

***Christianity and Public Support for the European Union:
A Multivariate Analysis***

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Abstract

This paper considers the relationship between Europeans' religious characteristics and support for the European Union. Using Eurobarometer data from the 1970s through the 1990s, we find that Catholics have been far stronger supporters of European integration than Protestants have, and that the devout in both traditions have been more in favor of the integration process than have nominal adherents. The effects of religion survive both longitudinal and intensive cross-sectional analyses incorporating alternative explanations for support of the EU. These findings suggest that if religion is declining as a social and political force, underlying support for European unity may also be dwindling. Public approval of the European Union may thus depend increasingly on economic performance of national governments and the Union itself.

The remarkable success of European integration has prompted scholars to develop political and economic theories to explain it (Caporaso and Keeler, 1995; O'Neill, 1996; Rosamond, 2000). Theories of globalization, international bargaining, and institutional autonomy illumine political decisions taken by the European partners, but do not explain why such a radical project has retained public support over four decades or why that support has declined in recent years. When political scientists seek to account for public attitudes, they usually resort to theories stressing economic factors (Duch and Taylor, 1997; Gabel and Whitten, 1997; Gabel, 1998). Indeed, as two leading scholars recently concluded, 'the dominant theme of the literature is now the primacy of economic and utilitarian concerns' (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1997: 6).

We do not doubt the importance of economic influences, but think that cultural factors also contribute to public attitudes toward the European project (cf. Putnam, 1993; Huntington, 1996). In fact, despite a primary focus on economics, many studies sneak cultural forces in the back door by the use of 'country' variables. Such measures are sometimes treated as simple statistical controls, without theoretical rationale, but are often labeled 'national tradition' representing the unique historical experience of each country or some part of that experience, such as 'foreign policy tradition' (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993). We suspect, however, that much of what is being tapped by such stratagems is cultural. Although national traditions are difficult to codify, cultural factors are more easily measured and should be incorporated directly in analyses of public attitudes.

One of the most vital cultural elements is religion, which has shaped modern European politics in crucial ways. Official links between state and church in many countries infuse political institutions with religious symbols and open policy making to clerical influence (Monsma and Soper, 1997). Furthermore, European party systems still bear the marks of religious debates

rooted in the Reformation and French Revolution (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; cf. Broughton and Donovan, 1999). Thus confessional parties, many of which still carry ‘Christian’ in their names and pledge to pursue policies consistent with religious principles, square off against militantly secular parties of both left and right (Baum and Coleman, 1987; Papini, 1997). Finally, religious affiliation and practice are still powerful predictors of individual vote choice (Lijphart, 1979).

Despite the historic role of religion in European politics, few scholars have used religious variables to explain elite and public support for integration. This neglect is rather surprising. The classic theories stressed the vital role that cross-national religious ties played in facilitating integration. Karl Deutsch, for example, argued that common Protestant affiliations eased the national unification of Great Britain and, later, her former American colonies (Deutsch et al. 1957: 46-56). Although Deutsch did not apply this insight to contemporary developments, other scholars noted that European integration in the 1950s was largely a Christian Democratic project (Fogerty, 1957; Haas, 1958), led by devout Catholics such as Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman, and Alcide de Gasperi. Indeed, postwar Christian Democratic leaders, with strong backing from their parties, the Vatican, and national Catholic hierarchies, explicitly tied their vision of a united Europe —Jacques Maritain’s ‘new Christendom’— to Christian forgiveness and love of enemies (Papini, 1997: 54; for a less idealistic perspective, see Milward, 1992; Moravcsik, 1998).

Thus, although the European Union (EU) may be ‘first and foremost an economic community’ (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993: 511), in the early postwar years integration and religion, especially Catholicism, were explicitly linked, theoretically and politically. Furthermore, the great divide over integration has always run between Catholic nations, who envisioned a single European federation (Nelsen, 1999), and Protestant latecomers, such as the United Kingdom,

Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway (which never did join), with their pragmatic preference for closer cooperation among sovereign states (George, 1990; Nelsen, 1993; Miles, 1996; Miles, 1997; Jakobson, 1998; Young, 1998). The Protestant countries are reluctant to abandon sovereignty for historical and political reasons, including an ancient distrust of 'Catholic Europe' that still erupts occasionally in elite and mass rhetoric. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church has consistently supported both the European Union and its expansion, although often criticizing specific EU policies. Indeed, many committed Catholic politicians, such as Commission President Romano Prodi (Balzan, 1999), Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres (*The Economist*, 1999), and former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (Schlaes, 1997), have been among the staunchest proponents of further integration. And not surprisingly, polls hint that religion remains a powerful shaper of attitudes, as devout Christians favor integration more than less religious or secular individuals do (Mac Iver, 1989).

This overview raises some clear expectations about the impact of religious affiliation on attitudes toward the EU. Although Christianity has always had a strong transnational element (see Colossians. 3:11), various traditions have applied this teaching in different ways. Catholicism, drawing on the experience of the High Middle Ages, has sought the unity of Christendom under the Pope's spiritual (and in the past, temporal) leadership. Today's Catholic perspective is quite different: the Church is less interested in uniting Europe under its political authority than under its moral leadership (Voyé and Dobbelaere, 1994). Yet Church teaching still encourages Catholic leaders and citizens to support integration, in part to defend Christian values (Synod of Bishops II, 1999: paragraph 83). As Joan Keating has observed, 'the idea of an integrated Europe had (and continues to have) a profound appeal to those steeped in Catholic social theory' (1994: 178).

