 2000: 380-84). Catholicism in Belgium also thrived thereafter, as the Church retained its strong presence in education, the Catholic movement received state support, Catholic religious symbols stayed in public view, and the Catholic party remained a powerful force in Belgian politics (Kalyvas 2000: 392; see also 1998).

[30] Tensions between Church and state also existed in Latin America. The Church faced persecution in Mexico, Columbia, Venezuela, Chile, Ecuador, and other countries where severe anti-clerical laws were passed (Davis: 241). The subjugation of the Church was especially harsh in Mexico, where by the 1920s and early 1930s it faced severe state persecution. There were claims that about 5300 priests, religious, and lay Catholics had been murdered; the mere presence of a priest in Mexico at this time was a capital offence (Cornwell: 113). By 1940 the Church "legally had no corporate existence, no real estate, no schools, no monasteries or convents, no foreign priests, no right to defend itself publicly or

in the courts, and no hope that its legal and actual situations would improve. Its clergy were forbidden to wear clerical garb, to vote, to celebrate public religious ceremonies, and to engage in politics," although both the government and the church sometimes ignored these restrictions (Mabry: 82). The Mexican Church supported the Cristero movement that revolted against the government and its persecution of the Church, while Pope Pius XI declared in a 1937 encyclical on the Mexican situation that there is such a thing as a just insurrection (Lewy: 312).

[31] Clearly, many of the measures taken against the Church in Europe and Latin America would be condemned in contemporary liberal democracies as repressive and in violation of basic human rights. The "democracy" that confronted the Church in these countries was rather different from that which is enjoyed in most Western countries today, and the Church's reaction to it should be understood in that context. One may also note that since the routing of the Church in Mexico in these decades did not produce liberal democracy, it may be that Catholicism was not a root cause of its absence. One observes as well that although the cultural theorists place a great deal of importance on the Catholic influence in Latin cultures, they tend not to acknowledge that strident *anti*-Catholicism was also a part of the culture of those countries.

[32] It is important from a theoretical standpoint to acknowledge that the Catholic parties (as well as some non-Catholic parties such as the German Social Democrats) did not enter the political arena with solid democratic credentials (Kalyvas 1996: 258-59, 264). The Catholic movements arising out of the anti-clericalism of this period originally espoused the position of the Vatican, which was that, ideally, Catholicism should be the state religion and public expression of heretical and atheistic beliefs should be suppressed (more on this below). Yet the Catholic parties forgot their illiberal philosophies once they were a part of an ongoing democratic compromise and functioned rather well in a parliamentary setting, offering an example of how a democratic philosophy may follow upon positive experiences with democracy.

[33] By the same token, it would be a mistake to think that the Catholic movements were unique in their early reluctance to fully embrace liberal democracy as it is conceived today. The violation of the Church's civil rights by secular authorities shows that the Church's adversaries also had a less than perfect love for democratic principles. Even so eminent a mind as Max Weber had changing and ambivalent attitudes toward democracy (Przeworski 1998: 138). Nor was there the same respect for free speech and expression as there is at present. In the 1880s, American authorities banned Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*; in 1914 Canada Customs prohibited the importation of Balzac's *Droll Stories*; and British officials tried to prevent people from reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover* into the 1950s. And before the collapse of communism in the late 1980s, many western intellectuals were not convinced that democracy would be of benefit to the lesser-developed nations of the world. George F. Kennan's remarks are typical of those in this school:

> I know of no reason to suppose that the attempt to develop and employ democratic institutions would necessarily be the best course for many of these peoples. The record of attempts of this nature has not been all that good. Time and again, authoritarian regimes have been able to introduce

> reforms and to improve the lot of masses of people, where more diffuse forms of political authority had failed. As examples one has only to think of Portugal under Salazar, of China under Mao, even Cuba under Castro . . . (42-43).

