

CHAPTER TWO

RELIGION AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM
IN MODERN EUROPE

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1 *Introduction*

Europe is united by a common heritage of Christianity, and divided by the aftermath of the Reformation wars. The contrast between the Protestant regions of Northern Europe and the Catholic regions of Southern Europe has inspired many sociological studies. Troeltsch, Brentano, Weber, Halévy, and Merton have forwarded theories about the consequences of the Protestant Reformation for the modernization of Europe. The most famous is, of course, Max Weber's study of how the Protestant idea of the worldly calling and the ascetic Protestant's quest for signs of salvation paved the way for legitimizing the modern spirit of Capitalism.¹ The closing chapter of *The Protestant Ethic* ends by relegating the difference to the era of early capitalism. Today we are caught in an iron cage of materialism and means-ends-rationality. This passage has inspired numerous theories concerning modernization, secularization and confessional convergence.

In section 2 below, the historical background for the differences between Protestants and Catholics is explored and how religious features are intertwined with societal structures. Section 3 presents Weber's ideal types in order to clarify where later research deviates from his typology. Section 4 presents empirical research on differences in economic ethics between religious groups in a modern, European context. Section 5 argues for three hypotheses about religious differences in economic ethics. Section 6 discusses the first hypothesis which is

¹ The main argument of this famous essay rests on distinctions between Catholic and Protestant ethics, and between the spirit of adventure-capitalism, exemplified by the Fuggers, and the spirit of modern capitalism, exemplified by Franklin. The latter spirit is tempered and legitimized by the ideals forwarded by Ascetic Protestantism.

that there are denominational differences in the orientation toward work. In section 7, the second hypothesis is discussed which assumes that there are denominational differences in the orientation to material goods. Section 8 focusses on the third hypothesis about denominational differences in individualism. In section 9, these three hypotheses are contrasted with a fourth which predicts that religion has become irrelevant for the ethics of modern capitalism. However, this explanation is supplemented by the idea that Catholicism may have aligned its ethics with the social conditions of modern capitalism.

2 *The historical background of the European divide*

In this chapter, Europe is confined to Western-Europe. This sub-continent is a patchwork of nations and ethnic groups, each with their own historical identity and long memories of strife. Religion has been both the great unifier and the great divider in Europe. The Reformation wars cast long shadows in social history. The differences between Catholicism and Protestantism have inspired many scholars (e.g., Weber, Halévy & Thompson, Merton). In their works, Protestantism is ascribed an active role in forwarding modern society, whereas Catholicism implicitly or explicitly is ascribed the role of the traditionalist laggard. All these theses have emerged at the beginning of this century. The main question is whether the split between Protestants and Catholics is still there today in advanced industrial Europe.

Stein Rokkan's (1973, 1980) mapping of the European political cultures pointed at two major lines of division: A north-south axis, where the religious factor is important, in combination with other factors, such as the formation of independent nation states and the establishment of vernacular languages. The east-west axis concerns the split between the coastal regions of commerce, and the inland regions of feudal agrarian production.

The north-south line demarcates where the power of the Roman empire and Latinization waned, and the powers of independent German, Gaul and Celtic chiefs were maintained. Christian religion expanded beyond this zone, aided by the expansion of Carolingian feudalism. However, the north-south line came to demarcate the range of Papal powers. Beyond this line, the real rulers of the local

church were the kings and chieftains. The Reformation movement began in the zone of exchange between north and south, but as the North became Protestant strongholds, the denominational cleavages came to coincide with the old historic divide.

Because of the Reformation, local rulers could expand their power and reorganize public services under the crown. Translation of the Bible into vernacular languages helped to establish local cultures, and to diminish the *lingua communa* of Vulgate. Through the reformation wars, religion became an expression of national loyalties, as well as spiritual aims.

Problems arose in those nations where the secular powers could not monopolize religion. Germany was an instance, and the famous Weber-theses was influenced by the experience of mixing Bavarian-Catholics and Prussian-Lutherans in Bismarck's melting pot.

3 *The Protestant Ethic thesis revisited*

The argument of the Protestant Ethic thesis rests on the ideal types: Ascetic Protestantism and the spirit of rationalized Capitalism.² Asceticism is characterized as a dual attitude toward the world, where one lives *in* this world, not *for* it. It leads to a state of tension, which may provide a strong motive for committed action. Protestantism transferred Christian Asceticism from the monasteries to common life, through the dogma of the calling. The idea of calling may take a traditional form, which obliges a human being to remain faithfully in the ascribed position, or it may lead to a search for signs that point at one's place in God's providential plan. Succeeding in one's calling may lead to wealth as a sign of God's grace and as means for the benefit of the common weal. The notion about God's providence was stated with the most forceful psychological effect through the dogma of predestination, emphasized by the Calvinists. Religious virtuosi following this dogma were forced into self-disciplined work in their calling, to God's grace and the common well-being of their neighbours. Puritans come quite close to the ideal type, while other

² The discussion at hand does not aim at discussing the relation between the capitalist spirit and capitalism as an economic system.

varieties of Protestantism and monastic orders may come close to some points, and remain far removed on others.

The 'spirit of capitalism' is illustrated by Franklin's *Necessary hints to whose that would be rich* (1736) and *Advice to a young tradesman* (1748). It is distinguished by its ethical fervor from similar-sounding expressions of greed or utilitarianism. Franklin's views on the moral duty to perform one's deed of a covenant expressed a divine revelation. This differs on the one hand from traditionalism, and on the other from the ancient motive of profiteering, an amoral 'adventurer capitalism'. Thereby, the spirit of capitalism can be specified as seeking accumulation of capital by peaceful trade as an ethical duty.