Protestantism's greater skepticism about the EU is also understandable. Christianity may

be 'dramatically universalist' (Tinder, 1989: 233), but sixteenth-century events still shape the way Protestants conceive Christian unity. The struggles against Roman spiritual and political hegemony fostered the Reformation's reliance on the nation state, created a distrust of international Catholicism, and encouraged a link in the Protestant mind between national sovereignty and true religion. Unionists in Northern Ireland who see the European Union 'as a Catholic conspiracy against Protestant liberties' (Morris, 1996: 129; cf. Bruce, 1986) are just an exaggerated example of this distrust. The same sentiments, somewhat muted, are found among Norwegian revivalists (Madeley, 1994: 151), Dutch Calvinist sectarians (Lucardie, 1988), and Swedish evangelicals (Hagevi, 2000). Despite the inroads of secularization, 'cultural' Protestantism still encourages Northern Europeans to protect national sovereignty against the encroachments of a European central government, notwithstanding the crucial fact that most Protestant religious leaders have endorsed integration (Carey, 1999).

Religious commitment should also affect attitudes toward integration, but in ways that vary by religious tradition. Our expectations for Catholics are clear: the more devout the believer, the more supportive of the EU that person should be. Not only are the faithful more likely to absorb the internationalist values of Catholic social theory, but they are also more 'available' for reinforcing leadership cues and community influence. For Protestants, however, the situation may be mixed. On the one hand, the faithful in established state churches (i.e., Lutheran and Anglican) may well attend to their clerical leaders' contemporary internationalist interpretations of the Christian tradition and follow such cues, rather than the nationalist implications of both historic and cultural Protestantism. On the other hand, among more particularistic sectarian Protestants religious participation might encourage more critical attitudes toward the EU. For most Europeans, however, religious commitment should bolster support for integration.

In the following analysis, we test the proposition that religion has influenced attitudes toward European integration. First, we describe our data and methods, identifying variables that help us test our religion hypotheses as well as alternatives stressing other influences. Second, we test a limited model for years ranging between 1973 and 1998, using relevant variables present in several surveys. Then we develop more complete models for 1994, taking advantage of the unusual presence of several religious measures, along with a particularly rich battery of questions permitting us to test alternative explanations. Finally, we comment on religion's impact on the European project and the implications of our findings for its future.

DATA AND METHODS

The primary obstacle to determining whether religion has influenced attitudes toward European integration is a paucity of data. Like other students of EU public opinion, we draw our data from the Eurobarometer series. The first source is the *European Communities Studies, 1970-1992 Cumulative File*, which merges three European Communities Studies (1970-1973) with biannual Eurobarometers from 1974 to 1992, incorporating all items asked in at least four surveys (Inglehart et al. 1994). Twelve European Union members (plus Northern Ireland) are represented, but we confine our analysis to the 'EC Ten', members throughout the period.¹ As others have discovered (Gabel and Whitten, 1997), few of these surveys simultaneously include all the variables needed for rigorous testing of theories about public support for integration. This is certainly true here: items on attitudes toward integration, adequate religious measures, and other critical political and social variables are rarely located in the same Eurobarometer. Nevertheless, we found surveys with the requisite items in 1973, 1978, and 1989-92. To extend the analysis, we also used *Eurobarometer 42: The First Year of the New European Union November-December*

1994 (EB42) (Reif and Marlier, 1997) and *Eurobarometer 50.0: European Parliament and Radioactive Waste, October-November 1998 (EB50)* (Melich, 2000). The latter surveys included the minimum number of variables needed to carry the analysis through the 1990s, using measures almost identical to those in earlier studies. Thus, our longitudinal analysis will consider data from four periods: the 1970s, 1989-92, 1994 and 1998.²

Our dependent variable is public support for integration. Four distinct questions about the EU were employed at times from 1973 to 1992, but when analyzing the *Cumulative File* and EB42 (1994) we use only the two asked most frequently: 'Is EC membership a good thing?' and 'Are you for or against European unification?' (Gabel, 1998). Although these items do not comprise quite as powerful a scale as all four items where available ($\alpha=.70$ compared to $.92$), for measurement purposes they are superior to the single items sometimes used (Duch and Taylor, 1997). Unfortunately, EB50 (1998) did not ask the 'for or against' question, so we substituted one that asks whether the respondent's country 'has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union' (v37). The resulting additive scale ($\alpha=.76$) behaves very much like the scale used for the earlier data sets and permits inclusion of the 1998 survey, with its seldom-asked religion questions.

Our model also incorporates a variety of independent variables that allow us to evaluate the impact of religion on attitudes toward integration in light of alternative explanations. For analytic purposes, we organize all these influences into five broad categories: religious commitment, political engagement, partisanship, ideology, and socio-demographics. We also utilize controls for year of study where more than a single survey is included in a period.

Religious Commitment Variables

Until recently, social scientists have neglected religion's role in contemporary European politics, assuming that it was disappearing as a social force (Dalton, 1996: 129-30; LeRoy and Kellstedt, 1995). Although American scholars have now developed a rich literature on the political role of religion (Leege and Kellstedt, 1993), their construction of better religious measures is too recent to aid the secondary analyst of historical European data. Unfortunately, the Eurobarometer religious items are very crude, employed sporadically, and occasionally miscoded.³ Nevertheless, we can construct reasonable measures of the two most important aspects of religion: religious tradition and religious commitment. In combination, these are central to our analysis.