The Church's Response to Anti-clericalism

[34] How did the Church respond to the anti-clericalism? It endeavored to create a network of agreements governing such things as Catholics' right to practice their religion, the provision of Catholic education, and government funding for Catholic institutions. The general philosophy of the Church in the face of the rising anti-clericalism is illustrated in the words of Pope Leo XIII:

> To princes and other rulers of the State we have offered the protection of religion, and we have exhorted the people to make abundant use of the great benefits which the Church supplies. Our present object is to make rulers understand that this protection, which is stronger than any, is again offered to them; and We earnestly exhort them in our Lord to defend religion, and to consult the interest of their Lord to defend religion, and to consult the interest of their States by giving that liberty to the Church which cannot be taken away without injury and ruin to the commonwealth (1881: part 25).

[35] The safest refuge for the Church in monarchical regimes in this era was usually found in an alliance with the sovereign. The Papal States themselves were dependent on European monarchies for their physical security until 1870 (Weigel: 19). Papal pronouncements urged Catholics in monarchies where the Church was not under fire to abstain from any and all acts of rebellion.

[36] Participation in democratic politics was in some circumstances another option, as seen in the cases of Germany and Belgium. The Church found in late-nineteenth century democracy, especially after the successes of the Catholic parties, a way to fight back against the anti-clerical movement. Given the huge size of the Catholic population in various European countries, it would have been irrational for the Church to ignore the opportunities democracy offered to serve Church interests. By the 1880s, the Church took a conciliatory position with regard to the rise of the republican states and the gradual development of democracy. In the encyclical *Immortale Dei* of 1885, Pope Leo XIII stated,

> the right to rule is not necessarily . . . bound up with any special mode of government. It may take this or that form, provided only that it be of a nature of the government, rulers must ever bear in mind that God is the paramount ruler of the world, and must set Him before themselves as their exemplar and law in the administration of the State (part 4).

[37] Leo XIII exhorted Catholics to be active in municipal and national politics, stating, "to take no share in public matters would be as wrong as to have no concern for, or to bestow no labor upon, the common good . . . " (1885: part 44). If Catholics "hold aloof [from politics]," he wrote, "men whose principles offer but small guarantee for the welfare of the State will the more readily seize the reins of government. This would tend also to the injury

of the Christian religion, forasmuch as those would come into power who are badly disposed toward the Church, and those who are willing to befriend her would be deprived of all influence" (1885: part 44). Catholics "have just reasons for taking part in the conduct of public affairs. For in so doing they assume not nor should they assume the responsibility of approving what is blameworthy in the actual methods of government, but seek to turn these very methods, as far as is possible, to the genuine and true public good, and to use their best endeavors at the same time to infuse, as it were, into all the veins of the State the healthy sap and blood of Christian wisdom and virtue" (1885: part 45). A French Jesuit put it to his congregation this way: "Take the sword! The electoral sword which cleaves the good from the bad!" (Rhodes 1983: 115).

[38] Catholics were free to disagree with the Holy See on matters of civil government. Leo XIII stated:

> . . . in matters merely political, as, for instance, the best form of government, and this or that system of administration, a difference of opinion is lawful. Those, therefore, whose piety is in other respects known, and whose minds are ready to accept in all obedience the decrees of the apostolic see, cannot in justice be accounted as bad men because they disagree as to the subjects We have mentioned . . . (1885: part 48).

[39] Once again, the positions taken by the Church are not consistent with the cultural theory. Leo XIII's views also provide another illustration of how democratic attitudes may arise from conflict and the creation of democratic institutions.

The Church's Desire for Domination in Spiritual Matters

[40] Although the Church was not opposed in principle to democratic institutions in the larger society, its first choice of government prior to Vatican II was one in which it enjoyed the status of a state church. In some circumstances this involved a preference for a religious monopoly. To give but one historical example, in Mexico in 1821 independence movement leaders Colonel Agustín de Iturbide and Vincente Guerrero drew up the *Plan de Iguala* which, among other things, offered to grant the Catholic Church a monopoly over religious affairs and to maintain the clergy's existing rights and privileges in an independent Mexico. The Church endorsed the *Plan*, and shortly thereafter "priests urged cooperation [with the independence movement] from the pulpits." Independence gained broad public support and was won later that year, and the Church got its monopoly (Meyer and Sherman: 296).