In the short heroic era of early capitalism, the motive of capital accumulation had to be legitimized by religion, as an inner drive. Today, the motive of accumulation of capital has become an external obligation, induced by the rationale of the capitalist system. 'Weber's thesis' thus demonstrates the transformation from one ideal type (the Protestant Ethic) to another (the modern Spirit of Capitalism), which simultaneously implies a change in the type of rationality, from *Wertrationalität*, where salvation is the focal value which determines the self-disciplined acts, and the calling is regarded as an assignment from God, to *Zweckrationalität*, where acts are determined by calculating means and ends and the calling is an obligation to act prudently and economically for one's own profit and for the common wealth. This transformation simultaneously expresses a process of *Entzauberung*, with the rise of a new world view which deprecates the wonders of divine creation by regarding nature and human beings as mere means.

4 *Survey analyses of the Weber thesis*

Several studies have tried to test whether Protestantism still has 'an elective affinity'³ to the ethos of modern Capitalism. Lenski (1963) found that Jews and white Protestants in Michigan identified with 'the individualistic, competitive patterns of thought and action linked with the middle class and historically associated with the Protestant ethic or its secular counterpart, the spirit of capitalism. By contrast,

³ Using Parsons' misleading translation of Goethe's term '*Wahlverwandschaft*'.

Catholics and Negro Protestants have more often been associated with collectivist, security-oriented, working class patterns of thought and action . . . ' (Lenski, 1963: 113). Lenski's work has been much criticized. Greeley thus pointed out that the data show no or only minor differences between Protestants and Catholics regarding economic status mobility, ambitions, attitudes to work, status, orientation to savings, or seeing God as endorsing economic efforts (Greeley, 1964: 376-377). The only solid difference demonstrated by Lenski (1963: 387) is that Catholics are more oriented toward trade unions. Lenski admits this but continues by comparisons between persons raised in similar settings. It is certainly necessary to bring intervening factors under control in a causal analysis, but this would imply that conclusions are based on very small samples. Efforts to replicate his results have been unsuccessful, especially outside the US (Lipset & Bendix, 1955; Bouma, 1973). Because of the lack of empirical corroboration and the rather primitive classification of religious positions, Greeley (1964) called for 'a Moratorium'.

Despite this, Listhaug and Lindseth (1994) tried to replicate Lenski's study on the basis of the EVS 90 data.⁴ Their analyses⁵ indicate that a) the Protestant Ethic is not a unidimensional concept, b) different operationalisations of the Protestant Ethic leads to diverging results, c) the pattern seems to be ascribable to national rather than to denominational differences.

The authors do not go into this latter point. Instead they delve into the religiously mixed countries in a multiple regression analysis controlling for the impact of sex, age, religious domination, the degree of religious commitment, and social class. The most important factor appears to be social class. No significant impact of religious denomination on work values was found. 'Social class is the only

⁴ The units of the analysis were nations and religiously mixed countries (Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Netherlands, West Germany) were split into a Protestant and a Catholic population. Members of other denominations were excluded. The analysis was thus rather crude with respect to the religious indicator, and Bouma's suggestion to define the type of religious belief, i.e., belief in predestination, was not followed here.

⁵ They operationalised the Protestant work ethic with four indices. The first one was based on Lenski's items. The second added some further items to the list. A third index on motivation for work was added. The fourth index combined preferences for competition and hard work.

variable that records a consistent impact on work values. The relationship goes in the expected direction with the higher classes having stronger work-directed values' (Listhaug & Lindseth, 1994: 95). Religiosity as such had a positive effect on work values, but only in Great Britain and West Germany. The multivariate analyses could not confirm Lenski's conclusion that the religious factor continues to exert its influence in advanced industrial society.

One could, of course, question the lack of elaboration on the religious dimension in their analysis. Lumping together various types of Protestantism in one common category is problematic if we keep in mind Weber's ideal type of ascetic Protestantism.⁶ A distinction should at least be made between membership of Protestant mainline churches, i.e., Lutherans and Anglicans, and free Protestant churches, i.e., Baptists and Jehovah's Witnesses. Besides, Calvinists should be subject to special comparisons whenever possible. That way we still would not have a complete correspondence with Weber's ideal type of Ascetic Protestantism, but it would bring the analyses a step closer.

One further general problem regards the operationalisation of the 'spirit of modern capitalism'. Efforts have been made by Granato et al. (1996) to illuminate the acquisition motive through the EVS material. Their analyses are based on the following question: 'Here is a list of qualities which children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if, any, do you consider being especially important?' According to Granato et al., two of the items indicated an achievement motivation according to the ideas of McClelland.⁷ These items were 'thrif', specified further as 'saving money and things', and 'determination', specified further as 'perseverance'. Furthermore, two other items seem to contradict achievement motivation by reflecting conformity to traditional social norms, such as 'obedience' and 'religious faith'. The index is therefore based on adding the two former items and deducting the two latter ones. Against the background of the whole discussion of the Weber-thesis, including Inglehart's (1990), further arguments are needed for positioning 'religious faith' on the side of anti-achievement.⁸ This combination of items is hardly

⁶ Also, Catholicism can hardly be regarded as a unified creed with respect to its economic ethics.

⁷ Though hardly according to the ideas of Weber.

⁸ Inglehart (1990: 124) has pointed out that Judeo-Christian norms tend to be most

convincing. Furthermore, national variations on these items seem to depend on associations raised by the wording of these items rather than on comparable value patterns.

