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Wealth Through Christ?

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Wealth Through Christ?

Matthew P. Mikulcik
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Research Honors

*Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;
They neither toil nor spin...
But if God so clothes the grass of the field,
Which today is alive and
Tomorrow is thrown into the oven,
Will he not much more clothe you,
O men of little faith.
(Matthew 6:28,30)*

As a Christian, should a belief in God have an impact on economic well-being? Does it? One could argue that Christians have certain values and beliefs that might have a significant impact on economic well-being. One could also argue that other non-Christian people possess similar values and beliefs that have nothing to do with a belief in the Christian God, but that might also have a significant impact on well-being. One could argue that the values and beliefs associated with being Christian should have a positive effect on well-being; however, one could also argue that the values and beliefs should have a negative effect on economic well-being.

All these arguments have been made. The purpose of this paper is to examine these claims and test if empirical evidence can be found to support any of them. The relationship between Christian beliefs and well-being will be investigated, along with the significance of this relationship.

Theory

There are two major areas that need to be explored in dealing with the theory of the effect of being Christian on economic well-being-- whether it might have a positive or negative effect, and whether the relationship is significant or not. This section of the paper will first look at the theory behind the positive/negative argument, and then the theory behind the significant/insignificant argument.

Positive/Negative

Most of the arguments for a positive relationship between being Christian and economic well-being concentrate on what is commonly known as the “work ethic”. Max Weber introduced the idea of the work ethic, specifically a Protestant work ethic, in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber writes extensively about the idea of work as a calling. He presents Martin Luther’s ideas that “the only way of living acceptable to God was . . . solely through the fulfillment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world. That was his calling”(Weber, 1958). If Protestants possess this kind of thinking, then a positive relationship would be expected. A person was supposed to work at his calling for the glory of God, and “unwillingness to work is symptomatic of the lack of grace”(Weber, 1958).

Weber also describes the Calvinist approach to the calling, which is more extreme. Calvinists were concerned with the necessity of proving one’s faith through worldly activity, and the concept of a calling fit nicely into this thinking(Weber, 1958). The better a person was at their calling, the more they displayed that they were one of God’s chosen people. Success through work was equated with spiritual success, which encouraged Calvinists to do their work as well as possible. This attitude could only help a person’s economic well-being. Similar to Calvinist thinking was the Quaker view, which “holds that a man’s life in his calling is an exercise in ascetic virtue, a proof of his state of grace . . . which is expressed in the care and method with which he pursues his calling”(Weber, 1958). Christians are concerned with their “state of grace”, and if they believe that this is shown through how they pursue their calling, this will have a profound impact on their work ethic. They will be willing to work harder than non-Christians in order to prove their possession of grace. This work ethic would have a positive impact on economic well-being.

The work ethic is backed by the observation that each person of the Trinity is described in the narratives of Jesus/Israel as working. The Father creates, the Son redeems, and the Spirit creates anew(Meeks, 1989). If man is created in the image of God, and God is a worker, man should also be a worker. Rebecca Blank claims that “our lives demonstrate our Christian commitments in

many ways, not least of which is to seek God's will in our personal economic decisions"(Blank, 1992). If as Christians, people are to be workers, then their economic decisions should reflect this and they should work more.

A Christian's economic decisions, no less than their religious decisions, are said to be ruled by God's covenant, and work is an expression of obedience to God(Rasmussen, 1965). The Old Testament exhorts us to "commit your work to the Lord"(Proverbs 23:4). Paul writes in the New Testament that "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord"(Colossians 3:23) and reminds us to rejoice "in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain"(I Corinthians 15:58). Work is to be considered not only as service to human beings, but also as service to God(Meeks, 1989). To live as Christians, people should possess the afore-mentioned work ethic, which should improve economic well-being.

The work ethic is further supported by the view that "waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins . . . because every hour lost is lost to labour for the glory of God"(Weber, 1958). Christians are taught in the book of Jeremiah that "cursed is he who does the work of the Lord with slackness"(Jeremiah 48). As Christians, people should not be wasting their time, but rather should work at their calling. Anything less would not be doing God's will.

