

Weber in Latin America: Is Protestant Growth Enabling the Consolidation of Democratic Capitalism?

ANTHONY GILL

Since the 1930s, a number of countries in Latin America have experienced rapid growth in the expansion of evangelical Protestantism. Has this religious change produced concomitant changes in the political landscape? Some scholars have seen the possibility of a Weberian 'Protestant ethic' emerging, making the region more amenable to democratic capitalism. Others have argued that the 'otherworldly' nature of these new (predominantly Pentecostal) evangelicals lends itself to a more apolitical outlook and a deference to authoritarian rule. Using survey data from four countries – Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico – this article concludes that denominational affiliation has little effect on political attitudes. The more critical factor determining political attitudes relates to the level of church attendance, which enhances civic engagement and trust in government.

Key words: democratization; protestantism; Weber; political values

Introduction

Religious dynamics in Latin America have changed dramatically over the past half-century. Once a bulwark for Roman Catholicism, the region now hosts one of the fastest growing populations of evangelical Protestants, specifically Pentecostals, in the world. Indeed, in countries such as Brazil and Guatemala, the numbers of actively practising Protestants and Catholics are equal. Considering that religious values and beliefs often form the bedrock for other forms of social behaviour, this trend begs an important question: Is the rise of evangelical Protestantism having any effect on Latin America's political and economic landscape? Given that Latin America's evangelical population preaches the values of thriftiness, trustworthiness and personal responsibility,¹ one might expect that the influence of this new Protestant population would have the impact laid out in Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the*

Anthony Gill is in the Department of Political Science, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, 98195-3530, USA

Spirit of Capitalism (1904–1905), namely that Protestantism would bolster the prospects of capitalism. And since many have argued a tight link between a proto-capitalist class and democracy,² Protestant denominations could potentially form the basis for a democratic civil society.³ The perceived minority status of Protestants may also predispose them to democracy as a means of protecting their religious civil liberties via greater access to the political arena.

Alternatively, some scholars have noted the otherworldly nature of Latin American Protestantism, which they claim gives rise to political apathy and an acceptance of authoritarianism,⁴ though these same authors also see laissez-faire capitalism as congruent with this authoritarian bent. This essay tests these various assertions regarding the linkage between denominational affiliation and political and economic predispositions using data collected from four countries – Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico – in the World Values Survey of 1990. This comparative analysis will also enable an indirect test of assertions made by the ‘religious economy’ school,⁵ namely that religiously pluralistic nations tend to exhibit higher amounts of religiosity. As the results show, denominational affiliation has little impact upon support for political and economic liberalization at the individual level. The more salient religious feature, after controlling for standard demographic variables, is church attendance, which appears to enhance participation in civil society in more religiously pluralistic societies. At the aggregate level, it does appear that the more pluralistic nations in the survey – Brazil and Chile – exhibit higher degrees of religiosity measured along various dimensions.

A New Protestant Milieu? Theoretical Considerations

Ever since Weber laid out his famous thesis linking Calvinist theology to the rise of capitalism, scholars have sought to explore how religious values affect other forms of social and political behaviour. It is hard to deny that certain religious attitudes and affiliations are linked to political behaviour. In the United States, evangelical Christians have been linked closely with Republican voting patterns, while Jews and Catholics have tended historically to vote Democratic.⁶ In Europe, Catholic clergy in some countries have been able to mobilize parishioners to support Christian Democratic parties at various times, though the linkage has not been as strong as in the United States.⁷ In Latin America, the close relationship between the Catholic Church and the colonial regimes meant that Catholic leaders and their devout followers often had strong preferences for centrist and corporatist forms of government. During the nineteenth century, the Church fervently resisted the advance of European liberalism and fuelled the preference of practising Catholics for more corporatist forms of social organization. During the 1960s, a more

progressive stream of Catholic thought emerged around the liberation theology movement.⁸ The general ideological thrust of this movement promoted grassroots democracy, focusing on the construction of civil society through small Christian base communities that would challenge the more authoritarian status quo.⁹ Economically, these groups opposed capitalism and promoted an ambiguous version of socialism. Without doubt, participants in liberation theology and the associated base communities demonstrated a connection between their religious and political values.

For the most part, liberation theology did not live up to the expectations of its founders or scholars.¹⁰ Instead, a 'new' phenomenon – the growth of evangelical Protestantism – far outpaced progressive Catholicism in terms of adherents.¹¹ Since this phenomenon was highly decentralized and lacked the intellectual documentation that liberation theologians left behind,¹² scholars have been scrambling to delineate the potential ideological influences that evangelical Protestants may be having on the region. But unlike a number of the studies conducted on US and West European religious attitudes, research on Latin American religion has been largely devoid of survey research to support broad-based conjectures about how new theologies are shaping the region. Aside from a few notable exceptions,¹³ casual observations have substituted for a rigorous statistical examination of values and attitudes.¹⁴ Theorizing has also been noticeably lacking as most studies on Latin American Protestantism tends toward descriptive analysis. Nonetheless, from the literature we can discern several testable hypotheses relating to the possible linkage between Protestantism and political and economic preferences.