The religious tradition item varies from one data set to another. The *Cumulative File* has seven categories: 'Roman Catholic', 'Protestant-Established', 'Reformed', 'Non-Conformist, Free Church', 'Other', 'None', and 'Orthodox'. This classification precludes much differentiation among Protestants. Not only are the 'established' Protestant churches different by nation (easy enough to determine), but minority or sectarian Protestants are included in several categories. In the early years, some fall under the 'Reformed' and 'Free Church' rubrics, not used in all countries or in later surveys, while many are relegated to the 'other' category, which bulks large in Northern Ireland and the Netherlands. And still others are probably hidden under the 'undocumented codes' that include numerous respondents in some years. By the 1990s the Eurobarometer religious tradition code includes only 'Catholic', 'Protestant', 'Muslim', 'Jewish', 'Other', and 'None'. Thus, although the *Cumulative File* provides some fascinating glimpses into the attitudes of sectarian Protestants (and later surveys allow us to do the same for minority religions), for present purposes we rely on a radically simplified religious tradition measure with

three categories, 'Catholic,' 'Protestant,' and 'None/Other.'

In our historical analysis, religious commitment is measured by church attendance, always a strong indicator of religiosity (Jagodzinski and Dobbelaere, 1995: 90). Respondents were asked if they attended church 'several times per week,' 'once per week,' 'a few times per year,' or if they 'never attend' (or have no religious preference).⁴ Although this four-point scale is quite crude compared to those now used in American survey research, it is adequate (Wald et al. 1993). In some years, the church attendance item was not asked of those who claimed no religious affiliation, leaving a substantial amount of missing data. We have compensated by assuming (like the Eurobarometer's authors) that those with no religion never attend services, a problematic assumption with some implications for our interpretation of Protestant attitudes.⁵

The three data sets also include other religious questions, but only sporadically. The *Cumulative File* and *EB42* tap religious salience, or the importance of religion in one's life (Guth and Green, 1993), but we are unable to use this measure in the historical analysis. In most early surveys, no religious salience question was asked or it was asked only in some countries. When included, the question took two forms. In four years, all respondents were asked: 'Do you personally feel, irrespective of how often you go to church, that your religion is of great importance, some importance, or only of little importance in your life?' In 1994 *EB42* asked respondents to assess the 'importance of God' in their lives, on a scale ranging from 1 to 10 (v163). Beginning in the late 1980s, the Eurobarometer also included a religious identity question: 'Whether you do or don't follow religious practices, would you say that you are 1) Religious; 2) Not religious; 3) An agnostic; 4) An atheist' (v498). Given their late adoption, these items are not available for our historical analysis, but we use both the 'importance of God' and religious identity measures in our intensive analysis of the 1994 survey (see below).

There are several alternative ways to use religious tradition and commitment variables. Given our theoretical assumptions—that those who attend services most frequently should hold the normative political values of their tradition most strongly—we have created separate Catholic and Protestant commitment categories. ‘Devout’ believers attend church once a week or more, the ‘conventional’ attend at least a few times a year, and ‘nominal’ adherents identify with a religion, but attend services once a year or never. In the 1994 cross-sectional analysis we employ a somewhat fuller commitment measure (see below). In both analyses, those who claim no religion or some other religion are the omitted reference category.

Political Engagement

We believe religious commitment influences attitudes toward the EU, but other explanations are possible. One such explanation is political engagement. Political activists often differ in significant ways from those isolated from, or hostile to, political life, and may have distinctive positions on issues such as integration. Indeed, most political elites in Europe, excluding those on the ideological extremes, have supported regional integration to some extent (Slater, 1982). This raises the possibility that the politically engaged of all persuasions might be more enamored of the EU than those less involved (Ray, 1997). Here we use a two-item scale assessing frequency of political discussion and persuasion efforts ($\alpha=.50$), available in the *Cumulative File* and *EB50* (1998). When analyzing *EB42* (1994), which lacks both items, we substituted the question: ‘To what extent would you say you are interested in politics?’ (v56).

Partisanship

Our brief historical review suggests that attitudes toward the EU should also be influenced

by partisanship. As Christian Democratic parties were the staunchest proponents of integration in the postwar era, and mainstream socialist parties were also quite supportive (Haas, 1958), we used the intended vote indicator in the *Cumulative File* (v24) and in *EB42* (v461). We created dummy variables for Christian Democratic and Socialist vote (following Lane and Ersson, 1991: 135-136; Hanley, 1994: 199-200). We expect Christian Democrats (first) and Socialists (second) to be more positive toward European integration than other citizens. If Catholic internationalism is captured politically by membership in Christian Democratic parties, we might also find that religion's impact is mediated through party attachments, rather than influencing attitudes directly. (Unfortunately, the 1998 study has no partisanship variable; its omission should presumably enhance the importance of related variables such as ideology and, perhaps, religion.)

Ideology

Ideology may also affect views of European unity. We have argued elsewhere that opposition to integration often arises from a 'red-green-brown' coalition (Nelsen and Fraser, 1995). Leftist and environmental groups fear that a new architecture for Europe may weaken the carefully constructed edifice of the welfare state, erecting an economic system on the backs of workers, the environment, or both. On the other end of the spectrum, the extreme right's authoritarian, anti-immigrant, and nationalistic views make the obliteration of borders unacceptable. We hypothesize, then, that public support for integration will decline on the far left and far right. The Eurobarometer has respondents place themselves on a ten-point spectrum, from extreme left '1', to the extreme right '10'. Given our expectations, we created two new measures through bifurcation of this scale, with degrees of ideology from 0 ('center') to 4 ('extreme' left or right).

Socio-Demographic Variables.

Although scholars often interpret the findings quite differently, earlier studies have shown that social class, education, income, gender and age influence attitudes on European integration (Gabel, 1998; Green, 1999). We expect, then, that the affluent (and those with ‘higher’ occupational, class and educational status) should support integration more fervently than those of modest means (and ‘lower’ status). Moreover, we expect a ‘gender gap’, with women less supportive of integration than men are (Nelsen and Guth, 2000), along with an ‘age gap’, as older citizens remain more nationalistic than younger Europeans.