Blessings of God might provide another argument for a positive effect on well-being. Jesus teaches to "look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap or gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them"(Matthew 6:26). If God loves his people and is concerned about their economic well-being, then he will take care of them since "those who seek the Lord lack no good thing"(Ps 34:106). An unique belief of Christians is that the material world is God's world, and one of the blessings of God is material abundance(Rasmussen, 1965). As Christians, people should be economically blessed to the extent that "if God shows you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way . . . if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward"(Tawney, 1926). It is God, not the individual, who provides economic well-being. An individual's skills and talents, which have a significant influence on well-being, are often considered to be blessings

from God by Christians. By not taking advantage of what God provides through His blessings of skills and opportunities, Christians would not be following their values and beliefs. All other things being equal, the blessings of God might have a positive effect on well-being.

The blessings of God also support a main theory on why being Christian might have a negative effect on economic well-being. Jesus teaches “do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear”(Luke 12:22) and he reprimands people whose primary focus in life is material possessions(Blank, 1992). Instead of worrying about economic well-being, Christians are to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well”(Matthew 6:33). These values might have a negative impact on economic well-being. A Christian might spend time worshipping and learning about God that a non-Christian might spend working. Christians first care is to concentrate on continuously strengthening their faith, and putting aside all dependence on work(Tawney, 1926). This might cause Christians to be worse off economically than they otherwise would have been.

Proverbs instruct “do not toil to acquire wealth”(Proverbs 23:4). The Methodist founder, John Wesley, gives a reason for this by fearing that “wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion” as a result of “pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches”(Weber, 1958). Christians should not try to acquire wealth, because doing so might hurt their faith. They may become enamored of this world, thereby forgetting the more important world to come. These values and beliefs should have a negative impact on well-being.

A third explanation for a possible negative relationship is the view that “those favored by God should live free from work and enjoy the divine like leisure that benefits their inherent goodness”(Meeks, 1989). If as a Christian, a person believes that God created the world and He now relaxes for eternity, enjoying a permanent Sabbath, they might be inclined to think they deserve the same(Meeks, 1989). God would want his people to enjoy life, and this would be accomplished through working less, which would suggest a negative relationship between Christianity and economic well-being.

Significant/Insignificant

Assuming that either a positive or negative relationship exists, is the relationship significant? Rasmussen claims that “spiritual life has an inevitable and dominating effect upon economic life”(Rasmussen, 1965). If this is so, Christian’s beliefs and values should have a significant impact on their well-being. Karl Marx supports this view by writing that “work is the revelation of one’s hidden, inner self”(Meeks, 1989). The values of Christians should come out in their work, and this should have an effect. Calvin encourages Christians to assert their values in business and other worldly affairs(Nelson, 1993). The more they assert, the more significant the relationship.

A problem in this thinking is that “in the tragic separation between religion and daily life, no area has developed a wider gap than that between faith and economic affairs”(Rasmussen, 1965). On the job, people are taught the importance of values such as individualism, self-reliance, and self-interest, values that directly conflict with many Christian values(Rasmussen, 1965). The temptation of economic life makes it very difficult for Christian values to be carried over into a person’s work and have a significant impact. Through work, human beings are constantly dominating and exploiting each other(Meeks, 1989). Christian values are often pushed to the side in the pursuit of economic goals, and the values become insignificant. A situation is created where monetary values dominate all other values including one’s faith(Seabrook, 1995). As a result, it is usually thought that religion and economics are generally unrelated because “the spiritual focus of most religions puts them at odds with the materialistic concerns of economics”(Rosser Jr., 1993). If Christians are focused on religious values that are not linked to economic values, there should not be a significant impact on well-being.

In addition, if the work ethic is a value that Christians possess that might impact economic well-being, “casual observations of contemporary Japan and other Chinese communities make it abundantly clear that these societies do not lack a work ethic.”(Lessnoff, 1994) These non-Christian cultures possess a pronounced work ethic, although theirs has nothing to do with “pleasing God or proving the salvation of one’s eternal soul, but is entirely secular and this-

worldly”(Lessnoff, 1994). If the Christian work ethic is not something different or special, it will likely not have a significant impact. There is also evidence that other religious groups, such as Jews, have certain values and beliefs that might have large positive impacts on economic well-being(Glenn, 1968). The effect of Christian values on economic well-being could very well be insignificant when compared to people such as Jews.