[41] The Church's position in the late nineteenth century is illustrated in an encyclical letter published in 1895 by Leo XIII:

> . . . it would be very erroneous to draw the conclusion that in America is to be sought the type of the most desirable status of the Church, or that it would be universally lawful or expedient for State and Church to be, as in America, dissevered and divorced. The fact that Catholicity [in the United States] . . . is in good condition, nay is even enjoying a prosperous growth, is by all means to be attributed to the fecundity with which God has endowed his Church, in virtue of which unless men or circumstances interfere, she

> spontaneously expands and propagates herself; but she would bring forth more abundant fruits if, in addition to liberty, she enjoyed the favor of the laws and the patronage of the public authority (part 6; quoted in Weigel: 22).

[42] The Church had a method of dealing with such matters that provides a textbook example of the rational choice perspective. It adopted a "thesis-hypothesis" approach in which the "thesis" stated the ideal, the principle to be implemented if conditions were right; the "hypothesis" contained concessions or compromises which were necessary in situations where it was difficult or impossible to realize the thesis (see Murray 1993a: 98; 1993b: 132). For example, a common interpretation of the Church's pre-Vatican II thesis is that the Roman Church was to be the one and only state church, and no public expression of non-Catholic religious ideas was to be tolerated. However, the hypothesis was that where Catholics were in the minority, or where for any other reason implementing the thesis would be disruptive of the public peace, no effort was to be made to implement Catholic preeminence. The thesis-hypothesis approach made explicit a maxim that other parties to democratic compromise often leave unsaid: where domination would be very costly or impossible, choose power sharing. Leo XIII wrote in 1881 that there should be harmony between church and state "so that injurious contests may be avoided" (part 26). This "situational" approach shows how democratic outcomes may be determined by particular balances of power rather than culture. The Church, like any other organization, preferred dominance, but came to embrace democracy in situations where dominance was not feasible.

Catholicism and Democracy in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s

[43] Not long after liberal anti-clericalism had receded in Europe, another challenge emerged: totalitarianism. Since some adherents of the cultural theory claim that there is or was an affinity between Catholicism and totalitarian doctrines such as fascism, it would be useful to assess this claim by considering one of the more controversial actions taken by the Vatican – the signing of the *Reichskonkordat* with Hitler's Nazi regime in July 1933. Reaching an agreement with the Holy See lent some luster to the newly-minted Nazi government, which was already gaining international attention for its human rights abuses. One might be tempted, following the cultural theory, to interpret the signing of the agreement as evidence of an affinity between Catholicism and Nazism. However, other interpretations are possible, especially in light of the context in which the agreement arose.

[44] The *Reichskonkordat* stipulated that the Nazi regime would guarantee Catholics' right to profess their religion and the Church's prerogative to manage its affairs without state interference (Lewy: 79-80). Under the concordat, the Nazis also agreed to protect and pay for Catholic education and to allow parents of Catholic children to demand confessional schools in areas where they had not existed so long as the number of Catholic children was sufficiently large. Some Catholics believed that such measures were necessary to prevent another *Kulturkampf*, since before the signing of the accord the Nazis had wrought no small amount of terror on Catholics and their institutions, including detaining and intimidating priests, raiding the offices of the two Catholic parties (the Zentrum and the Bavarian People's Party), breaking up meetings, confiscating election materials, and firing civil servants who were members of the Catholic parties (Lewy: 28).

[45] The agreement also involved the National Socialist regime's acceptance of the Code of Canon Law, which the Vatican had enacted in 1917. The Code gave the Holy See control over the appointment of bishops and other prelates, and ensured that it had the final word in matters of Church policy and doctrine. The Code's main architect, Eugenio Pacelli (later Pius XII), believed that its implementation was necessary to ensure the Church's unity and survival in the twentieth century (Cornwell: 85). According to John Cornwell, the main purpose of the Code was to enlarge the pope's control of the Church, including his power to suppress dissent (84-85).