As an occupation item is available in all the data sets, we created two dummies to best capture the impact of social class in the historical analysis. Manual laborers and the unemployed comprise the ‘labor’ variable, while white-collar and professional occupations were coded ‘professional’. All other occupations—including business—comprise the omitted reference category. Income measures were present in every study except *EB42*, where we use a proxy that counts the number of possessions that a respondent owns (v485). As the Eurobarometers of the 1990s include a subjective social class measure, we use a more powerful combination of occupation and subjective social class in the 1994 cross-sectional study (see below).

Year

As public support for the EU has changed somewhat over time, we included controls to account for the possible impact of ‘specific events occurring between the first and second measurement’ (Campbell and Stanley, 1963: 5). Such eventualities seem especially likely during the 1989-92 period when the Berlin Wall fell, the Single Market was created and the Maastricht

debates took place. Therefore, we use dummy variables for the later years in each pooled sample, with 1973 and 1989 as the omitted reference categories.

AN HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT: 1973-1998

How has religion affected attitudes toward the European Union? Table 1 provides an unequivocal answer: In every period, Catholics at all commitment levels are more likely to support integration, even when other factors are controlled. And the most devout Catholics are more supportive of the EU than conventional Catholics, who, in turn, are more supportive than nominal Catholics. The relationship does show some signs of deterioration over time, however, especially among conventional and nominal Catholics, perhaps reflecting the Church's weakening cultural hold on its more peripheral members. Committed Catholics, on the other hand, remain strongly integrationist, with an apparent dip in support in the early 1990s completely reversed by the end of the decade.⁶ In short, Catholics are committed to European integration: the more committed the Catholic, the more committed the integrationist.

Protestants, however, are much less enthusiastic about the EU than Catholics. Although during the early period devout and conventional Protestants appear slightly more supportive than the non-religious (the omitted reference category), the general trend is for Protestants to be less friendly to the EU, and for the *least* devout to be the least supportive. The pooled sample for 1989-92 shows this result most clearly. Thus, being Protestant does make one less supportive of the EU, but a few regular church attendees may sometimes get a strong dose of Christian internationalism that is missed by more nominal Protestants.

As we see, religion has a powerful effect on attitudes toward integration, even controlling for additional factors stressed by alternative explanations. These other explanatory variables,

however, do play a role in predicting EU support, usually in the expected direction. As Table 1 shows, political engagement has the predicted positive effect: people interested in politics support the EU. Second, Christian Democratic and Socialist voters also support integration, with Christian Democratic voting a more powerful predictor in the 1970s and 1994, though not in 1989-92. Third, ideology has always been a vital determinant of attitudes, but the direction of the relationship has altered over time. In the 1970s leftist respondents were more skeptical of integration, while rightist ideology had no independent impact. By 1989-92 this had changed dramatically: left-leaners were more likely to support integration, while citizens on the right were more likely to oppose it. The trend strengthened throughout the 1990s as left and right sharply diverged. Left identification grew stronger as a predictor of positive attitudes toward the EU while right identification became an even more powerful predictor of negative attitudes.⁷

Socio-demographic influences are fairly consistent over time. When everything else is controlled, the working class is strongly skeptical of integration, while professionals are more likely to favor the EU. Citizens with more education and money tend to support integration, but older folks are more critical. Men tend to be more favorable to integration than women, though the relationship is not significant in 1994 and 1998.

Finally, events seem to have an effect on attitudes toward integration. The coefficient for '1978' indicates that events between 1973 and 1978 had a positive influence on support for integration. The global economic crisis (and the impotence of the Community's response) and the bitter British accession debate eroded public support for integration in the early 1970s, but those effects had been reversed by 1978 (Inglehart, 1990: 418). The opposite effect appeared in 1989-92. The heady days of 1989, when the European Community could seemingly do no wrong, gave way to the frictions of the Maastricht debates, pushing respondents in a more Euro-skeptical

direction, especially in 1992.

[Table 1 about here]

In sum, religious tradition and commitment—especially Catholic devotion—has a particularly powerful *direct* effect on attitudes toward integration, even when viewed over time, using several different data sets, and taking into account major alternative explanations. In our attempt, however, to develop a model for use with several data sets over three decades, we had to settle for somewhat unsatisfactory measures and, just as important, discard a few critical variables. Indeed, the variance we explain is fairly modest in each year, and drops from the 1970s to the 1990s.⁸ Will religious variables survive in more fully specified models describing support for integration? We turn to this question next.

RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT IN A FULL MODEL, 1994

EB42 (1994) offers the best opportunity to develop a full model of attitudes toward integration that incorporates better measures of integration attitudes, political engagement, partisanship, and ideology, while adding items that tap the impact of values and economics. Such a model certainly provides a more rigorous test for religious influence. Before we look at the results, we describe the elaboration of variables used in Table 1 and the addition of new ones.

We first developed a more robust measure of support for the European Union. Our dependent variable is a principal components factor score of five items measuring evaluation of the EU. These include whether the respondent is for or against the EU (v63), considers membership in the EU a good or bad thing (v64), thinks that one's country benefits from the EU (v65), would regret the dissolution of the EU (v66), and would like integration to go faster (v68). Although these items are sometimes thought to represent different sorts of public evaluation

(‘affective’, ‘utilitarian’, or ‘pace of integration’), they are strongly correlated. Thus, on empirical grounds they can be combined in a highly reliable measure of generalized support for the EU ($\theta = .83$) (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000).