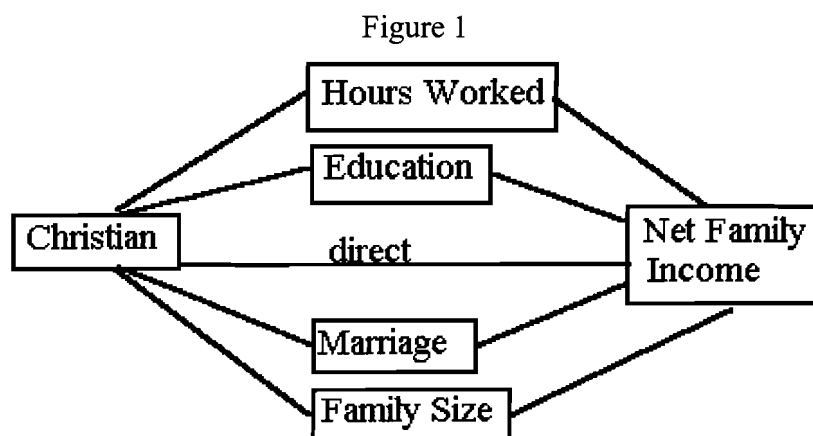
Empirical

Previous studies have tried to test the above theory through a series of difference of means tests, whereby empirical testing is done to see if differences exist between things such as the average income of Christians and non-Christians for example. Glenn and Hyland, in their 1968 study, looked at sample means of things such as economic level and educational level to test if a difference exists between Protestants and Catholics, and occasionally Jews. They found that “religious influences do not handicap Catholics in their competition with Protestants.”(Glenn, 1968) This result would suggest that the ideas that Weber writes about are not valid. Welch did a study in 1978 that compared education, occupation, and annual income of religious affiliates to non-affiliates. He concluded that “religious non-affiliation does not constitute a barrier to worldly success.”(Welch, 1978) This result would support the argument that being Christian has an insignificant impact on economic well-being.

Both of these previous studies compared means of groups of individuals and had the short coming that they did not control for non-religion related variables which effect earnings. In contrast, this paper will be looking directly at the individuals and will be able to control for non-religion related variables such as education and sex. The data is taken from the 1993 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth(NLSY). This is a database that took a representative sample of individuals in 1979, surveyed them on all aspects of their life, and has surveyed them every year since. By looking at micro-data, the impact of an individual’s values and beliefs on their economic well-being can be more closely examined.

Direct and Indirect Effects

Net Family Income will be the proxy for economic well-being, and a series of ordinary least squares regressions will be run to test for the impact of being Christian on Net Family Income. Theory suggests there are many ways, both direct and indirect, that being Christian might have an impact on economic well-being. An example of a direct effect would be things such as blessings from God, which might directly influence Net Family Income by providing material abundance. Weber's work ethic and the theory that being Christian might impact values towards work would be an example of an indirect effect of being Christian on economic well-being. Being Christian might have an impact on hours worked, and hours worked might have an impact on Net Family Income. If this is the case, being Christian would have an indirect impact on Net Family Income through hours worked. This is shown graphically in Figure 1.



Since theory suggests that being Christian might have an indirect effect on economic well-being through hours worked, it is possible that being Christian might also have an indirect effect on economic well-being through other variables. A main theory why being Christian might have an impact on economic well-being is that being Christian influences an individual's values. The other three variables that indirect effects will be tested for-- education, marriage, and family size -- are greatly affected by an individual's values. They measure to a certain extent how much a person values their education, or how much a person values a traditional marriage or a large

family. Since a person's education and family structure are likely to impact Net Family Income, if being Christian impacts these variables, it will indirectly impact Net Family Income.

Christian

Christian and non-Christian-- these groups are so large and diverse that even if the effect of being Christian on economic well-being was determined, analyzing the importance and significance of this result would be very difficult.¹ All Christians are not the same. All non-Christians are not the same. There are differences among each broad category, differences in the focus of the religion, the values, and the beliefs. As a result, the Christians and non-Christians were broken into smaller categories that, while still large and diverse, do a better job of putting groups with similar focuses, values and beliefs together and distinguishing to a certain extent these differences.

The division of the Christians was based on the groupings used by Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney in their book *American Mainline Religion*. They used data from the General Social Survey, a survey that appears to be very similar to the NLSY used in this study. They divided Christians into six groups-- Liberal Protestants(LIBERAL), Moderate Protestants(MODERATE), Black Protestants, Conservative Protestants(CONSERVATIVE), Catholics(CATHOLIC), and Others(OTHER PROT). The Black Protestant group was eliminated because race will be included as a control variable in the regressions. The NLSY data was then placed into the remaining groups. These groupings and the number of individuals in each are shown in Table 1.