[46] In return for signing the accord, the Vatican agreed to a demand dear to the Fuhrer's heart – a prohibition against priests participating in German politics, a move that spelled the demise of the Zentrum (Rhodes 1973: 176). Lewy describes the exclusion of the Roman Catholic clergy from politics as "one of [Hitler's] main reasons for concluding the Concordat" (84). The German dictator is quoted as saying, "One is either a German or a Christian. You cannot be both" (26). That Hitler wanted an end to priestly participation in politics suggests that in his view there was no affinity between Nazism and Catholicism.

[47] The Zentrum and other Catholic organizations had vehemently opposed Hitler and his party before the concordat was signed. In 1931, Catholic journalist Walter Dirks described the Catholic relationship with Hitler's movement as one of "open warfare" (quoted in Cornwell: 108). Local priests, bishops, and the Catholic press urged the faithful to oppose the National Socialists and to support the Catholic parties; in many dioceses membership in Nazi organizations was not allowed (Lewy: 20). Catholics who joined the Nazi movement complained that the "Church made life difficult for us" (Abel: 98, quoted in Cornwell: 108). Murdered Nazis were denied burial in consecrated cemeteries, and those who refused to leave the party were sometimes denied the sacraments.

[48] Perhaps the biggest challenge to using the cultural theory to explain the signing of the *Reichskonkordat* is the high level of support for National Socialism among *Protestants*. The voting records of the day indicate that before the concordat was signed, in particular before Hitler became Chancellor, lay Catholics tended to heed the warnings of the Catholic parties, clergy, and press to oppose Hitler. Richard Hamilton, who provides a painstaking review of the evidence available for the crucial German elections of this period, reports: "*the vote for the National Socialists was very disproportionately Protestant*" (38, emphasis in original), a pattern that was especially pronounced in rural areas and small towns. At this point in German history it appeared that Protestantism, not Catholicism, was the faith with an affinity to Nazism. Also to be considered is the seldom-mentioned fact that the Protestant churches also signed a concordat with the Nazis, which was finalized a few months before the Catholic one. And contrary to what the cultural theory would predict, Hitler had a tougher time gaining acceptance in Catholic circles than in Protestant ones. Klaus Scholder has observed that although the "winning over of Protestantism presented no special problems to Hitler, things on the Catholic side were much more difficult" (237).

[49] Another important factor to consider is that it seems that the Vatican was laboring under the illusion, common to many to this day, that fascism and communism are polar opposites, the former being the "extreme right," the latter the "extreme left;" one "ultra conservative," the other "revolutionary." The Curia was well aware of the recent murderous

persecution of Christians, both lay and ordained, perpetrated in the Soviet Union, Spain, and Mexico, and took the anti-clericalism of the German communist movement seriously. The Vatican saw in communism not only a threat to the existence of all churches, but also a force that was undermining Western civilization itself. In the Vatican's view, the farther a party was from communism the better. Even groups like the Social Democrats, whom it perceived to be adjacent to the communists on the political spectrum, were not to be trusted (Cornwell: 112-13, 116), a rather puzzling belief given the Zentrum's successful partnership with the party in the Weimar coalition.

[50] Hitler was well aware of the profound fear of communism among various groups in Germany and exploited it for political gain, promising to smash the national communist movement. Hamilton writes: "For those who were worried about a threat of a Communist (or Marxist) uprising, the [Nazi Party] probably appeared, despite its many questionable features, as their best choice" (414). Hamilton also notes that the Nazi antagonism toward the German Communist Party (as well as the Social Democrats) "was not just ideological but was backed up by a private army, the Sturmabteilung" (414).