Religiosity

The 1994 study also contains additional religious measures. Besides the religious affiliation (v496) and church attendance (v497) questions, *EB42* asks about the ‘importance of God’ in one’s life, an excellent measure of religious salience (v163). Finally, a religious identity item (v498) asks whether the respondent considers herself ‘a religious person’, ‘not a religious person’, ‘an agnostic’, or ‘atheist’. In sum, we have measures of religious tradition, behavior, salience, and identity.

Although there are several ways to incorporate these measures, we have followed the strategy of our historical analysis by combining the religious tradition, behavior, salience, and identity items into composite measures of ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant commitment’. We first collapsed the four identity categories into two: ‘religious’ and ‘not religious’ (with the latter including ‘agnostics’ and ‘atheists’). Then we subjected the church attendance, identity, and ‘importance of God’ measures to a principal components analysis, which produced a single factor that accounted for 74 percent of the variance ($\theta = .83$). We then divided respondents into three equal groups, ranging from low to high religious commitment, and created an ordinal measure of ‘Catholic commitment’ as follows: not Catholic ‘0’, nominal Catholic ‘1’, conventional Catholic ‘2’, and devout Catholic ‘3’. ‘Protestant commitment’ was calculated in the same way. Those with no affiliation and adherents of minority religions again constitute the omitted reference group. In addition to the Catholic and Protestant commitment measures, we incorporated a third

'religious' variable. The bivariate data revealed a curvilinear relationship between the original religious identity item and EU support: both the 'religious', on the one hand, and 'agnostics' and 'atheists', on the other, were warmer toward the EU than were the original 'not religious' respondents. We therefore included a dummy variable for those claiming an 'agnostic' or 'atheist' identity.

Political Engagement

EB42 permits a more discriminating assessment of a respondent's political engagement, particularly regarding the EU. In this model, we use the political interest question from Table 1 and add items on interest in EU politics (v57), perceived knowledge of EU policies and institutions (v62), and, frequency of watching TV news (v45). Previous research shows that the politically engaged are more supportive of the EU, but when specific interest in EU politics is controlled, those interested in politics in general seem to define their interest in purely national terms, making political interest *negatively* related to support (Nelsen and Guth, 2000).

Party Identification

Some might argue that a better measure of party identification, especially Christian Democratic affiliation, would reduce the direct effect of religion on attitudes. *EB42* allows us to improve our partisanship measure by incorporating both the intended vote item (v461) and the following party attachment question: 'Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party?' (v460). We use intended vote as before, and also create two new 'partisanship' variables. 'Christian Democratic Party ID' is scored as follows: non-Christian Democratic voters '0', Christian Democratic voters who feel close to 'no particular' party '1', Christian Democratic

voters who are mere sympathizers '2', those who are 'fairly close' to the party '3', and those who are 'very close' '4'. The same procedure was used for the 'Socialist Party ID'. We expect increasing loyalty to either party to bolster support for the EU.

Ideology and Values

Table 1 demonstrated the importance of ideology as a determinant of EU support. Thus, we retain our ideology measures, but add two others that measure 'new' value orientations that scholars have suggested might have a major impact on support for the EU. One of the most stimulating perspectives on contemporary European politics has been Ronald Inglehart's contention that a 'culture shift' from materialist to postmaterialist values is underway (Inglehart, 1977, 1990). According to this view, postmaterialists should exhibit stronger support for the EU than materialists do. A corollary of Inglehart's perspective is that postmaterialist values should eclipse religion in shaping orientations toward integration. Thus, if we include both in a multivariate analysis, postmaterialism should outperform religious factors. To test this conjecture, we use *EB42*'s own postmaterialism measure (v534). In the same vein, we also include another set of 'new' values, specifically feminist gender roles.⁹ Our own recent work suggests that, contrary to some scholars' expectations, feminists will be more supportive of integration than those holding traditionalist social values. (For a full discussion of this issue, see Nelsen and Guth, 2000).

Economic Vulnerability

Finally, our historical analysis showed that socio-demographic factors (which remain nearly the same in this full model¹⁰) influence attitudes toward integration, but in many respects

such measures are simply proxies for an individual's real or perceived economic vulnerability. Gabel (1998), for instance, has shown that those threatened by potential changes brought on by integration are less likely to support the process. As many studies have shown, however, *perceptions* about one's personal economic situation and the national economic climate are usually much more powerful predictors than so-called 'objective' measures such as occupation, class or income (Miller and Shanks, 1996). Therefore, we constructed two variables that assess a respondent's perceived economic vulnerability. *EB42* asked respondents eight questions about their national and personal economic environments, which we subjected to a principal components analysis. Although all variables loaded strongly on the first component, a second dimension consisting of some personal situation items also appeared. A varimax rotation clearly separated the items evaluating the current and future 'sociotropic' economic situation (v37, v39, v41, v43) from those measuring 'personal' economic well-being (v38, v40, v42, v44) (cf. Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Gelleny and Anderson, 2000). The resulting scores both have *theta* reliabilities of .80.

Finally, we introduce one more variable that permits the strongest possible test for our hypothesis. The careful reader might object that our religious measures simply reflect 'national tradition', rooted in a host of historical factors. Of course, we have argued above that religion constitutes one of the most powerful of these historical and cultural factors. Resolving whether distinct national traditions are the product or the cause of religious differences is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, to pose a stringent test, we calculated the mean score for EU support among citizens of each country to use as a control. Thus, in effect we are analyzing the deviation in citizens' scores from their nation's mean score. (Employing country dummies in the regression produces almost identical results and identifies the Italians, Dutch and the Irish as more favorable

toward the EU, while the British and Danish are more hostile. We have used the national means to produce a more economical display in Table 2.) If the influence of religion survives this procedure, we can be confident of its power.