Since the focus of this paper is on Christians, non-Christians will be divided into only three groups-- JEW, OTHER, and non-affiliates. The variable JEW contains the respondents that claimed to be Jewish, and are a separate group because they are treated separately in much of the previous literature. OTHER is all the non-Christians that claimed to have some religious affiliation other than Jewish. While it is recognized that other non-Christian religions are very

¹ In earlier versions of this paper, empirical tests looked at the differences between Christians and non-Christians, Christians and non-affiliates, and Catholics and Protestants. A decision was then made that it would be better to divide the religion variables into smaller groups so that the results would be easier to interpret.

Table 1: Religious Groupings

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Liberal Protestants | | 349 |
| | Presbyterian | 194 |
| | Episcopalian | 100 |
| | United Church of Christ | 19 |
| | Reformed United Church of Christ | 4 |
| | Congregationalist | 32 |
| Moderate Protestants | | 938 |
| | Methodist | 461 |
| | Lutheran | 444 |
| | Christian Reform | 15 |
| | Reformed | 14 |
| | Hungarian Reformed | 1 |
| | Dutch Reform | 2 |
| | Grace Reformed | 1 |
| Conservative Protestants | | 1515 |
| | Baptist | 1227 |
| | Church of Christ | 52 |
| | Churches of God | 23 |
| | Church of God in Christ | 5 |
| | Apostolic Faith | 2 |
| | Full Gospel | 3 |
| | Four Square Gospel | 2 |
| | Holiness | 25 |
| | Pilgrim Holiness | 1 |
| | Pentocostal Assembly of God | 4 |
| | Pentocostal Church of God | 6 |
| | Pentocostal | 83 |
| | Pentocostal Holiness | 11 |
| | United Holiness | 1 |
| | 7th Day Adventist | 16 |
| | Holiness (Nazarene) | 6 |
| | Nazarene | 16 |
| | Bible | 1 |
| | New Testament Christian | 1 |
| | Christian & Missionary Alliances | 2 |
| | Brethern | 2 |
| | United Brethern | 2 |
| | Christ in Christian Union | 1 |
| | Covenant | 2 |
| | Evangelical | 10 |
| | Evangelical Reformed | 1 |
| | Evangelist Free Church | 6 |
| | Salvation Army | 1 |
| | Wesleyan | 3 |
| Other Protestant | | 406 |
| | Latter Day Saints | 8 |
| | Jehovah's Witness | 20 |
| | Quaker | 8 |
| | Mormon | 28 |
| | Other | 342 |
| Catholic | | 1836 |
| Jew | | 63 |
| Other Non-Christian | | 119 |
| Non Affiliates | | 627 |

different from one another just as Christian denominations are very different from one another, since the focus of this paper is on Christians, it is beyond the scope of this paper to divide the non-Christian religions into smaller groups. This being the case, interpreting results on OTHER would be extremely difficult at best, and will not be done in the context of this paper. OTHER needs to be included in the regressions to serve as a control variable. If it was not included, then all non-Christians (excluding Jews) would be grouped together with the non-affiliates. The non-affiliates are all those that did not claim a religion in the survey, and they will be the group against which all other religions are compared.

In addition to dividing the religions into smaller sections, another religious variable that will be included is church attendance, which will be used as a proxy for faith. The reason for this is that, for example, an individual might claim to be a Moderate Protestant, but if that individual never attends church, the influence of religion on his values is likely to be different when compared to an individual who is an avid church attender. The control group for the attendance variables are those that never attend. The attendance variables used are defined as follows:

ATT1: Several times a year

ATT2: About once a month

ATT3: Two or three times a month

ATT4: About once a week

ATT5: More than once a week

Model 1

Model 1 will test for the indirect effects as described earlier and shown in Figure 1. Four separate regressions were run, testing for the impact of religion on Hours Worked, measured by the total number of hours worked in the 1993; Education, defined as the highest grade completed in 1993; Marriage, defined as one if respondent is in a traditional marriage in 1993 with spouse present and zero otherwise; and Family Size, measured by the total number of individuals in the household.

The independent variables were the five Christian variables, the two non-Christian variables, and the five attendance variables. These religion variables are all taken from the 1982 survey, the last year in which religious data is available on the NLSY. The regressions were not run using 1982 data for all the variables because in 1982 the respondents were only between the ages of 17 and 25, and the economic data would not be representative of a working population. By running the regressions using 1982 faith and 1993 economic data, what is being tested is whether or not the values and beliefs individuals had in their youth had an impact on their economic well-being as adults. If Christians possess certain values and beliefs that might have an impact, were these beliefs instilled in the respondents in the early part of their life, and did they have an impact? The fact that religious data is not available for 1993 is a limiting factor of this data set, but it by no means decreases the value of the results. Rather, it helps strengthen many of the arguments that revolve around values.