One of the more recent hypotheses to be advanced regarding religious preferences for economic policies emanates from the Weberian tradition linking Protestantism with a capitalist world view. The idea here is that because Protestantism (and in particular Pentecostalism) favours direct connections with God and a strong emphasis on individual responsibility, Protestantism would favour the individualistic, laissez-faire values of capitalism. Deiros notes that fundamentalist Protestants

have also promoted the doctrines of laissez-faire capitalism and the ideological liberalism dominant in the West – a seemingly incongruous attachment, given their support for right-wing regimes. This is expressed in several causes or principles that capture the allegiance of fundamentalists, including the right of private property.¹⁵

A number of scholars build upon the notion that Latin American Protestants support liberal economic and political arrangements but reverse the causality of Weber's famous thesis. Rather than viewing religious values as leading to certain economic and political values, scholars such as Sexton and Goldin and Metz see individuals converting to Protestantism because it

has values that are more congruent with the previous advance of capitalism in the region.¹⁶ Despite the direction of causality asserted, all these authors hypothesize that Protestants will be significantly more associated with values supporting economic liberalization. With neo-liberal economic policies being hotly contested throughout the region, Protestants may shift the political debate towards more open economic policies, if this hypothesis is true. All of this is contrasted to Catholicism, which is viewed typically as promoting more corporatist, state-centered economic regimes. The influence of papal encyclicals on social justice dating back to Pius IX and the recent influences of Vatican II and liberation theology would lead one to expect that practising Catholics would be less favourable towards laissez-faire capitalism, holding other socio-economic characteristics (e.g., income) constant. Even the more theologically conservative Pope John Paul II has issued statements critical of neo-liberalism.¹⁷

While Protestantism in Europe and the United States has tended to be linked to an active support of political democracy,¹⁸ the same has not been universally true for Latin American Protestants. Ireland notes that the 'prevailing stereotype of Pentecostal crentes [believers] is that they are apolitical conservatives who leave the injustices of the world to the Lord's care, privatizing public issues and giving implicit support to authoritarian political projects'.¹⁹ After providing evidence from interviews with two Brazilian Pentecostals he concludes that this stereotype is largely true.²⁰ His reasoning is largely derived from the fact that Pentecostal theology places far greater emphasis on achieving rewards in the afterlife than in the present world. Such a mindset creates a predilection for political apathy and acceptance of the status quo, which in Latin America has often been authoritarian. Deiros echoes this assertion by claiming that

fundamentalists tend to consider evangelism – in its narrower or 'spiritual' sense – to be the only legitimate activity of the church and remain wary of current trends toward church involvement in political affairs. They fear that such involvement may lead the church away from its central evangelistic mission into a substitute religion of good works, humanitarianism, and even political agitation . . . Because fundamentalists place the end of history outside of history, their social conscience is subdued, and their organizations reinforce this oppressed conscience by supplying a sociocultural structure which attributes a sacred character to the state of oppression . . . Any claim for justice or liberation from oppression is transferred to a remote eschatological future.²¹

This stereotype is augmented by several high profile cases wherein some evangelicals supported dictators or political leaders with an authoritarian bent: Efraín Ríos Montt (Guatemala); Jorge Serrano Elías (Guatemala); the

ARENA party (El Salvador); Augusto Pinochet (Chile) and Alberto Fujimori (Peru). For example, Smith and Fleet argue that in Chile,

during the Pinochet years, Catholics and mainline Protestant denominations, most of which were opposed to the dictatorship, worked closely together. In contrast, the new denominations (Pentecostals as well as [Jehovah's] Witnesses and Mormons) were more favorably disposed to the military government.²²

The obvious predictions from these assertions, then, are that evangelical Protestants will be less heavily involved in civil and political society (due to their 'otherworldly' perspective) and that their general mindset will reflect more conservative political values. From the above discussion, we can thus lay out the two following testable hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Latin American Protestants, as compared to Catholics, will have attitudes more favourable to laissez-faire capitalism.

Hypothesis 2: Latin American Protestants are more likely to be politically conservative and less engaged in civil society.

Beyond testing individual attitudes across denominational affiliations, the introduction also noted that we have the opportunity to examine indirectly some of the claims of the religious economy school at the aggregate (national) level of analysis. Iannaccone, Gill and Stark and Finke have asserted that religiously pluralistic societies will exhibit higher levels of church participation given that competing denominations will work harder to recruit and retain parishioners.²³ Applying Iannaccone's work on religious human capital,²⁴ which demonstrates that continual exposure to religion intensifies belief, we would also assume that the aggregate level of religious intensity would be higher in nations that are more religiously pluralistic. Likewise, if religious values and intensity have any impact on political and economic values we would expect that the effects would be most pronounced in the nations with the most pluralistic religious markets.

In order to make specific cross-national predictions about religious intensity based upon consideration of pluralism, it is worthwhile to review briefly the religious and demographic backgrounds of the four nations contained in this study. Brazil and Chile are by far the most religiously pluralistic nations of the countries examined here. Evangelical Protestantism took hold early in each nation and has grown rapidly since the middle of the twentieth century. Most estimates place the percentage of evangelical Protestants in the population (overwhelmingly Pentecostal in both cases) in the double digits, roughly between 15 and 25 per cent of the population at the time of

the 1990 World Values Survey.²⁵ Brazil's religious landscape also includes a significant number of Afro-Brazilian spiritist religions such as Umbanda and Candomblé. Contrast this with Argentina and Mexico, where Catholicism has been the dominant religion until very recently, with Protestants beginning to make substantial inroads only in the 1990s. The lack of Protestants in these two nations results largely from regulations restricting the activities of religious minorities. Military regimes in Argentina favourable to the Catholic Church between 1966 and 1983 imposed severe restrictions on Protestants to the point of expelling some foreign missionaries.²⁶ The situation was slightly different in Mexico wherein the revolutionary and anticlerical Constitution of 1917 severely curtailed the property and civil rights of all religious organizations, Catholics and Protestants alike. These restrictions were rolled back when the constitution was amended in 1994.²⁷ The comparison of these four nations is particularly useful as demographic characteristics are not correlated with the religious dynamics. Both Argentina and Chile, different in terms of religious pluralism, are ethnically homogenous nations relative to Brazil and Mexico, also quite different with respect to religious pluralism. And while these four nations represent the four largest economies in Latin America, Brazil and Mexico face more acute problems of poverty and income disparity than do the other two. This brief review of the four nations then leads us to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: The more religiously pluralistic nations – Brazil and Chile – should exhibit higher levels of religious participation and belief in comparison with the less pluralistic nations – Mexico and Argentina.