Findings

Table 2 shows that even controlling for a variety of alternative explanations, religious variables remain powerful direct predictors of attitudes toward the EU. In Model 1, we include all the predictors except national tradition. We see that Catholic commitment still produces stronger support for integration, while greater Protestant devotion actually encourages skepticism. Atheists and agnostics do, in fact, back the EU more than do those with 'no religion'.

Religion remains the important story in Model 1, but we find other interesting results as well. Politically engaged respondents, especially those interested in *European Union* politics, tend to support integration, but as we predicted above, once interest in EU politics is controlled, interest in politics produces more skepticism. People who are interested in national, but not EU politics, distrust supranational efforts. Once again, Christian Democratic vote predicts EU support, as does Socialist vote and Socialist party attachment. Surprisingly, though, strength of Christian Democratic attachment does not significantly increase pro-integration sentiment, perhaps indicating a weakening of support among the party faithful.

What can we say about ideology and values? As we should expect from Table 1, in 1994 leftists support the EU, right leaners are skeptical. In contrast, postmaterialism emerges as a significant, but unimpressive, determinant of support for integration. More importantly, postmaterialism does not obliterate other cultural factors. For example, postmaterialism fails to reduce the explanatory impact of religion on EU support (cf. Layman and Carmines, 1997).

Indeed religion —particularly Catholic religion— has a much more significant effect. Nor does another set of ‘new values’ often associated with postmaterialism —feminism— have much impact. True, those who hold non-traditional gender role values favor the EU, but the impact is very small when other factors are controlled. Table 2 also demonstrates that perceived economic vulnerability, both sociotropic and personal, contributes to lower support for integration.

Demographic factors continue to have an independent impact. The working class, those with lower incomes, and older folks are also, unsurprisingly, less favorable toward the EU, while the middle and upper classes and the educated support the EU. Some of these effects are quite modest, however. Unlike our findings in Table 1, men are not significantly friendlier to integration once other factors are controlled. Our expanded model accounts for 24 percent of the variance in attitudes, a great improvement over the 10 percent reported for 1994 in Table 1.

Model 2 includes the same variables, but adds national tradition. Although this variable obviously ‘explains’ a good bit of variation in attitudes, it does not eliminate religious influences. Although the Protestant coefficient does drop out, Catholic commitment and agnostic/atheist identification still enhance support for the EU, even when national differences are accounted for. The effects of other variables are consistent with those seen in Model 1. And the variance explained rises to over 28 percent.

In the end, religion —mainly Catholicism— remains a strong, independent influence on attitudes toward integration. Catholic devotion, even in the ‘secular’ 1990s, still pushes respondents to favor integration more than might be expected given their scores on a host of other variables. The same is true in reverse for Protestants, though the influence is not as strong. It should be noted that we are considering only the direct effects of religion. Religious affiliation and practice also have important indirect effects on support for integration through their influence

over partisanship, ideology, and other political values. In short, both the historic assessment and the two models for 1994 lead us to conclude that religion does matter.

[Table 2 about here]

Other evidence supports our conclusion about the important role of religion. As an alternative measure of public support for integration, we calculated a score based on respondents' preference for national or EU decision-making in eighteen distinct policy areas (cf. Gabel, 1998: 341). A regression analysis of this score produces results very similar to those in Table 2, with devout Catholics having a stronger preference for EU policymaking. Less systematic evidence in other Eurobarometers supplies additional support for our interpretation. In an analysis of several 1998 questions not reported here, we found that devout Catholics are much more likely than Protestants to perceive that 'there is a single European cultural identity shared by all Europeans.' In addition, they more often favor expansion of the EU, especially into the historically Catholic areas of Eastern Europe. Moreover, devout Catholics are less likely to impose economic conditions in determining whether new countries should be admitted. All this conforms to our expectations. On the other hand, church-going Protestants are much more likely to mention 'loss of national identity' as a major fear about the integration process, supporting our theory that connects Protestantism and the nation state. Our theory also suggests that sectarian Protestants should be the most opposed to European integration. In fact, where we can identify such groups in a few early Eurobarometers, that is exactly what we find: very devout Calvinists in the Netherlands and Northern Ireland, and other Protestant minorities are much more hostile than are Catholics or those with no denomination (for this data, see Fraser et al. 1997).

Although we have confirmed many of the theoretical strands explaining support for the EU, it is fascinating that even at the end of the twentieth century the historic factors of religion

and class (and ideologies and parties associated with both) still shape European political views (cf. Rose, 1974). These factors are truly cross-cutting, at least on attitudes toward integration. In practical terms, Catholic commitment has softened the resistance of opposition groups to the emerging European entity. Indeed, it is quite striking in simple bivariate analysis how Catholic Church attendees among 'natural Euroskeptics' are much less critical of Europe than their non-religious counterparts. Hence, Catholic church-goers among leftists and rightists, workers and trade union members, rural residents, and the poorly educated are all considerably warmer toward the EU than are those who share the same traits, but are not religious. Interestingly, the same influences are replicated among citizens of the more recent 'Catholic' entrants to the European Union, such as Spain, Portugal and Austria (data not shown).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

What can we conclude about the role of religion in shaping attitudes about the European Union? First, religious affiliation does influence attitudes in ways consistent with our characterization of religious traditions from the most internationalist or universalistic to the most nationalist or particularistic. Roman Catholics are warmest toward the Union, while Protestants tend to be slightly less supportive than secular citizens are, although their position may depend on national circumstances. Sectarian Protestants are the least fond of the European Union, although examination of their attitudes is limited by the Eurobarometer's inadequate identification of religious groups. And although religious tradition is a powerful influence on attitudes, religious commitment also plays a solid role. Among Catholics (and perhaps among some Protestants), high commitment 'internationalizes', making attendees more sympathetic to integration projects. But among sectarian Protestants the opposite effect appears, with observant members least pro-

Union.