Most of the studies inspired by Lenski use a broad set of economic indicators and attitudes which do not pinpoint Weber's specification of the concept. Indicators such as social mobility, self-employment, savings, or entrepreneurship might as well point at what Weber regards as 'adventurer capitalism'. In order to test Weber's thesis, we not only need information about religious membership but we also need to know to what extent people have internalized the economic ethics of their churches, whether they regard themselves as members of an ascetic elite, seeking for signs in their work and their ethical life that indicate whether they are elected to a state of grace. The available data do not fulfill such ideal requirements. As a minimal measure we may look at how committed members of various confessional groups regard work.

5 Hypotheses

The discussions above led to a set of partially contradictory hypotheses regarding the present-day consequences of Weber's thesis. Lenski's arguments for a continuation of the confessional impact on the economic ethics leads to three hypotheses which relate to Weber's study. The first concerns work as a calling. It states that confessional differences in the view on work are still discernible.

H1) work is ascribed an intrinsic value as a calling from God among committed members of ascetic Protestant denominations, less so among mainline Protestant churches, and least among Roman Catholics.⁹

firmly espoused by the Materialist value type, i.e., by persons who give highest priority to economic and physical security. The national variation of the Achievement Motivation Index seems rather odd. For instance, the US is on a par with Turkey, Brazil, Ireland, Spain, and India (Inglehart, 1997: 223). Furthermore, its correlation with the rate of capital economic growth depends mainly on contrasting Africa and East Asia. As for Europe, the correlation is very low.

⁹ It is not at all clear that a job-orientation may be regarded as a type of calling. It is entirely possible that the Protestant Ethic has become dissipated and secularized in modern times. That is, in fact, the essence of Weber's final remarks in his essay.

Weber did not present his thesis in an intellectual void. The thesis was influenced by the German Kulturkampf between the industrialized Protestant north and the agrarian Catholic south. The problem of Weber's contemporaries was not to demonstrate that Protestants were more adapted to a capitalist society than Catholics, but to explain this adaptation.

Karl Marx indicated an affinity between Protestantism and Capitalism: 'The religious world is but the reflection of the real world. And for a society based upon the production of commodities, . . . Christianity with its *cultus* of abstract man, more specifically in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism etc., is the most fitting form of religion' (Marx, 1954: 83).¹⁰ Georg Simmel argued that money becomes the center of interest of marginalized individuals and classes, such as members of Protestant sects, i.e., the Huguenots, the Quakers, or the Herrnhuter (Simmel, 1978: 221). So there are good theoretical arguments for proposing a hypothesis which links religious conviction to material acquisition, even if we disregard Weber.

One of the characteristics of modern capitalism, according to several scholars, is the importance attached to money and material goods, or covetousness. This point was especially stressed by Werner Sombart (1902, 1913). This motive is not related to a Protestant ethic, but rather to the cynical stance of capitalist tycoons. An entrepreneur who was truly an ascetic Protestant in Weber's sense would seriously doubt whether an acquisitive attitude to wealth is ethically defensible as it may turn a person away from God's cause.¹¹

Such arguments show that a distinction should be made between several types of economic motives, and especially between the Weberian orientation toward work as a sacred calling on the one hand and the motive of acquisition of money on the other. One way to circumvent this dilemma is by regarding the Weber-thesis as a special case of a more general motive, which also includes features of the

¹⁰ Marx also argued that the monetary system is essentially Catholic while the credit system is essentially Protestant (MEW 25.3: 606).

¹¹ Weber emphatically stressed that covetousness or profit-seeking had no relation in itself with capitalism in the introduction which he added for the *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*: 'Erwerbstrieb, "Streben nach Gewinn", nach Geldgewinn, nach möglichst hohem Geldgewinn hat an sich mit Kapitalismus gar nichts zu schaffen' (Weber, 1975: 12).

Marx-thesis. McClelland (1961, 1963) for instance, argues for an Achievement-motivation. According to him, some cultures in some periods are especially oriented toward socializing children to regard economic achievement as a positive goal. Such an orientation is often followed by economic dynamism. A hypothesis derived from the Marx-Simmel-McClelland theses states that:

H2) Protestants are more oriented towards accumulation of wealth than Roman Catholics.¹²

Individualization is often referred to as a characteristic feature of a capitalist value system. The theme of individualism was already mentioned by Durkheim, who in his famous study on suicide argued that Protestants were more individualistically oriented than Catholics. Several church historians, such as Ernst Troeltsch, argued that Protestantism enhanced an individualistic orientation by confronting the human being directly with the almighty God, and Weber followed this line by pointing out the inner isolation of especially Calvinists and Puritans. This leads to the hypothesis that:

H3) Protestants are more individualistically oriented than Roman Catholics, especially with respect to morality.

Over these hypotheses we may put one derived from Weber's iron cage thesis. From being a determinant factor in the formation of societal values and ideology, religion has become marginal and dependent on developments of the economic and administrative system.¹³ This line of argument can find support in a wide range of modern sociological theories. This argument could be forwarded as a hypothesis:

H4) Denominational differences regarding economic ethical issues, i.e. work, materialism and individualism, are small since these values are mainly determined by economic structures, and because the economic structures have converged in modern, capitalist Europe.

¹² Following Sombart, it is not necessary to stress ascetic Protestantism here. Weber would probably add that wealth is also seen by truly ascetic Protestants as a temptation for pleasure and leisure which must be castigated in order to use it prudently according to God's will as a tool for investment and production.