Hypothesis 4: To the extent that religious factors play a role in shaping political and economic attitudes, and to the extent religious pluralism enhances the religiosity of a society, the individual level effects linking religious variables to political and economic preferences will be more pronounced in Brazil and Chile.

With these four hypotheses in mind, we now turn to an analysis of the data, beginning with a comparison of the aggregate (national) level data.

Data Analysis

Using standard statistical procedures we examine the data from the 1990 World Values Survey at both the aggregate level, wherein we compare results across nations to determine how well the predictions of the religious economy school hold (hypothesis 4), and at the individual level to see if Protestants differ from Catholics to any significant degree in their political and economic attitudes (Hypotheses 1–3). We will also look at the latter results

in a cross-national context as an auxiliary test of the religious economy school's predictions (see Hypothesis 4). A detailed description of the variables used can be found in the appendix.

Aggregate Level Analysis

Supply-side theories predict that religiosity, both in terms of belief and activity (e.g., church attendance) will be higher in countries with greater degrees of religious pluralism. Table 1 confirms that among the four countries studied, Brazil and Chile have the highest degree of religious pluralism. Brazil's non-Catholic rate (excluding 'no answer' responses) is about 20 per cent of respondents, while Chile's rate is just under 15 per cent, figures that correspond to casual estimates of religious affiliation. Interestingly, Chile had a high non-response rate to the religious denomination question, which may also account for the lower percentage of individuals refusing to provide interviewers with a specific religious denomination (the 'no answer' category).²⁸ Mexico exhibited the smallest non-Catholic population at 6.7 per cent, while Argentina registered a figure of 9.7 per cent. Note that Argentina has a fairly significant Jewish population that was included in the 'other' category (but excluded in the regression analyses below). Notice that Argentina did not have any respondents classifying themselves as 'fundamentalist', which would likely include evangelicals/Pentecostals.

A simple tripartite categorization of church attendance shows little support for the supply-side hypothesis in that the countries with less pluralism register higher levels of regular church attendance. Hypothesis 3 seems to be disproved by this analysis. Mexico has the highest level of 'frequent' church attendance, while Argentina and Brazil are statistically equal in these categories. Chile, surprisingly, checks in with the lowest level of 'frequent' church attendance. The high level of church attendance in Mexico may be explained by the Catholic Church's attempt to mobilize against an anticlerical government. In essence, the Mexican Catholic Church did have an ideological competitor, though it was the state, not Protestants. At the time of the survey, the Mexican Church was mobilizing politically to have the 1917 constitution amended to allow for greater liberties for religious organizations.²⁹ Results for Argentina in terms of church attendance remain a mystery. Considering that the Catholic Church was discredited for its active participation in the military dictatorship,³⁰ one would expect religious participation to suffer. The low confidence score that religious institutions receive in Argentina (see Table 2) would seem to bolster this expectation. However, this expectation might be less pronounced since most religious participation in Argentina tends to be concentrated in the upper classes, and the upper classes were generally more supportive of military rule.

While *church attendance* figures do not bolster the supply-side hypothesis, other measures of religious belief and activity show stronger support for

TABLE 1
RELIGIOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE POPULATIONS IN FOUR LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, 1991

	Argentina (1978-1002)	Brazil (1771-1781)	Chile (1489-1500)	Mexico (1507-1531)	F or χ^2
Belongs to denomination (%)	84	88	82	85	25.9***
Religious denomination (%)					992.8***
Catholic	90	79.2	67.7	92.9	
Mainline	2.1	3.4	0.9	3.3	
Fund.	0	6.5	9.3	2.9	
Other	7.6	10	4.2	0.5	
NA	0.2	0.9	18.5	0.5	
Church attendance (%)					216.4***
Rarely	15	33.2	35.5	21.9	
Occasional	53.2	33.2	36.8	34.7	
Frequently	31.8	33.7	27.7	43.4	
Mean score	2.80 (1.19)	2.52 (1.59)	2.30 (1.66)	2.85 (1.52)	36.6***

Notes: Church attendance is reported in three categories for the sake of simplification. The mean score for church attendance is calculated on the three-category response.

Standard deviations for mean scores in parentheses.

'Other' religious denomination excludes Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist. May include Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, other non-traditional Protestant sects, Afro-Brazilian spiritists (Umbanda, Candomblé), or other indigenous religions. NA = no answer.

Church attendance index represents a five-point scale with 5 = highest attendance.

***Significant at the 0.001 level.

Source: *World Values Survey 1991*.

TABLE 2
RELIGIOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE POPULATIONS IN FOUR LATIN
AMERICAN COUNTRIES, 1991

	Argentina (1978–2002)	Brazil (1771–1781)	Chile (1489–1500)	Mexico (1507–1531)	F
How often pray	2.6 (1.6)	3.4 (1.1)	3.0 (1.3)	2.8 (1.3)	98.7***
Religiosity index	20.2 (8.2)	24.6 (4.9)	22.7 (6.1)	21.6 (7.1)	113.5***
How important God	7.9 (2.7)	9.4 (1.6)	8.6 (2.3)	8.1 (2.5)	135.0***
How important religion	2.9 (1.1)	3.4 (0.9)	3.2 (0.9)	3.0 (0.9)	75.2***
Confidence in your Church	1.5 (1.1)	2.1 (1.0)	2.2 (0.9)	2.1 (0.9)	126.5***

Notes: Standard deviations for mean scores in parentheses.

Higher figures for all scales represent higher levels of the variable.