Of course, religion works in concert with other influences. Where strong Christian Democratic parties existed after World War II, these educated their adherents into a pro-integration perspective, or at least channeled the sentiments fostered by religious influences. Socialist parties often participated in the task of building the Union and producing a supportive public, influencing many outside the Catholic Church and countering a universal suspicion among working-class Europeans and left ideologues that the EU would harm their interests. Indeed, as we have seen, social class and education are almost invariably powerful indicators: the better-off and better-educated are friendlier to the European enterprise.

Of course, both religion and social class have long contributed to the ideological divisions in most of Europe and those ideological formations have their own independent impact, with the far right and the far left both dissenting from pro-integration policies. The nationalist right tends to be a somewhat more consistent critic of the European enterprise, but the left has at times (and in some places) offered powerful resistance. Countering these ideological effects is political engagement, which everywhere moves citizens toward a greater appreciation of the internationalist effort.

What do our findings portend for the future of the EU? If, indeed, religious tides are slowly ebbing in Europe—especially Catholic commitment (Jagodzinski and Dobbelaere, 1995), a prime source of Europeanist sentiment may be eroding, even though the statistical relationships remain relatively constant. Catholicism has the same effects as always, but on fewer citizens. If this is the case, what will replace it? Postmaterialism has been touted as a significant generator for pro-integration sentiment (and may explain why religious ‘nones’ have become less critical of European unity). But these new values may lack power as a motivating political force, at least

with respect to the EU, and do not seem inherently 'internationalizing' (Michalski and Tallberg, 1999). Indeed, postmaterial values may well direct their holders toward local concerns, as recent protests against international organizations in Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Prague suggest. In the absence of underlying support based on religious worldviews, the European Union will be ever more dependent on its economic performance for continued public (and elite) support.

We might also predict, on the basis of our findings, some effects of the Union's recent expansion. For example, despite recent tensions, Catholic Austria is more likely to bring a cooperative spirit to collective decision-making in the long run than predominantly Protestant (or really secular) Sweden and Finland. Beyond prospects for consolidating the current EU, our findings also have implications for new members. Poland appears on fundamental value grounds to be more compatible with the Union than the more resolutely secular Czech Republic or even Hungary, with its Reformed Protestant minority. In similar fashion, predominantly Roman Catholic Lithuania may find the EU more culturally comfortable than do the mainly Lutheran countries of Estonia and Latvia, both of which may share the skeptical approach of their Scandinavian neighbors. And our findings seem to indicate that even if the EU can find ways to overcome the economic barriers to Turkish membership, it will still have difficulty accepting a Muslim nation into its 'Christian club' (Ögütçü, 1994). In any event, our results show that the Union's success has depended in part on a vision for European unity grounded in the religious values of citizens, and not just on its economic successes and failures.

European Union leaders have recently exhibited a renewed appreciation for the role of religious values in undergirding their now-threatened enterprise. In the mid-1990s the European Commission sponsored a series of consultations with religious leaders from all over the continent. At one of the first meetings former Commission President, and devout Catholic, Jacques Delors

appealed to church leaders for cooperation, concluding that ‘if in the next ten years we have not succeeded in giving a spirit, an inspiration and a soul to Europe we will have failed’ (*Catholic World News*, 1995). The Commission itself has also charged its Forward Studies Unit with monitoring ‘the growing political importance of religions and cultures’ (Forward Studies Unit, 1998: 2). Whether or not the Commission will succeed in reviving (or creating new) religious enthusiasm for the European Union, its efforts certainly represent recognition at the highest level that religion matters to European integration.

NOTES

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1. The ‘EC Ten’ include Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland. Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland and Sweden were not surveyed until they entered the Community and thus are not included in our analysis. Nevertheless, our analysis holds up well in exploratory studies that we have conducted using the full current membership of the EU. We have weighted the sample according to national populations to approximate the ‘citizenry’ of the ‘EC Ten’.

2. Although we would have preferred to pool the 1994 and 1998 studies, the former uses a different political engagement variable, and the latter has no party variables. As a precaution, then, we ran separate regressions for these years.

3. Anyone using the religious affiliation variable in the *Cumulative File* should do so warily. The *File* contains numerous coding errors, which become apparent when the data are inspected by country and year. To cite just a few instances: the 1987 file combines all Catholics and Anglicans in the United Kingdom under the former label; the 1988 file has a large number of

Greek Orthodox in the UK, who apparently move to the Netherlands in 1989. (Inspection of the voting behavior of the latter group suggests it comprises miscoded hyper-Calvinists.)

4. Attendance varies greatly across EU members, of course, ranging from Ireland, where in the early surveys 87.3 percent say they go to church once a week or more, to Denmark, where only 4.8 percent claim to attend that often.

5. In the early years, and in some countries even later, the church attendance question was not asked of all those who said they had no religious affiliation, apparently on the assumption that such individuals did not attend services. We have no choice but to follow that assumption and put such individuals in the 'never attend' category, to keep them in the analysis. In the 1989-92 period, however, this assignment does make a marginal difference in our results. If only those 'no religion' respondents who were actually asked the church attendance question are included, Protestants remain marginally more supportive of the EU than non-affiliators in Table 1. The results for Catholics are essentially the same regardless of the treatment accorded the missing data.

6. Experimentation indicates that the coefficient for the Catholic 'devout' in 1998 is probably bolstered slightly by the absence of a Christian Democratic party variable that picks up some Catholic influence in the other three models.