¹³ Material goods were regarded by Baxter as a light mantle on the shoulders of the pious, but they have turned into a steel cage. 'Indem die Askese in die Welt umzubauen und in der Welt sich auszuwirken unternahm, gewannen die äusseren Güter dieser Welt zunehmende und schliesslich unentrinnbare Macht über den Menschen, wie niemals zuvor in der Geschichte' (Weber, 1975: 188).

6 Denominational differences in intrinsic work orientation

The analysis is based on individual response patterns across Western Europe.¹⁴ Such an approach is closer to Weber's methodological individualism, though it may lump together response patterns which are specific to each nation (Halman & Vloet, 1994).¹⁵ One major result from the EVS study is that work forms a central part of people's identity and value system. In Western Europe, work tops the list of core values, next to the family. Work has, however, several aspects. Understood as labour, work covers physical activities which provide means for consumption and production. Understood as craft, work covers social and creative activities which have developed the means of production to the state of advanced industrialism.

The EVS questionnaire contains a list of fifteen job characteristics and respondents were asked to indicate the importance of each of them. Analyses yielded three clusters of work qualities, and one of these can be interpreted as an intrinsic orientation to work, or work as a craft. Qualities such as 'opportunity to use your initiative', 'responsible', 'you feel you can achieve something', 'meets your abilities', 'interesting', may be combined into a simple, additive index which is related to other attitudes to work,¹⁶ such as whether 'a decrease in the future importance of work is bad'.¹⁷ However, an intrinsic work orientation does not imply an orientation toward hard work.¹⁸

Preliminary tests support the first hypothesis since the average number of these five qualities mentioned is 2.7 for the whole sample, 2.9 among members of mainline Protestant churches, i.e., Anglicans,

¹⁴ Comparisons of overall figures for nations are not the best way to investigate religion as an individual motive for economic ethics. Such cross national comparisons may lead to conclusions which rest on an ecological fallacy.

¹⁵ France, UK, Western Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Ireland, Iceland. Mean index values are weighed according to population size.

¹⁶ A high degree of intrinsic work-orientation is empirically correlated with job satisfaction and freedom to take decisions in one's job. However, since the coefficients are rather weak, these issues are not identical.

¹⁷ Respective averages for those who agree and disagree are 2.38 and 2.73.

¹⁸ Those who mention hard work as a desirable quality for their children tend to score lower on the index of intrinsic work than those who do not, the respective averages being 2.43 and 2.59.

Lutherans and Dutch Reformed, and 2.4 among members of the Roman Catholic church. These differences are statistically significant. However, national variations in these indices are noticeable. Among the unchurched, the mean is 2.6, which is quite close to the total mean. However, this empirical distinction is far too rough to grasp the subtle distinction between religious groups and types of members made by Weber.

Table 2.1 Intrinsic work orientation* in religious and professional groups

	Roman Catholics	Mainline Protestants	Free Churches	All including non-members
Employer	2.7	3.3	3.1	2.9
Professional/ Middle-level non-manual	2.9	3.5	3.5	3.1
Junior level non-manual	2.6	3.2	2.9	2.7
Foreman/skilled worker	2.5	2.9	3	2.6
Semi-skilled/ unskilled worker	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.1
Farmer/agricultural worker	1.8	2.6	1.5	2
All	2.4	2.9	2.9	2.7

* Mean index value on five items, Western Europe 1990, weighted

There is a relation between people's work and their tendency to stress intrinsic work-values. People who are employed in jobs characterized by formal training, high status, leadership, responsibility are more likely to mention intrinsic work values than those in low-status jobs. The major religious groups of this study are not evenly composed of job types. The job distribution among Roman Catholics and Protestants is similar, while there is a disproportionate number of members of the free churches that work as Professionals or middle-level non-manual workers. Therefore, comparisons between the religious groups should control for the effects of people's jobs. As national samples are too small for a statistically satisfactory control, all the West-European data available have been combined.

Table 2.1 demonstrates that Roman Catholics are somewhat less

oriented toward the intrinsic values of work than both Protestant groups. This difference is not great, though it is statistically significant within all job categories. Weber stressed the differences between the Protestant fractions. Calvinists are assumed to be closer to the ideal type of Ascetic Protestantism than Pietists, Baptists, Methodists, or Lutherans. It is not possible to further distinguish Protestant churches in the combined data set, but we may focus on members of Protestant free churches, such as Baptists, Pentecostals, Dutch Re-reformed, or Mormons. The distinction between mainline Protestants and non-conformist Protestants is admittedly not sharp. Nevertheless, the category of the free church members can be expected to correspond more closely with ascetic Protestantism than mainline Protestantism. Despite this, the findings demonstrate that mainline Protestants and members of free churches are highly similar in their intrinsic work orientation, even when the type of job is controlled for.

Because of the broadness of the category of free churches, this analysis must be followed up by comparative studies of social settings where Roman Catholics and Calvinists are confronted: the Netherlands, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. As for the Netherlands, two major churches are based on Calvinism: the Dutch reformed and the Re-reformed. Both cover a wide range of theological fractions, although the Re-reformed is generally considered more orthodox. The most striking outcome is that differences in work ethic are very small between these three religious communities, despite their different dogmatic traditions. In the few questions where significant differences emerge, members of the Dutch Reformed church seem more work-oriented. These refer to whether one considers work as important in one's life, whether one's children ought to learn to work hard, and whether social utility is an important aspect of work. Members of the Re-reformed church are not more work-oriented than Roman Catholics. These results are not affected by narrowing them down to those who are actually employed. This contradicts H1 on how ascetic Protestantism may inspire a work-orientation. Thus, the Dutch case does not provide any support for the Weber-inspired thesis.