***Significant at the 0.001 level.

Source: *World Values Survey* 1991.

supply-side hypotheses (see Table 2), in support of hypothesis 3. While lower in church attendance, Brazilians and Chileans reveal themselves as more likely to pray than individuals in the other two countries. Likewise, on measures of the importance of God and one's religion, Brazil and Chile register significantly higher scores. A composite index of various religious belief indicators (see appendix) also indicates that Brazil and Chile have higher levels of religiosity, supporting the supply-side theory. One additional measure – confidence in one's own church – reveals the predicted pattern. In the three countries where the Catholic Church was relatively autonomous from the state – Brazil, Chile and Mexico – a confidence in religious organizations is high. Moreover, confidence in churches was high in the two most pluralistic environments, Brazil and Chile. Argentina scores particularly low on this category, which is not surprising given the Catholic Church's close affiliation with an unpopular dictatorship and monopoly status.³¹

Individual Level Analysis

Linear regression analysis is used to examine the relationship between religious affiliation and economic and political attitude among individual respondents. Realizing that a respondent's political attitudes can be shaped by a myriad of factors beyond religious affiliation and practice, regression allows us to observe the relative weight of religious variables when other demographic variables are held constant.³² It should be noted that the total amount of the variance in respondents' attitudes is quite low (with R^2 values often below 0.10). This is not uncommon in survey data given that the level of ambiguity in some of the attitudinal questions leads to greater

random variation in responses. Three different regression models were estimated for four different dependent variables across each of the four different countries (see Tables 3–6). The four dependent variables are: Economic Libertarian Index; Left-Right Ideological Scale; Civil Society Participation Index; and a Trust in Government Index. The segmentation of the regression models into different countries allows for a cross-national comparison to see whether religious factors play a more salient role in the formation of political and economic attitudes for individuals in some countries relative to others. This allows us to better test Hypothesis 5 wherein we predicted religious factors would play a greater role in shaping other attitudes in more religiously diverse and competitive environments. Different models within each country subdivision were calculated to explore the different dimensions of religiosity while avoiding problems of multicollinearity. For instance, model III goes beyond merely looking at denominational affiliation and seeks to isolate Protestants and Catholics who are regular churchgoers. Definitions of all variables used can be found in the appendix.

Overall, the central finding for this essay is that denominational affiliation had little impact on economic and political attitudes. Latin American Protestants and Catholics do not differ substantially in their political or economic preferences. Factors such as age, gender and socio-economic status carry much more explanatory weight in these models than denominational affiliation.³³ In other words, the data disproved hypotheses 1 and 2 that asserted Protestants would be qualitatively different in their attitudes than Catholics or the society at large. Even when specifically examining Protestants with a high degree of church attendance we see little difference between others in society. Such a finding may not, at initial glance, appear all that sexy for social scientists; scholars generally prefer ‘positive’ results that confirm the hypotheses they specify. However, scientific inquiry – and hence our knowledge about the social world – also relies upon finding evidence that disproves longstanding notions about what we think is true. This is especially the case when new forms of evidence – in this case survey results from four countries – are brought to bear on assertions based on other (often less rigorous) methodologies. The one exception to this overall finding occurs in Chile wherein Protestants have *less* favourable attitudes towards libertarian economic values as compared to non-Protestants. Mexican Protestants tended to be more favourable towards economic libertarianism, though the results were only significant at the 0.10 level.

This overall conclusion, that denominational affiliation is not correlated with the predicted political and economic attitudes, does not mean that religion is unimportant. Several interesting findings should be pointed out. Perhaps the most striking result is that in the two nations with the greatest degree of religious competition – Brazil and Chile – church attendance is

TABLE 3
OLS REGRESSIONS, FOUR LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, 1991 (DEPENDENT VARIABLE: LIBERTARIAN INDEX)

Model	Mexico			Argentina			Brazil			Chile		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Gender	-0.006	-0.010	0.015	0.073	0.080	0.080	0.144***	0.152***	0.150***	0.052	0.051	0.039
Age	0.128**	0.128**	0.121**	0.110	0.129 [†]	0.148*	0.166***	0.164***	0.187***	0.098**	0.092**	0.085**
Age finished school	0.080 [†]	0.085 [†]	0.091*	0.048	0.053	0.054	-0.027	-0.018	-0.014	0.012	0.003	-0.032
Income scale	0.082*	0.076 [†]	0.077*	0.084	0.086	0.108	0.041	0.054	0.047	0.062 [†]	0.069*	0.110***
Town size	-0.076 [†]	-0.094*	-0.072 [†]	0.025	0.026	0.025	-0.034	-0.040	-0.035	-0.016	-0.018	-0.007
Parent socialization	-0.011	-0.022	-0.022	0.025	0.016	0.002	0.070*	0.055 [†]	0.078*	0.010	0.007	0.018
Underemployed	0.035	0.034	0.034	0.026	0.028	0.034	-0.025	-0.025	0.004	0.005	0.005	-0.019
Professional	-0.017	-0.018	-0.038	0.158*	0.157*	0.135*	0.090**	0.088*	0.103	0.063 [†]	0.067*	0.057 [†]
Raised religious	-0.021	-0.023	0.008	-0.004	-0.030	-0.007	0.001	0.003	0.008	0.024	0.023	0.023
Prayer frequency	0.001	0.009	0.000	0.062	0.042	0.078	-0.025	-0.050	-0.006	-0.018	-0.017	0.006
Left-right ideology	0.088*	0.066	0.079*	0.072	0.085	0.096	0.029	0.020	0.008	0.059	0.060 [†]	0.070*
Religious belief	0.024	-	-	-0.024	-	-	-0.077*	-	-0.081*	0.003	-	-
Church attendance	-0.037	-0.021	-	-0.045	-0.054	-	0.009	-0.008	-	0.077*	0.071*	-
Protestant	0.074 [†]	0.068 [†]	-	0.090	0.085	-	0.043	0.041	-	-0.082*	-0.085**	-

(continued)

TABLE 3 CONTINUED

Model	Mexico			Argentina			Brazil			Chile		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Importance religion	-	-0.046	-0.001	-	-0.001	0.007	-	0.021	-	-	0.054	0.059
Importance of God	-	0.024	0.048	-	0.014	0.026	-	0.028	-	-	-0.033	-0.067 [†]
Catholic high attendance	-	-	-0.018	-	-	-0.083	-	-	-0.007	-	-	0.047
Protestant high attendance	-	-	0.067 [†]	-	-	0.070	-	-	0.056 [†]	-	-	-0.031
Sample size	654	637	721	270	263	273	883	877	1003	992	983	1201
Adjusted R ²	0.026	0.023	0.025	0.019	0.019	0.024	0.060	0.057	0.072	0.025	0.028	0.033
F	2.297**	2.012*	2.281**	1.403	1.335	1.474	5.075***	4.617***	6.628***	2.851***	2.940***	3.745***

Notes: Positive coefficients indicate a preference for political/economic liberalization.