There are no expectations for the five attendance variables, and there are no expectations for the OTHER and OTHER PROT because the groups they represent are too diversified to make any generalization and expectations for. The expected rankings for the remaining four Christian variables and JEW are shown in Table 2.

Following Weber's theory which was discussed earlier, the Liberal and Moderate Protestants are expected to possess the "Protestant work ethic." The Liberal and Moderate Protestants are the groups that most possess the qualities and traits that Weber associated with the Protestant work ethic, and as a result they are expected to have the greatest impact on HOURS WORKED. It is expected that the Conservatives will possess a work ethic similar to the Catholics, and this is expected to be less than the work ethic possessed by the Liberals and the Moderates. While it is expected that the Conservative and Catholic work ethic will be less than the Liberal and Moderate work ethic, it is unclear how it might compare to the work ethic of a non-affiliate. The expected impact of being Jewish on HOURS WORKED is not discussed by Weber, and is therefore not applicable.

The EDUCATION, MARRIED, and FAMILY SIZE expectations are based on results found by Roof and McKinney(Roof, 1987). These are rankings are drawn directly from results that they found, and these rankings are the expectations for this project.

Table 2: Expected Ranking of Denominational Impact on HOURS WORKED, EDUCATION, MARRIED, and FAMILY SIZE

| | HOURS WORKED | EDUCATION* | MARRIED* | FAMILY SIZE* |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|----------|--------------|
| LIBERAL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| MODERATE | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| CONSERVATIVE | 3 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| CATHOLIC | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| JEW | NA | 1 | 4 | 5 |

* based on Roof and McKinney, 1987

Model 2

After the results of Model 1 are calculated, Model 2 will be run so calculations can be made to determine whether being Christian has a positive or negative impact on economic well-being and whether this impact is significant or insignificant. The dependent variable in Model 2 is Net Family Income, and many variables are included that might have an impact on it. The five Christian variables are included, as are the two non-Christian variables and the five attendance variables. The coefficients on these religious variables from the Model 2 regression results will give the direct impact, if any, of these variables on Net Family Income.

HOURS WORKED, EDUCATION, MARRIED, and FAMILY SIZE are the next four variables included. They are all expected to be significant. HOURS WORKED is expected to be significant because it is reasonable to think that the more an individual works, the more they might earn. The expectation that EDUCATION should be significant is derived from Gary Becker's human capital theory, which describes several variables that have an "important effect

on observed earnings”(Becker, 1975) including education. MARRIED and FAMILY SIZE are expected to be significant for two reasons. First, as the number of people in a family increase, the number of people that could potentially contribute to Net Family Income increases. Second, as the family grows, the need to have greater income increases as a result of more people to support. If these four variables are significant, then indirect impacts of the religion variables can be calculated. This process will be explained in the results section of the paper.

A number of control variables are also included so that the impact of religion on Net Family Income can be determined once other factors that might also have an impact are controlled for. If this is not done, it might be the case that, for example, Liberal Protestants have a positive impact on Net Family Income when compared to non-affiliates; however, this could be because Liberal Protestants tend to come from a more advantaged background. If differences in background are controlled for by including them in the regression, the impact of religion on Net Family Income is easier to interpret and the coefficients have more meaning.

AGE is included as a proxy for work experience, since the older a person is, the more opportunity they have had to work. MINORITY and MALE, dummy variables assigned a value of one if the respondent is a minority or male respectively, are variables commonly included in income studies, and as a result will also be included in this project. EDMOM, the highest grade attained by the respondent’s mother, is included to try to control for background differences. The higher the level of educational attainment by an individual’s mother, the more advantaged a background they are expected to have come from.

The final group of variables included attempt to control for differences in where individuals reside. URBAN, a dummy variable with a value of one if the respondent lives in a urban setting and zero otherwise, is included to control for differences from living in a city as opposed to living in a rural setting. SOUTH, WEST, and NORTH EAST are included to control for differences in economic well-being in different sections of the country. The control group against which these variables are compared is the North Central region.

Table 3 lists all the variables and their expected signs.