Scotland includes two major religious communities: the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic church. The former is inspired by both the Presbyterian-Calvinist tradition of John Knox and the Anglican tradition developed south of the border. The index for the intrinsic valuation of work is 2.0 for Roman Catholics and 2.6 for

members of the Church of Scotland.¹⁹ It is especially based on denominational differences on one issue from the scale, namely the importance of using one's initiative in a job. A similar difference can be found in the proportion of people who would find it a good thing if there were less emphasis on work in the future: 42% for Catholics, compared with 26% for Protestants. This difference is highly significant. Therefore, some support can be found for H1 in Scotland.²⁰

Northern Ireland is characterized by three major religious communities: The Roman Catholic, the Church of Ireland, and the Presbyterian church. There appear to be no significant differences between these communities regarding their work-orientation. Therefore, despite the existence of clearly diverse denominational groups, the case of Northern Ireland does not support H1.

It must be concluded from these national cases that the Weber-inspired thesis can only be partially supported in the case of Scotland. There is no convincing evidence that members of churches which are historically based on ascetic Protestantism are more oriented toward intrinsic values of work. The conclusion on H1 does not necessarily imply that Protestants and Catholics in modern Europe have similar views on work. An inductive analysis of the work values demonstrates value differences on another dimension than the extrinsic-intrinsic one. In most Protestant countries,²¹ the top-ranking quality of work is 'pleasant people to work with', while the top-ranking quality is 'good pay' in most Catholic countries (Riffault, 1995: 36). This juxtaposition does not follow logically from the Weber-thesis. Analyses at an individual level across Western Europe confirm that Protestants tend to stress the ambience of the workplace more than Roman Catholics. Thus, pleasant colleagues are mentioned by 59% of the Roman Catholics, 71% of the mainline Protestants and 75% of the nonconformist Protestants. This finding could lead us to seek for a reformulation of the first hypothesis. However, it is

¹⁹ Which is significant at 5% level.

²⁰ As differences between these communities with respect to job satisfaction are non-significant, the difference in attitudes to work can be interpreted as expressing an ethical view.

²¹ This is not easily observable in Riffault's study, since she only includes one Scandinavian country. The countries where most people mention 'pleasant people to work with' are in Riffault's study: Western Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal. We can add Iceland, Norway, and Sweden to the list, and thus underline the regional pattern.

questionable whether this difference can be ascribed to the religious factor. Firstly, intra-national differences between denominations are non-significant. Secondly, it should be noted that the people in the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland are generally similar regarding their views on job qualities, despite denominational differences.

One further step toward testing the first hypothesis is distinguishing between more and less committed members of the religious groups. Here, the hypothesis can not be confirmed. The respondents were asked to indicate the importance of God using a figure from 1 = none to 10 = very much. The correlation coefficient between the index of intrinsic work values and this index of religious commitment is low for the whole sample (-0.045). The correlations are not statistically significant for either Roman Catholics or for mainline Protestants. In these cases, people's religious commitment does not seem to influence their work ethic. Therefore, the results of our analyses indicate that work values in Northern and Southern Europe are dependent on other social factors than religion, which points in the direction of the alignment-thesis.

7 *Denominational differences in acquisitiveness*

The hypothesis refers to a specific denominational orientation toward money and material resources. However, it does not refer to the type of capitalist spirit described by Weber, but rather to the one described by Sombart.

Regrettably, the European Survey Study does not provide issues which illustrate adequate distinctions between various attitudes to money and material rewards. Some issues may be used, however, as a preliminary operationalisation. One of the items is the question whether it would be good if in the near future there would be 'less emphasis on money and material possessions'. This may refer to a materialist orientation and even to some varieties of capitalist orientation. It is possible to follow up the theme of covetousness by regarding those who wanted their children to learn thrift and who simultaneously found it a bad thing if the future development of society put less emphasis on money and material goods.

Actually, the combined Western European data show a slightly stronger materialistic orientation among members of the mainline Protestant churches than among Roman Catholics. Among the

Protestants, 61% find such a development a good thing compared with 69% of the Catholics. Among members of Protestant free churches, the proportion is the same as among Catholics. The proportion of mainline Protestants who evaluate such a development as 'bad' is 19%, and thus a little higher than the proportion among the Roman Catholics, 14%, and especially among the nonconformist Protestants, a mere 8%.

A co-variation between materialism and religion could be caused by the respondents' job situation or income. In order to control for this, various employment groups are analysed separately.²² This analysis indicates that a statistically significant difference remains between Catholics and Protestants in their evaluation of money, though only in a few job categories—among non-manual workers and among skilled and semiskilled workers. Religion thus seems to have an influence on the evaluation of material goods in combination with other factors, such as the standard of living. So religion may be a factor supporting a materialistic orientation, and Roman Catholicism seems to have a closer affinity to materialistic values than Protestantism. This conclusion contradicts the second hypothesis. However, the validity of this item is questionable.

Another adequate item for testing hypothesis 2 occurs in a battery of questions referring to qualities that children ought to develop at home. One of these is 'thrift'. It is mentioned by slightly more Protestants (37%) than Catholics (34%). When the data are split into job categories, statistically significant differences between Protestants and Catholics remain within non-manual workers and unskilled workers. This indicates that religion has some influence in a constellation with other factors.²³ According to hypothesis 2, members of Protestant free-churches should be expected to value thrift more highly than members of mainline Protestant denominations. However, the finding of only 27% refutes this.