Beta coefficients (excluding constant term) reported.

Collinearity diagnostics showed VIF < 2.0 for all independent variables in all models.

[†] p < 0.10.

*p < 0.05.

**p < 0.01.

***p < 0.001 two-tailed tests.

Source: *World Values Survey 1991*.

TABLE 4
OLS REGRESSIONS, FOUR LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, 1991 (DEPENDENT VARIABLE: LEFT-RIGHT IDEOLOGY)

Model	Mexico			Argentina			Brazil			Chile		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Gender	-0.035	-0.033	-0.041	0.088	0.102	0.112	-0.080*	-0.073*	-0.052	-0.103**	-0.089	-0.051
Age	0.019	0.028	0.017	0.008	-0.018	0.010	0.157***	0.151***	0.171***	0.028	0.023	0.036
Age finished school	0.029	0.041	0.021	-0.111	-0.106	-0.092	-0.054	-0.047	-0.072*	0.054	0.055	0.035
Income scale	0.062	0.054	0.045	0.150*	0.140*	0.142*	0.009	0.009	0.017	0.024	0.034	0.063*
Town size	-0.072†	-0.073†	-0.085*	0.038	0.027	0.035	0.011	0.016	-0.003	-0.048	-0.046	-0.043
Parent socialization	0.007	0.019	0.008	-0.040	-0.030	-0.016	0.051	0.058†	0.051	0.042	0.051	0.007
Underemployed	-0.018	-0.021	-0.047	0.114†	0.118†	0.139*	-0.020	-0.016	-0.013	0.047	0.050	0.058†
Professional	-0.087*	-0.078†	-0.056	-0.034	-0.036	-0.062	-0.103**	-0.106**	-0.090**	-0.039	-0.043	-0.021
Raised religious	0.075†	0.064	0.022	0.061	0.085	0.069	0.042	0.043	0.029	-0.028	-0.030	-0.002
Prayer frequency	0.078†	0.022	0.059	-0.033	-0.006	0.018	0.000	-0.020	-0.001	0.060†	0.035	0.094**
Religious belief	0.022	-	-	0.082	-	-	0.049	-	-	0.017	-	-
Church attendance	0.080†	0.061	-	0.157*	0.174**	-	0.047	0.044	-	-0.006	-0.016	-
Protestant	-0.059	-0.056	-	-0.115†	-0.113†	-	-0.034	-0.027	-	-0.029	-0.032	-

(continued)

TABLE 4 CONTINUED

Model	Mexico			Argentina			Brazil			Chile		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Importance religion	-	0.031	0.035	-	0.097	0.098	-	0.041	0.052	-	0.005	-0.032
Importance of God	-	0.150***	0.215***	-	-0.082	-0.053	-	0.067 [†]	0.039	-	0.098**	0.138***
Catholic high attendance	-	-	0.061	-	-	0.107 [†]	-	-	0.041	-	-	0.002
Protestant high attendance	-	-	-0.022	-	-	-0.075	-	-	0.031	-	-	-0.005
Sample size	658	641	725	271	264	274	885	879	1000	993	984	1202
Adjusted R ²	0.031	0.052	0.103	0.042	0.043	0.033	0.051	0.054	0.060	0.018	0.025	0.044
F	20.633***	30.571***	70.093***	10.953*	10.892*	10.700	40.747***	40.657***	50.603***	20.445**	20.811***	40.986***

Notes: Higher coefficients indicate greater preference for right-wing ideology.

Beta coefficients (excluding constant term) reported.

Collinearity diagnostics showed VIF < 2.0 for all independent variables in all models.

[†]p < 0.10.

*p < 0.05.

**p < 0.01.

***p < 0.001 two-tailed tests.

Source: *World Values Survey 1991*.

TABLE 5
OLS REGRESSIONS, FOUR LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, 1991 (DEPENDENT VARIABLE: CIVIC SOCIETY PARTICIPATION INDEX)

Model	Mexico			Argentina			Brazil			Chile		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Gender	0.025	0.024	0.019	0.148**	0.141*	0.132*	0.047	0.051	0.047	0.110***	0.113***	0.087**
Age	-0.040	-0.037	-0.038	0.067	0.033	0.026	-0.029	-0.035	-0.029	0.000	-0.011	-0.005
Age finished school	-0.003	0.017	0.008	0.169**	0.137*	0.145*	0.085*	0.091**	0.091**	0.045	0.042	0.053†
Income scale	0.128***	0.128***	0.107**	0.080	0.092†	0.078	0.059†	0.070*	0.061†	0.069*	0.077*	0.069*
Town size	0.056	0.064†	0.056	0.001	-0.004	-0.003	-0.032	-0.032	-0.045	-0.046	-0.040	-0.041
Parent socialization	0.025	0.024	0.022	-0.027	-0.014	-0.016	0.034	0.020	0.017	0.058†	0.053†	0.081**
Underemployed	-0.015	-0.020	-0.013	0.074	0.085	0.084	-0.044	-0.046	-0.030	0.039	0.042	0.010
Professional	0.013	0.020	-0.004	0.073	0.081	0.083	0.052	0.054†	0.056†	0.072*	0.075*	0.058*
Raised religious	0.020	0.010	0.037	-0.058	-0.021	-0.031	0.049	0.046	0.058*	0.038	0.035	0.026
Prayer frequency	0.073†	0.046	0.065	0.062	0.127*	0.132*	0.026	0.006	0.052†	0.061†	0.047	0.053†
Religious belief	-0.091*	-	-0.078†	-0.065	-	-	-0.061†	-	-0.064*	-0.050	-	-0.083**
Church attendance	0.057	0.036	-	0.001	0.007	-	0.174***	0.157***	-	0.111***	0.099**	-