Table 3: Expected Impact on Net Family Income

| | | | |
|--------------|---|--------------|---|
| LIBERAL | ? | HOURS WORKED | + |
| MODERATE | ? | EDUCATION | + |
| CONSERVATIVE | ? | MARRIED | + |
| CATHOLIC | ? | FAMILY SIZE | + |
| OTHER PROT | ? | AGE | + |
| JEW | ? | MALE | + |
| OTHER | ? | MINORITY | - |
| ATT1 | ? | EDMOM | + |
| ATT2 | ? | URBAN | + |
| ATT3 | ? | WEST | ? |
| ATT4 | ? | SOUTH | ? |
| ATT5 | ? | NORTH EAST | ? |

Results

Model 1

The four regressions were run for Model 1, and the results are shown in Table 4. The numbers not in parentheses are the coefficients generated by the regression. The coefficient is the amount that the dependent variable increases or decreases by a one unit change in the independent variable. For example, if LIBERAL changed from a 0 to a 1, HOURS WORKED would increase by about 246. One way of thinking about this is that a Liberal Protestant works 246 hours more in a year compared to a non-affiliate, since all the Christian and non-Christian variables are compared to non-affiliates.

The numbers in parentheses are the t-statistics, and the asterisks are used to signal levels of significance. The t-statistic is used to determine whether an independent variable has a significant impact on the dependent variable. The larger the t-statistic, the more significant the variable. The minimum to begin claiming significance is about 1.645, which indicates that there

is only a 10% chance that the variable is actually has no effect. The asterisks show these levels, with one asterisk indicating a 10% chance, two indicating a 5% chance, and three indicating a 1% chance or less. Using LIBERAL as an example again, its t-statistic in the HOURS WORKED regression is 3.592, which means that the chance that it actually has no effect is 1% or less as indicated by the asterisks. N is the number of individuals in the regression, and R squared is the percentage of variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables.

It is important to note since that only religion variables were included in the Model 1 regressions, the results indicate the maximum effect that the religion variables can have on the four dependent variables. It is possible that the results could reflect other things that are not controlled for, but the inclusion of further variables was beyond the scope of this paper.

The HOURS WORKED regression turned out generally as expected. The Liberal and the Moderate Protestants, the groups that Weber would argue would have a Protestant work ethic, do possess a significant work ethic, both increasing HOURS WORKED by around 250 hours. CATHOLIC having both a positive and significant work ethic when compared to non-affiliates was a little surprising, especially since the CATHOLIC impact is quite a bit larger than the CONSERVATIVE impact; however, they are both much less than LIBERAL and MODERATE, which also supports Weber's work theories. With the exception of ATT1, the attendance variables are all insignificant which is interesting. It would appear that compared to those that never attend church, attending church has no significant impact on HOURS WORKED, either positive or negative. The other interesting result is that JEW increases HOURS WORKED by about 434 hours, nearly twice what LIBERAL and MODERATE increased HOURS WORKED by. Does this suggest that Jews, who are not Protestants, possess the "Protestant work ethic" even more than the Liberal and Moderate Protestants? Not necessarily, but Jews appear to have a work ethic that is arguably much greater than the Protestant work ethic.

Table 4: Model 1 Regressions Results, Dependent Variables HOURS WORKED, EDUCATION, MARRIED, and FAMILY SIZE

| | HOURS WORKED | EDUCATION | MARRIED | FAMILY SIZE |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| LIBERAL | 246.176 (3.592)*** | 1.150 (7.092)*** | 0.142 (4.335)*** | -0.277 (-2.589)*** |
| MODERATE | 258.736 (4.808)*** | 0.511 (4.058)*** | 0.145 (5.737)*** | -0.152 (-1.825)* |
| CONSERVATIVE | 98.817 (1.982)** | -0.778 (-6.666)*** | 0.048 (2.054)** | 0.111 (1.446) |
| CATHOLIC | 163.988 (3.371)*** | -0.085 (-0.748) | 0.099 (4.395)*** | 0.046 (0.617) |
| OTHER PROT | 150.253 (2.230)** | -0.058 (-0.371) | 0.073 (2.352)** | 0.105 (1.011) |
| JEW | 434.363 (2.644)*** | 2.733 (7.129)*** | 0.064 (0.838) | -0.391 (-1.545) |
| OTHER | 54.319 (0.518) | 0.266 (1.078) | 0.065 (1.330) | 0.039 (0.239) |
| ATT1 | 90.768 (2.372)** | 0.690 (7.703)*** | 0.045 (2.488)** | 0.077 (1.305) |
| ATT2 | 77.162 (1.471) | 1.157 (9.937)*** | 0.054 (2.153)** | 0.186 (2.286)** |
| ATT3 | 35.854 (0.704) | 1.275 (10.768)*** | 0.090 (3.733)*** | 0.298 (3.815)*** |
| ATT4 | 69.792 (1.567) | 1.524 (14.567)*** | 0.110 (5.189)*** | 0.333 (4.817)*** |
| ATT5 | 71.932 (1.166) | 1.780 (12.407)*** | 0.147 (5.037)*** | 0.222 (2.319)** |
| N | 5419 | 5523 | 6098 | 5524 |
| R squared | 0.01068 | 0.10962 | 0.02088 | 0.01354 |