7. The high coefficients for ideology in 1998 may result in small part from the missing partisanship variables.

8. The inability to explain as much variance in the 1990s data as in the 1970s data is not peculiar to our model, but is characteristic of those emphasizing economic variables as well (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1997: 17-19).

9. *EB42* includes five questions concerned with traditional gender roles (v145-v149),

which we combined in a scale ($\alpha=.79$). For more details, see Nelsen and Guth, 2000.

10. The only significant changes from the historical analysis above are to the class variables. *EB42* has both occupational and subjective social class measures. The two measures are strongly correlated, but the social class question has many missing values. To minimize both problems we created two new variables: 'Labor' and 'Bourgeois'. As we describe in Nelsen and Guth (2000), 'Labor' assigns a '2' to respondents who both claimed to be working class *and* who work at a manual job, a '1' to those who *either* claimed to be working class or were manual laborers, and a '0' to respondents claiming neither. Similarly, 'Bourgeois' assigns a '2' to those who see themselves 'middle', 'upper-middle', or 'upper' class *and* who work in a business or professional occupation, a '1' who fit one category, and '0' to those who claim neither.

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TABLE 1: Religion and Support for the European Union (Ordinary Least Squares estimates, unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in parentheses)

| | 1973/78 | 1989-92 | 1994 | 1998 |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Catholic Commitment | | | | |
| Devout | 1.052*** (.042) | .674*** (.022) | .810*** (.077) | 1.252*** (.140) |
| Conventional | .992*** (.040) | .356*** (.018) | .625*** (.069) | .544*** (.127) |
| Nominal | .813*** (.048) | .169*** (.028) | .257*** (.071) | .312* (.124) |
| Protestant Commitment | | | | |
| Devout | .037 (.074) | -.080* (.040) | -.152 (.136) | .344 (.296) |
| Conventional | .216*** (.045) | -.075*** (.022) | -.192* (.089) | -.318 (.174) |
| Nominal | -.017 (.052) | -.409*** (.032) | -.113 (.081) | -.292* (.149) |
| Political Engagement | | | | |
| | .309*** (.010) | .194*** (.005) | .310*** (.028) | .396*** (.033) |
| Partisanship | | | | |
| Christian Democratic | .221*** (.003) | .094*** (.018) | .858*** (.077) | — |
| Socialist | .129*** (.032) | .131*** (.017) | .657*** (.065) | — |
| Ideology | | | | |
| Left | -.115*** (.012) | .014* (.007) | .099*** (.023) | .245*** (.041) |
| Right | .002 (.012) | -.071*** (.007) | -.161*** (.029) | -.403*** (.048) |
| Socio-Demographic Variables | | | | |
| Labor | -.333*** (.034) | -.292*** (.016) | -.341*** (.055) | -.732*** (.118) |
| Professional | .360*** (.061) | .097** (.034) | -.115 (.092) | .507* (.225) |
| Education | .089*** (.005) | .074*** (.002) | .066*** (.006) | .074*** (.010) |
| Income | .139*** (.012) | .102*** (.006) | .029* (.012) | .075*** (.013) |
| Sex (Male) | .283*** (.026) | .211*** (.013) | .062 (.047) | .145 (.088) |
| Age | -.003*** (.001) | -.013*** (.000) | -.012*** (.001) | -.025*** (.002) |
| Year | | | | |
| 1978 | .223*** (.027) | — | — | — |
| 1990 | — | -.190*** (.019) | — | — |
| 1991 | — | -.008 (.018) | — | — |
| 1992 | — | -.399*** (.019) | — | — |
| Adj. R² | .151 | .076 | .100 | .079 |
| Weighted N= | 20,296 | 95,568 | 9407 | 9524 |

*Coefficient significant at $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 2: Religion and Support for the European Union: Full Models, 1994
(Ordinary Least Squares estimates, unstandardized regression coefficients,
standard errors in parentheses)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Religious Commitment | | |
| Catholic | .131*** (.010) | .053*** (.010) |
| Protestant | -.025* (.013) | -.007 (.012) |
| Atheist | .083* (.033) | .066* (.032) |
| Political Engagement | | |
| Interest in Politics | -.138*** (.015) | -.110*** (.015) |
| Interest in EU Politics | .349*** (.015) | .357*** (.015) |
| Knowledge of EU Politics | .107*** (.014) | .110*** (.014) |
| TV News Usage | .065*** (.011) | .042*** (.011) |
| Partisanship | | |
| Christian Democratic Vote | .299*** (.079) | .138 (.078) |
| Christian Democratic Party ID | .017 (.031) | .033 (.030) |
| Socialist Vote | .153* (.062) | .134* (.061) |
| Socialist Party ID | .074** (.024) | .066** (.023) |
| Ideology | | |
| Left | .070*** (.010) | .052*** (.010) |
| Right | -.086*** (.012) | -.087*** (.012) |
| Postmaterialism | .041** (.016) | .037* (.016) |
| Feminist Role Values | .013*** (.002) | .015*** (.002) |
| Economic Vulnerability | | |
| Sociotropic | -.120*** (.010) | -.113*** (.010) |
| Personal | -.095*** (.010) | -.094*** (.010) |
| Socio-Demographic Variables | | |
| Labor | -.099*** (.020) | -.050* (.019) |
| Bourgeois | .067*** (.020) | .041* (.019) |
| Education | .009*** (.003) | .090*** (.003) |
| Income | .010* (.005) | .006 (.005) |
| Sex (Male) | .013 (.020) | .009 (.020) |
| Age | -.006*** (.001) | -.005*** (.001) |
| National Tradition | -- | .496*** (.023) |
| Adj. R² | .240 | .284 |
| Weighted N= | 8371 | 8371 |

*Coefficient significant at p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.