(continued)

TABLE 5 CONTINUED

Model	Mexico			Argentina			Brazil			Chile		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Protestant Importance religion	-0.030	-0.030	-	-0.017	-0.015	-	0.055 [†]	0.047	-	-0.020	-0.030	-
Importance of God	-	-0.004	-	-	-0.053	-0.054	-	0.050	-	-	0.036	-
Catholic high attendance	-	0.011	-	-	-0.025	-0.007	-	0.003	-	-	-0.013	-
Protestant high attendance	-	-	0.032	-	-	0.039	-	-	0.087**	-	-	0.054 [†]
Sample size	-	-	0.000	-	-	-0.034	-	-	0.115***	-	-	0.030
Adjusted R ²	821	801	917	416	407	428	1026	1019	1170	1144	1132	1389
F	0.024	0.017	0.014	0.052	0.045	0.047	0.055	0.053	0.046	0.042	0.041	0.038
	20.581**	20.031*	10.979*	20.812***	20.416**	20.552***	50.648***	50.166***	50.368***	40.946***	40.489***	50.260***

Notes: Positive coefficients indicate greater participation in autonomous civic organizations.

Beta coefficients (excluding constant term) reported.

Collinearity diagnostics showed VIF < 2.0 for all independent variables in all models.

[†] p < 0.10.

* p < 0.05.

** p < 0.01.

*** p < 0.001 two-tailed tests.

Source: *World Values Survey 1991*.

TABLE 6
OLS REGRESSIONS, FOUR LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, 1991 (DEPENDENT VARIABLE: TRUST IN GOVERNMENT)

Model	Mexico			Argentina			Brazil			Chile		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Gender	-0.001	0.009	0.012	0.071	0.079	0.097	-0.007	-0.006	-0.014	0.081*	0.094*	0.045
Age	-0.016	-0.008	-0.010	0.071	0.052	0.060	0.038	0.039	0.039	0.111***	0.113***	0.096**
Age finished school	-0.100*	-0.091*	-0.099*	-0.201**	-0.189*	-0.181*	-0.032	-0.037	-0.020	-0.069†	-0.069†	-0.065*
Income scale	0.072†	0.070†	0.081*	-0.072	-0.081	-0.067	-0.142***	-0.158***	-0.131***	-0.021	-0.017	-0.014
Town size	-0.048	-0.054	-0.037	-0.001	0.005	-0.008	-0.057†	-0.050	-0.069*	-0.018	-0.021	-0.004
Parent socialization	-0.092*	-0.095*	-0.067†	-0.049	-0.034	-0.016	0.057†	0.078*	0.059†	0.042	0.056†	0.014
Underemployed	-0.016	-0.027	-0.030	-0.003	0.004	0.015	-0.009	-0.009	-0.022	0.038	0.035	-0.003
Professional	0.017	0.015	0.006	-0.038	-0.059	-0.031	-0.088**	-0.089**	-0.091**	-0.038	-0.044	-0.045
Left-right ideology	0.084*	0.057	0.077*	0.078	0.093	0.087	0.209***	0.215***	0.208***	0.101***	0.089**	0.112***
Raised religious frequency	-0.088*	-0.086*	-0.089*	0.038	0.055	0.034	-0.032	-0.039	-0.012	0.018	0.014	0.024
Prayer frequency	0.081*	0.074	0.072	0.034	0.031	0.018	0.035	0.049	0.035	0.013	0.009	0.060†
Religious belief	0.068	-	-	0.150*	-	0.142*	0.134***	-	0.151***	0.119***	-	0.133***

(continued)

TABLE 6 CONTINUED

Model	Mexico			Argentina			Brazil			Chile		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Church attendance	0.117**	0.115**	-	-0.009	0.014	-	0.085**	0.105**	-	0.023	0.018	-
Protestant Importance	-0.051	-0.042	-	0.015	0.015	-	-0.019	-0.005	-	-0.026	-0.014	-
religion	-	0.103*	0.136***	-	0.023	-	-	0.048	-	-	0.062 [†]	-
Importance of God	-	0.039	0.057	-	0.092	-	-	-0.012	-	-	0.086*	-
Catholic high attendance	-	-	0.058	-	-	0.001	-	-	0.056 [†]	-	-	0.021
Protestant high attendance	-	-	0.041	-	-	0.037	-	-	0.041	-	-	-0.012
Sample size	646	629	705	266	260	277	871	865	985	988	979	1210
Adjusted R ²	0.058	0.067	0.083	0.092	0.081	0.081	0.164	0.150	0.165	0.055	0.053	0.071
F	30.887***	40.061***	50.324***	30.033***	20.621***	20.835***	130.37***	110.37***	150.06***	50.203***	40.718***	70.676***

Notes: Positive coefficients indicate greater trust in governmental institutions. Beta coefficients (excluding constant term) reported.

Collinearity diagnostics showed VIF < 2.0 for all independent variables in all models.

[†]p < 0.10.

*p < 0.05.