The results of the EDUCATION regression were also generally as expected. JEW had a large significant impact, increasing educational attainment by nearly three years when compared to non-affiliates. The Liberals followed in second, and the Moderates in third as expected. CATHOLIC was insignificant, and while CONSERVATIVE was significant, the Conservative Protestants attained nearly a year less of education compared to non-affiliates. The biggest surprise in this regression was the results of the attendance variables. They were all highly significant, and the greater the attendance, the greater the positive impact, up to a maximum of

increasing education approximately 1.8 years if an individual attended church more than once a week compared to not attending at all. A possible explanation for this is that the more devoted individuals are to their faith, the more devoted they might be to other things such as education. Values on learning, specifically learning about their faith, might increase with more attendance, and these might carry over into traditional education.

The coefficients in the MARRIED regression indicate differences in the probability of being in a traditional marriage with spouse present. For example, the LIBERAL coefficient of 0.14 indicates that the probability of a Liberal being in a traditional marriage is 14% higher than a non-affiliate. The results were not as expected. Liberals and Moderates had the highest coefficients, and they were rather large. The Conservatives were expected to have the largest coefficient, and they actually had the smallest coefficient of the significant variables. The CATHOLIC coefficient was significant and fairly large, while JEW was insignificant, although JEW and CATHOLIC were expected to have roughly the same impact on MARRIED. The attendance variables were all significant and again increased as attendance increased up to 0.15 on ATT5. Increased church attendance increases the probability of being in a traditional marriage up to 15% when compared to non-attendees. If church attendance is a measurement of commitment to one's faith, then perhaps the more committed an individual is to their faith, the more likely it is that they will be committed to one individual.

None of the religion variables in the FAMILY SIZE regression had a very large magnitude, with the largest being an increase of 0.33 of a person. This indicates that religion is not a very significant determinate of FAMILY SIZE, which is backed by the fact that only six of the twelve variables were significant. CONSERVATIVE, expected to have the largest impact was insignificant, as was CATHOLIC and JEW. LIBERAL and MODERATE were both significant, but had such small negative coefficients that the impact of being a Liberal or Moderate Protestant on FAMILY SIZE is not very large. The attendance variables were the only ones with positive significant results, the largest being ATT4 with a coefficient of 0.33.

In all four regressions, the R squared was rather small, ranging from 0.01 to 0.10. This indicates that the religion variables only explained from 1% to 10% of the variation in the dependent variables. This is not a very surprising result though. It was thought that the religion variables might have some influence on HOURS WORKED, EDUCATION, MARRIED, and FAMILY SIZE, but it was never expected that they would be the most important variables in explaining the variation in these four variables. These regressions support this expectation.

Model 2

The regression results for Model 2 are shown in Table 5. With the exception of MALE, the control variables, the non-religious variables, were all significant and they all had the expected sign. The result that the region variables, WEST, SOUTH, and NORTH EAST, all had a positive and significant impact is a little surprising. This would indicate that when other characteristics are controlled for, including race, sex, and education, if an individual resides in any region other than the North Central, their Net Family Income will be greater when compared to a similar individual residing in the North Central. It is not clear why this is the case, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to research possible reasons for this result.

The religious variables provided some very intriguing results. LIBERAL, MODERATE, and CATHOLIC were all significant, although MODERATE is only marginally significant. Both JEW and CONSERVATIVE were insignificant, as were all the attendance variables with the exception of ATT5. The very large positive coefficient on CATHOLIC is the most interesting result. This indicates that when factors such as education, background, family, and region are controlled for, being Catholic has a positive impact of \$6756.21 on Net Family Income when compared to a non-affiliate. Perhaps this supports the theory of the “blessings of God” having a positive impact on economic well being. If this is the case, then are Catholics blessed more than other non-Catholic Christians, especially the Conservative Protestants where there was a difference between the coefficients of nearly \$2500? Another possible explanation is that the schools that Catholics went to might be better. Many Catholics are brought up in private Catholic schools, which are arguably oftentimes provides a better education than a public school.