A further approach to people's materialistic orientation is whether they regard payment as an important quality of their work. The proportion of all respondents in the combined Western European sample who mention 'good pay' is a little higher among Roman Catholics (69%), than among mainline Protestants (67%), and among non-

conformists (60%). This difference is hardly dramatic, although it indicates that ascetic Protestants may be less materialistic in their outlook than members of the mainline churches. This item enables us to retrace the difference between Catholics and Protestants within several of the job categories specified—the employers, the mid-level non-manual workers, the unskilled worker and the farmers.²⁴

The three items mentioned above all seem to relate to aspects of materialism, although these items do not combine into a neat scale,²⁵ and the findings are partially contradictory. In order to clarify the analysis further, we may investigate selected countries in order to contrast Calvinists with Roman Catholics. In Scotland, the data suggest that some confessional differences may exist regarding material values, especially regarding teaching one's children thrift. However, these differences are not statistically significant. As for the Netherlands, Roman Catholics and the Dutch Reformed hardly differ regarding material values. However, none of the Dutch Re-reformed answer that it is a bad thing if there were less emphasis on money and material goods in the future, while relatively many give the ambiguous reply that they 'don't mind'. As for Northern Ireland, no significant differences between the main confessional groups can be traced regarding the view on teaching children thrift or payment as a job incentive. On the third item, however, Presbyterians and nonconformists are less likely than Roman Catholics and members of the Church of Ireland to consider it a good thing if there were less emphasis on money in the future, and are more likely to consider it undesirable.

Such a result indicates a general tendency on the part of nonconformist Protestants to be somewhat less materialistically oriented than both mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics, which contradicts the expectations of the second hypothesis, while it supports Weber's argument on the ambiguity of ascetic Protestants toward material values. However, further data are needed on people's evaluations of economic means, and how these values are influenced by religion. By focussing on hypothesis 2 one may overlook an important supplementary finding: only a minor proportion of today's western Europeans seem to be very focussed on material values. Most

²² With simplified categories for the free church members.

²³ Same as above.

²⁴ Same as above.

²⁵ As demonstrated by both factor analysis and reliability analysis.

people actually consider it a good thing if there were less emphasis on money and material possessions in the future. So, despite Weber's iron cage-thesis, most Western Europeans today express a wish to carry their material worries and wealth as a light, discardable burden.

One may interpret this as an outcome of a shift from material toward post-material values, as indicated by Inglehart (1990, 1997).²⁶ In a series of publications, he proposes a shift in values from one set oriented toward material and social security to another set oriented toward social influence and self-actualization. Inglehart argues (1990: 54) that Protestantism helped to break the traditionalistic grip of the medieval Christian world view and inspire an economic dynamism in parts of Europe. However, material needs will eventually be saturated with growing prosperity. Throughout their lives, people tend to focus on values which were scarce during their youth. The generations which have grown up in the Western world since 1945 have experienced an unprecedented economic security, which allowed them to focus on nonmaterial needs and values, such as a sense of community and the quality of life. Since the Protestant countries were the first to gain affluence, they are also the first to feel the saturation effect. According to Inglehart, this explains why materialist values seem to be more widespread among Catholic countries in southern Europe while post-materialist values are especially widespread in the Protestant region of northern Europe (1990: 59). This argument is partially based on speculations about value patterns of the past combined with documented short-term fluctuations. However, Inglehart's main argument about the saturation effect of economic growth may explain some of the findings above.

8 *Denominational differences in individualism*

According to the third hypothesis Protestants are expected to be more individualistic than Catholics. One problem in operationalizing this hypothesis is related to the ambiguity of the concept of 'indi-

²⁶ Inglehart's theoretical assumptions and his operationalisations have been subject to much debate. This is not the proper place for thorough comment. Notwithstanding this critique, Inglehart has presented an inspiring new theme in the study of value changes.

vidualism'. The term covers a wide range of meanings, from autonomy to selfishness. Empirical studies of the EVS data have demonstrated that items which point at individualism in different social fields do not form an unidimensional pattern (Halman, 1996) and moreover, the degree of individualization in different fields is not related to the economic level of the society. It is necessary to specify sub-hypotheses regarding different types of individualism, ethical, cultural and economic individualism.

As far as ethical individualism is concerned one of the morality dimensions relating to the private life can be used (Harding et al., 1986). There is a slight tendency for Roman Catholics to be more restrictive than Protestants in issues relating to private morality, such as divorce, infidelity, abortion, suicide, euthanasia. This result, however, is dependent on differences in religious commitment between the two denominations. Members of the Protestant churches in general tend to be less religiously committed than members of the Roman Catholic church. If comparisons are restricted to the most religiously committed members, differences in moral attitudes are almost evened out. Therefore, ethical individualism depends on the general religious commitment rather than on religious affiliation.