[51] Many people in Germany in the early 1930s believed that the Nazi regime would be very short-lived. There was speculation at the time that the Vatican also shared this view, and that after trying unsuccessfully for over ten years to sign a concordat with a German government, it felt that it could get one passed with Hitler which future governments would have to honor. Whatever the reality, a West German court declared in 1957 that the concordat was valid in the new Federal Republic (Lewy: 92-93).

[52] Shortly after the signing of the accord, Hitler boasted: "I shall be one of the few men in history to have deceived the Vatican" (Rhodes 1973: 178). Within weeks of the signing, disagreement between the two parties arose on how certain clauses were to be interpreted, and it was only a matter of months before the persecution of Catholic officials resumed – all the deputies of the Bavarian People's Party were arrested, priests were thrown in jail, and other harsh measures were taken (Rhodes 1973: 179-81). By the spring of 1937, the German Catholic hierarchy was "thoroughly disillusioned" with the Nazi regime (Shirer: 235). That year Pius XI vented his years of frustration by publishing the encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* (With Burning Sorrow), which condemned Nazisim as pagan and mocked its exaltation of race and blood. Similarly, in November 1939 his successor, Pius XII, agreed to participate in a military coup, planned by German general Ludwig Beck and others, that would overthrow Hitler and return Germany to democracy (Cornwell: 235). The pope's role was to be an intermediary between Beck's supporters and the Allies, but the coup never materialized.

[53] Pius XII's support for the coup and the restoration of German democracy suggests that he preferred liberal democracy to Nazism. This makes perfect sense, as under liberal democracy the Church would be free from state persecution; the Church had fared well under truly liberal systems. There was a tragic irony in the Vatican's initial perception of Nazism and communism as polar opposites rather than political cousins sharing a fundamental illiberalism.

[54] In 1944, Pius XII spoke favorably of democracy, saying: "Taught by bitter experience, [people] are more aggressive in opposing the concentration of dictatorial power that cannot be censured or touched, and call for a system of government more in keeping with the

dignity and liberty of the citizens. These multitudes, uneasy, stirred by the war to their innermost depths, are today firmly convinced – at first, perhaps, in a vague and confused way, but already unyieldingly – that had there been the possibility of censuring and correcting the actions of public authority, the world would not have been dragged into the vortex of a disastrous war, and that to avoid for the future the repetition of such a catastrophe, we must vest efficient guarantees in the people itself" (part 12). He added: "If, then, we consider the extent and nature of the sacrifices demanded of all citizens, especially in our day when the activity of the state is so vast and decisive, the democratic form of government appears to many as a postulate of nature imposed by reason itself" (part 19).

Conclusions

[55] The shifting stance of the Church on matters of democracy and obedience to secular authority cannot be explained by the cultural theory. The cultural thesis as applied to Catholicism would predict a consistently anti- or non-democratic stance on the part of the Church (at least until Vatican II) and consistently pro-democratic attitudes on the part of Protestants and other designated groups, yet that did not occur. Several examples discussed above show how on several occasions the Church took conciliatory positions on matters of secular democracy, and even urged the faithful to participate in democratic institutions.

[56] Rational choice theory offers an alternative interpretation of these events that challenges the positions taken by the cultural theorists. Rather than viewing the Church as one of several groups that allegedly forestalled the spread of democracy because of their cultures, the alternative interpretation maintains that the Church followed a strategy much like that of any other organization in the secular political realm. It preferred a position of dominance for itself, but where that was not feasible, it was willing to enter into the democratic compromise. And like other groups involved in power struggles in which domination by a single contender is unlikely, in reaching a compromise the Church came to adopt a democratic ideology regarding secular political practice, awakening to the fact that it could survive and even flourish under liberal democracy. The examples of the Church behaving in this manner cast considerable doubt on the cultural thesis as it applies to Catholicism, and illustrate the usefulness of the rational choice approach. A study of other supposedly anti-democratic groups from the latter perspective is called for, and would contribute to our understanding of the larger issue of how democracy arises and is sustained.

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