**p < 0.01.

***p < 0.001 two-tailed tests.

Source: *World Values Survey* 1991.

highly correlated with participation in civic society; the more people attend church, the more they are likely to participate in other civic groups in society (see Table 5). Indeed, this is the strongest predictor of civic engagement in Brazil and is equivalent to gender in Chile. This is an important result given that many have argued that civic engagement forms the bedrock for a functioning democratic society.³⁴ Table 6 also reveals that people who have intense religious beliefs are more likely to trust the government in Brazil and Chile. Church attendance also plays an important role in fostering trust in the government in Mexico and Brazil. To the extent that a basic level of trust in governing institutions is vital for a functioning democracy, religion may be said to be laying the groundwork for more open and stable political institutions. Of course, blind trust in a government could lend itself to a vulnerability to authoritarian rule; questioning authority and a healthy scepticism of one's rulers is also vital for democratic governance. What is interesting, though, and contrary to the assertions of Deiros,³⁵ is that Protestants are not more likely than Catholics to exhibit trust in the government. Therefore, what Deiros saw as a passive trustworthiness in one's government among evangelical Protestants in Latin America may well be true for active Catholics; the effect is not denominational specific but is rather based upon one's immersion in religious belief and practice.

As for one's political ideology (see Table 4), the more a respondent considers God to be important in Mexico and Chile, the more likely they are to be conservative. In both cases, the 'importance of God' variable was the best predictor of one's political leanings, even outweighing demographic features typically related to ideology (e.g., gender, age). In Argentina, church attendance is also correlated with conservative political values. Since most Argentines were declared Catholics, and given that anti-progressive nature of the Church hierarchy, this result comes as no surprise. Correspondingly, Protestants tended to be more to the left of Catholics in Argentina.

Conclusion

When evidence from the 1990 World Values Survey is viewed in whole, it is clear that Weber is not at work in Latin America, at least in terms of the culturally defining role of Protestantism. Statements to the effect that evangelical Protestants are dramatically altering the political and economic landscape – either by making it more amenable or less amenable to classical liberal values – are, according to the evidence seen here, overdrawn. In most cases, Protestants and Catholics do not differ dramatically in their political and economic attitudes. Such a finding goes against what many have written about Protestant movements in the past, though corresponds with other survey research conducted on Protestant beliefs in Central America.³⁶ To some

extent, religion tended to play a more salient role in the more religiously diverse countries of Brazil and Chile, though Mexico too witnessed some interplay between religious belief (and practice) and attitudinal measures. The adversarial history of church and state in Mexico over the past century would naturally motivate the clergy to mobilize their parishioners in the face of legal hostility to their institution. What we can learn from this cross-national variation is that future studies of religious values should consider the institutional and structural context of the situation under observation. Values and norms do not arise in a vacuum, but can be shaped by the institutional incentives facing individuals at any particular moment or place. As this research has shown, there is a connection between different forms of 'religious economies' and the nature and strength of religious values and how those values shape political attitudes. For too long, research agendas examining either culture or institutions have remained separate from one another. Developing and testing a comprehensive theory of how both culture and institutions affect one another will be invaluable to the study of religion and politics, not to mention the realm of social science more generally.

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NOTES

1. Elizabeth Brusco, *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995).
2. Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1966).
3. Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).
4. Pablo A. Deiros, 'Protestant Fundamentalism in Latin America', in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds), *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and Rowan Ireland, 'The *Crentes* of Campo Alegre and the Religious Construction of Brazilian Politics', in Virginia Garrard-Burnett and David Stoll (eds), *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993).
5. Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).
6. Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
7. Carolyn M. Warner, *Confessions of an Interest Group* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Stathis Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1996).
8. Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

9. W.E. Hewitt, *Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).
10. Jean Duedelin and W.E. Hewitt, 'Latin American Politics: Exit the Catholic Church?', in Satya R. Patnayak (ed.), *Organized Religion in the Political Transformation of Latin America* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995).
11. It appears as if Protestant growth first 'exploded' in Latin America in the 1980s and that scholarship picked up on this trend in the early 1990s. However, there was scholarly research on this topic dating back to the 1960s that indicated Protestantism was growing rapidly well before the 1980s. See David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990); and David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990). See also Emilio Willems, *Followers of the New Faith: Cultural Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967); and Christian Lalive d'Epinay, *Haven of the Masses: A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969).
12. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973).
13. Timothy J. Steingenga and Kenneth Coleman, 'Protestant Political Orientations and the Structure of Political Opportunity: Chile, 1972–1991', *Polity*, Vol.27, No.3 (1995), pp.465–82; Roderic Ai Camp, 'The Cross in the Polling Booth: Religion, Politics, and the Laity in Mexico', *Latin American Research Review*, Vol.29, No.3 (1994), pp.69–100; and Edwin Eloy Aguilar, José Miguel Sandoval, Timothy J. Steingenga and Kenneth Coleman, 'Protestantism in El Salvador: Conventional Wisdom versus Survey Evidence', *Latin American Research Review*, Vol.28, No.2 (1993), pp.119–40. While excellent studies in their own right, none of these studies examined more than one country at a time. This study seeks to place the debate on Protestantism in a more comparative perspective.
14. Ireland (note 4).
15. Deiros (note 4) p.172. Deiros makes the specious claim that right-wing regimes naturally favoured laissez-faire capitalism, when in reality many of these military governments pursued corporatist policies that were more interventionist than some of their civilian predecessors. See Glen Biglaiser, *Guardians of the Nation: Economists, Generals and Economic Reform in Latin America* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002). Deiros also uses the term 'fundamentalist' interchangeably with 'evangelical Protestants' (namely Pentecostals) and notes that in recent decades 'fundamentalists' constitute the vast majority of Latin American Protestants.
16. James D. Sexton, 'Protestantism and Modernization in Two Guatemalan Towns,' *American Ethnologist*, Vol.5, No.2 (1978), pp.280–302; and Liliana R. Goldin and Brent Metz, 'An Expression of Cultural Change: Invisible Converts to Protestantism among Highland Guatemala Mayas,' *Ethnology*, Vol.30, No.4 (1991), pp.325–38.
17. Neo-liberalism is generally associated with less government interference in the economy, notably free trade, deregulated labour markets and tight monetary policies.
18. W.K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England*, Vol.1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), pp.31–40; and Wald (note 6) pp.40–67.
19. Ireland (note 4) p.45.
20. *Ibid*, pp.63–4.
21. Deiros (note 4) p.175.
22. Michael Fleet and Brian H. Smith, *The Catholic Church and Democracy in Chile and Peru* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), p. 177.
23. Laurence R. Iannaccone, 'The Consequences of Religious Market Structure: Adam Smith and the Economics of Religion', *Rationality and Society*, Vol.3, No.3 (1991), pp.156–77; Anthony Gill, *Rendering Unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000). See also R. Stephen Warner, 'Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.98, No.5 (1993), pp.1044–93.