Economic individualism is a value-orientation which is close to Conservative or Liberal ideologies, though not necessarily identical to these. The 1990 EVS study contains a series of questions which illustrate people's attitudes toward a number of economic issues, namely more differentiated incomes, private ownership and free competition. Since answers to these questions do not form a scale, it is necessary to analyse them one by one. The general tendency is for mainline Protestants to be slightly more individualistic regarding economic issues than Roman Catholics on all the questions asked. Thus, mainline Protestants more often state that competition is a good thing, that there should be greater incentives for individual effort, that private ownership of business and industry should be increased. These results support the hypothesis, although the differences are not large. As for the nonconformist Protestants, the answers do not point at a higher degree of economic individualism than among mainline Protestants. They are on a par with Catholics regarding the view on competition and private ownership. If religion is an influential factor, then differences between more and less religiously committed persons should emerge. We may again utilize the importance of God as an indicator of religious commitment. However, this analysis does

not render noticeable differences regarding economic individualism within the religious groups.²⁷

One way to operationalize cultural individualism is by presenting a hypothetical choice between freedom and equality. Given such a choice, 52% of the Roman Catholics²⁸ preferred liberty compared to 66% of the mainline Protestants and 56% of the nonconformist Protestants. This seems to pinpoint a profound divergence in views between the major denominations. However, the Protestant minorities seem less culturally individualistic than members of the major Protestant churches, which contradicts the expectation. Also in this instance, a control for the degree of religious commitment is called for. This does not reveal any internal variation among nonconformist Protestants. Preference for freedom is slightly lower among the highly committed members of the mainline Protestant churches than among members with a lower commitment, 63% and 67% respectively. The clearest contrast can be found among the Catholics, where 56% of the least committed Catholics prefer freedom, while the proportion is only 49% among the most committed ones. This indicates that religious commitment tends to counteract tendencies of cultural individualism prevailing in a capitalist society.

Cultural individualism may also be illustrated through its opposite, authoritarianism. In the questionnaire the respondents were asked to evaluate a series of changes that might take place in the near future, one of which was 'greater respect for authority'. This is one of the few items where the denominational divergence was noticeable. 76% of the free-church members found such a development a good thing, compared to 61% among the Roman Catholics, and only 37% among the members of mainline Protestant churches. It is furthermore remarkable that the appreciation of authority increases with religious commitment in all three communities which seems to indicate that cultural individualism among Protestants is not due to religion, but more to the cultural setting in which their church is embedded. Furthermore, cultural individualism seems to be hindered rather than enhanced by non-conformist Protestantism.

9 *Modernization and secularization revised*

The three hypotheses were not unambiguously supported by the data. On a few indicators, mainline Protestants seemed slightly more work-oriented, materialistic and individualistic than Roman Catholics. However, the indicators used did not demonstrate a consistent pattern, and the differences between Protestants and Catholics could not be explained by their religious commitment. Furthermore, nonconformist Protestants were generally less accommodating to a capitalist spirit than mainline Protestants. Efforts to actualize the Weber thesis for modern Europe seem to rest on false assumptions.

This could imply that society has become secularized and that religion has thus become irrelevant for the work ethics in modern capitalist society (H4). The basic hypothesis derived from modernization theory states that 'the more economically advanced a country is, the more progress both secularization and individualization will have made' (Ester et al., 1994: 41).²⁹ Ester et al., classified the countries according to the real gross domestic product per equivalent adult in 1988 in US-dollars in three categories, and they related this to the proportion of unchurched, marginal, modal, and core membership of churches. Their conclusion was that 'the stage of economic development is, at least in the short term, not as decisive in explaining church attendance as the (first) hypothesis assumes' (Ester et al., 1994: 46). The countries with the highest proportion of core members include the most and the least advanced countries in economic terms. They furthermore correlated measurements of orthodox beliefs with the stage of economic development, which also refuted the hypotheses. Ester et al. concluded that even 'if the hypothesis that the individualization and secularization processes are economically based is restricted to Western Europe, differences between countries at the same level of wealth were too large to accept a kind of economic determinism' (Ester et al., 1994: 52). Similar results emerge when more sophisticated measurements of religiosity are used. The modernization theory needs to be revised—at least for its implications about secularization.

²⁷ Which points to the alternative hypothesis that economic individualism of the mainline Protestants can mostly be ascribed to their socioeconomic situation.

²⁸ Excluding don't know answers.

²⁹ They add 'at least in Western democracies' as a condition against the effects of secular politics in the former Socialist countries.

The vital question here is not whether people are becoming more or less religious, but whether their economic ethics and values are influenced by religious teachings. Studies of the EVS90-data show that even though core members are generally orthodox, they do not accept all the tenets, and many core members combine a belief in resurrection with a belief in reincarnation.

For the discussion of how religious views may influence people's ethics, particularly in the economic field, it is especially important to look at the types of answers they seek in the church, and which questions the churches are allowed to take up. Following up on the discussion on the relevance of the denominations in economic values and ethics, it is worth noting that less than a third (31%) of the mainline Protestants think that their church answers moral problems *adequately*, that less than a half of the Catholics have a similar opinion (44%). There are probably very few who associate the question with economic ethics. The major churches are mostly seen as providing spiritual answers, and they may take up great ethical themes such as racial discrimination, euthanasia, abortion, or the ecological balance, although they are not supposed to raise political questions. The members are split on whether their church may speak on unemployment, with 49% among the Catholics and 41% among the mainline Protestants. This does not seem to indicate that the members of the major churches welcome guidance regarding economic ethics. The free churches—which are generally closer to the ideal type of Ascetic Protestantism—are allowed by their members to take up a wider range of themes.

Another possible explanation is that the churches may still have some indirect impact on the ethical views of their adherents, though their ethical positions have changed with the establishment of modern capitalist society. The history of Europe points to the great denominational divide between North and South, and most of the studies of the EVS90 data focus upon value differences, within and between nations and groups, rather than value consensus. The final point here is to underline the basic consensus about social values among Protestants and Catholics in Western Europe today.

It is often overlooked that significant but small differences in mean indices express a considerable degree of overlapping values. A rough comparison between members of the Roman Catholic church, members of the mainline Protestant churches, and members of Non-

Table 2.2 A comparison of some basic values of Catholics, Mainline Protestants and members of free churches

% who find it a good thing if there would be:	Catholics	Mainline Protestants	Free Churches	All West Europeans
Less emphasis on money	69	61	69	67
Decreasing importance of work	34	30	34	34
More emphasis on family life	92	90	88	88
A simple and more natural lifestyle	86	74	81	83
More emphasis on technological development	63	58	57	61
More emphasis on individual development	89	85	81	86
More respect for authority	57	46	78	53

Conformist Protestant churches³⁰ demonstrates that there is considerable consensus regarding the basic values: Most West Europeans agree that there should be more emphasis on family life, on individual development, on a simple and more natural lifestyle, and a considerable majority agree that there should be less emphasis on money, and more on technology. There is less agreement about whether it would be a good thing if there were greater respect for authority in the future and less emphasis on work.

It is very difficult to organize value patterns under headlines which make sense. However, Erik Allardt's (1975, 1978) suggestion that values can be put into three basic types, having, being and loving seems to offer a sensible distinction for the present task. The responses indicate that loving and being are the most important values, whereas

³⁰ Catholics tend to give positive answers on all the value questions referred to.

having seems to have an instrumental status, as a condition for a good life rather than being a value in itself. This pattern of values seems to correspond to basic Christian teachings. It is a classical theme to stress loving and being as valid values and to reject the importance of having or Mammon. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether this pattern of values is directly derived from the Christian teachings.

In order to elucidate the alignment thesis, we must take a closer look at the changing economic conditions of North and South from Weber's time till the present day, and at the changing ideologies. At the turn of the century, the dynamic centers of the European economy were situated in the North, and the spokesmen of the Protestant churches were mostly allied with the bourgeoisie. Since the sociological literature has focussed rather narrowly on the economic ethics of Protestantism, it would be of interest here to outline the economic ethics of modern Catholicism.

The Catholic regions industrialized slowly, and the Catholic church found it difficult to cope with the modernization of society. *Rerum Novarum* (1891) tried to steer a middle course between Socialism and Capitalism, by stressing the dual obligations between masters and workers. This type of thinking was elaborated in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), which could be read as legitimizing a corporatist ideology. Mussolini's own attitude was secularistic, and Italian Fascism originally rested on its own vitalistic world-view. However, the *Concordate* paved the way for mutual respect if not understanding. It also established the principle of subsidiarity, which ensured that children could still attend Catholic schools, workers could join Catholic unions, consumers could join Catholic cooperatives, that sick persons could go to Catholic hospitals, and so forth. The corporative line of Catholicism became dominant in Austria before the Nazi takeover, in Spain under Franco, in Portugal under Salazar, and in several Latin-American countries. The fall of Fascism led to a problem of legitimization. However, the church found a new role as a bulwark against Communism. The democratic character of the third way between capitalism and Socialism was stressed by Catholic leaders in Western Europe.

Simultaneously, an economic expansion took place in Southern Europe. During the 20th century, Northern and Southern Europe have converged in their economies. Inglehart (1990: 57-61) thus points out that whereas a high economic growth was once and

almost uniquely a Protestant phenomenon, since 1965, the Catholic countries of Europe were likely to have experienced a higher economic growth rate than the Protestant countries.³¹ This may help to explain why Catholics and Protestants differ so little on economic ethics today. Inglehart argues that the entrepreneurial outlook emerged in Catholic Europe during this century, while it receded in the Protestant regions (1997: 219). Inglehart has a point, since the new centres of capitalist dynamism are Munich, Torino, Milano, Madrid, Brussels, all of these cities where Catholicism continues to be strong. Furthermore, in the latest social encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* (1991), the Catholic church has revised its position slightly, be it conspicuously, toward an accommodation with private ownership of capital, while warning against cynical capitalism. In relation to the Weber thesis, it is worth noting that it also contains a full-fledged acceptance of the ethics of work. The Pope often advocates a third way between Capitalism and Socialism. However, his attitude toward Capitalism does not differ much from the critique of Luther against cynical merchants and the warnings of Calvinist preachers against worshipping Mammon. So it seems that the Catholic church has aligned itself with the economic ethics of Protestantism.

10 Conclusions

Weber's thesis has inspired a series of studies on the relationship between religion and economic values in modern society. It is therefore appropriate to investigate whether such a relationship can be demonstrated in survey data from modern Western Europe. The relationship was specified in hypotheses about the differences between Catholics and Protestants in their work ethos, their attitude to wealth, and their individualism. Our analyses do not provide much evidence for these hypotheses. In modern Europe, the two main religious groups do not differ much in their work ethics, economic individualism, or emphasis on wealth, though there is some indication of differences with respect to cultural individualism. These results point at an alternative argument which stresses that economic modernization leads to secularization, implying that religion is generally

³¹ Inglehart's conclusion is beyond dispute, though historical data on economic growth are notoriously problematic.

regarded as irrelevant for the functioning of the economic field. The findings seem supportive to such a conclusion. However, although religion is less important for setting explicit social goals for Western Europe, it may be influential in forming implicit ideologies about human nature and human rights, the nature of society, and social justice. Whereas religion may not be seen as a legitimate and appropriate foundation for economic ethics which either legitimizes or criticizes modern capitalism, religion may still form a template of basic social values, which indirectly influences people's views on the economic system. Even today, religion may form the starting point for a critique of the capitalist economic system, since religion can from its very source underline that this system is a human creation, which necessitates some degree of loyal support in order to function and be reproduced.

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