24. Laurence R. Iannaccone, 'Religious Practice: A Human Capital Approach', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol.29, No.3 (1990), pp.297–314.
25. David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). The figures presented include doubly-affiliated Christians, which make it difficult to get a precise estimate of the number of Protestants actually existing in the nation.
26. Gill, *Rendering Unto Caesar* (note 23) pp.166–70.
27. Anthony Gill, 'The Politics of Regulating Religion in Mexico: The 1992 Constitutional Reforms in Historical Context', *Journal of Church and State*, Vol.41, No.4 (1999), pp.761–94.
28. One of the problems with cross-national surveys is that different response terms may imply substantively different meanings to respondents. Many evangelical Christians in Latin America belong to independent, non-denominational churches thus may have a difficult time fitting into one of the survey's predetermined categories. The low response rate for Chile may also be due to the fact that the survey was conducted during the last several months of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1990; as religious affiliation was often linked to one's political leanings, there may have been a reluctance to self-identify.
29. Gill, 'The Politics of Regulating' (note 27).
30. Emilio F. Mignone, *Witness to the Truth: The Complicity of Church and Dictatorship in Argentina, 1976–83*, trans, Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).
31. Ibid.
32. To facilitate a comparison of the relative weight of each independent variable in explaining the dependent variable, standardized beta coefficients are reported. This is a common technique used in survey research where measurement scales differ (as they do in the World Values Survey). A standardized beta coefficient is simply the beta coefficient divided by the standard error. The larger the standardized beta in absolute terms, the greater weight that variable has in accounting for variation on the dependent variable.
33. A detailed line-by-line analysis of each independent variable is not presented here given space considerations and that the primary focus is on religion.
34. Putnam (note 3).
35. Deiros (note 4).
36. Aguilar (note 13).

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Author's address for correspondence: Anthony Gill, Political Science, Box 353530, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195-3530, USA.

Appendix: Description of Variables and Indices

Gender	0 = female; 1 = male
Age	Actual age of respondent (0–99).
Age finished school	10 point scale with higher scores representing greater schooling.
Income scale	10 point scale with higher scores representing greater income.
Professional employee	0 = not professional; 1 = professional. Professional includes white collar, managerial, educational and government employees.
Size of Town	8 point scale with higher scores representing larger towns/cities.

Married	0 = not currently married; 1 = currently married.
Underemployed	0 = not underemployed; 1 = underemployed (unemployed or working less than 30 hrs. per week).
Church attendance	0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally (holidays); 3 = monthly; (regression analyses only)*; 4 = weekly; 5 = more than once a week.
Raised religious	0 = not raised religious; 1 = raised religious.
Frequency of prayer	0 = never; 1 = crisis only; 2 = rarely; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often.
Protestant	0 = not Protestant; 1 = Protestant (incl. main-line, evangelical and 'other').
Left-right ideology	10 point scale with 1 = far left and 10 = far right.
Importance of religion	1 = not at all; 2 = not very; 3 = quite; 4 = very important.
Importance of God	10 point scale with 1 = not at all important and 10 = very important.
Catholic high attendance	1 = Catholic with weekly or weekly + church attendance; 0 = otherwise.
Protestant high attendance	1 = Protestant with weekly or weekly + church attendance; 0 = otherwise.
Confidence in church	0 = none at all; 1 = not very much; 2 = quite a lot; 3 = a great deal.
Religious Belief Index	(cumulative score of the following response categories). <i>The following responses were coded as -1 = not agree; 0 = neither; +1 = agree:</i> Life is meaningful because God exists. Death has a meaning only if you believe in God. Sorrow and suffering only have meaning if you believe in God. <i>The following responses were coded as 0 = no; 1 = yes:</i> Belief in God ... life after death ... a soul ... the devil ... hell ... heaven ... sin ... resurrection from the dead ... reincarnation

Libertarian Index

(Cumulative score of the following response categories; 10 point scale of opposing values where 10 = greater preference for libertarian alternative):

Incomes should be equal vs greater incentives for individual effort.

Government ownership of business vs private ownership of business.

State should take responsibility for welfare vs. individuals should be responsible.

Competition is harmful vs competition is good.

Hard work isn't rewarded vs hard work is eventually rewarded.

Zero-sum wealth creation vs. positive-sum wealth creation.

Civic Society

Participation Index

(Cumulative score of following response categories where 0 = does not belong and 1 = belongs to listed organization; all organizations refer to non-governmental organizations). Civil Society Index 1 includes all groups listed below. Civil Society Index 2 excludes participation in religious groups.

Social welfare services

Education, arts, music or culture

Local community action on political/social issues

Third World development or human rights

Conservation/environment/ecology

Youth groups

Sports and recreation

Women's groups

Peace movement

Animal rights

Voluntary health organizations

Other groups

Government Trust
Index

(Cumulative score for the following response categories were 0 = no trust at all; 1 = not very much trust; 2 = quite a lot of trust; 3 = a great deal of trust):

The armed forces

The education system

The legal system

The police

Parliament (national legislature)

Civil service



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