Table 5: Model 2 Regression Results
 Dependent Variable: Net Family Income

| | | |
|--------------|----------|-------------|
| LIBERAL | 4773.47 | (2.208)** |
| MODERATE | 2842.37 | (1.676)* |
| CONSERVATIVE | 2273.86 | (1.398) |
| CATHOLIC | 6756.21 | (4.355)*** |
| OTHER PROT | 3424.42 | (1.608) |
| JEW | 5590.87 | (1.093) |
| OTHER | 6320.83 | (1.859)* |
| ATT1 | 250.51 | (0.207) |
| ATT2 | 982.98 | (0.591) |
| ATT3 | -473.33 | (-0.291) |
| ATT4 | -695.41 | (-0.479) |
| ATT5 | -3376.62 | (-1.703)* |
| HOURS WORKED | 6.39 | (12.980)*** |
| EDUCATION | 3878.11 | (18.765)*** |
| MARRIED | 20702.56 | (19.191)*** |
| FAMILY SIZE | 2048.22 | (5.770)*** |
| URBAN | 5830.60 | (5.442)*** |
| WEST | 3237.76 | (2.512)** |
| SOUTH | 2236.65 | (1.996)** |
| NORTH EAST | 9387.09 | (7.232)*** |
| AGE | 782.77 | (4.090)*** |
| EDMOM | 695.36 | (3.896)*** |
| MALE | -570.14 | (-0.622) |
| MINORITY | -5302.32 | (-4.244)*** |
| N | 4151 | |
| R squared | 0.34645 | |

It is therefore possible that even though they might have received the same amount of years of education as a non-Catholic, the higher quality of the education provides Catholics with advantages that would help them receive a higher net family income. The CATHOLIC results could be reflective of this. It is very difficult to determine exactly why CATHOLIC has such a large significant coefficient, and perhaps future research can explore this area further.

To determine the net impact the religion variables have on Net Family Income, the indirect effects need to be calculated and added to the direct effects. To calculate the indirect effects, the sum is taken for each religion variable of its impact on HOURS WORKED, EDUCATION,

MARRIED, and FAMILY SIZE multiplied by the impact those variables have on Net Family Income. For example, as was shown in Table 4 earlier, LIBERAL increases HOURS WORKED by 246.176 hours. As is shown in Table 5, a one unit increase in HOURS WORKED increases Net Family Income by \$6.39. The indirect impact of LIBERAL on Net Family Income through HOURS WORKED would therefore be $246.176 * \$6.39$, or \$1573.06. This means that being a Liberal Protestant has a positive impact of just under \$1600 on Net Family Income as a result of working more when compared to a non-affiliate. This same process is then done for the other three variables, EDUCATION, MARRIED, and FAMILY SIZE, and the impacts are added together to get a net indirect impact of LIBERAL on Net Family Income compared to a non-affiliate which totals to \$8405.30. If this indirect effect is then added to the direct effect of \$4773.47, which is the coefficient from Table 5, the net impact of LIBERAL is $\$8410.22 + \4773.47 , or \$13,183.62. These calculations are done for all of the religious variables and are displayed in Table 6.

As was mentioned earlier, the results for the Model 1 regressions indicated the maximum possible effect of the religion variables on EDUCATION, HOURS WORKED, MARRIED, and FAMILY SIZE as a result of not including other control variables. As a result, the net indirect effect that is calculated is also the maximum possible net indirect effect of the religion variables.

The net impact on Net Family Income is positive for all variables. This implies that having religious values has a positive impact on economic well-being, regardless of what the particular religion is, when compared to a non-affiliate. There are definitely varying degrees to the impact on economic well-being, and for the most part they are what could be expected. Of the Protestant variables, LIBERAL had the greatest impact, followed by a relatively large impact by MODERATE and then by a much smaller impact by CONSERVATIVE. This is not surprising. The Liberal Protestants include those that tend to follow the Calvinist tradition, and they are supposed to possess the greatest concern for things of this world. The religious focus of Liberals tend to be on material things, as opposed to the Conservatives, who tend to focus more on things not of this world, and who therefore were not expected to have as great an impact as the Liberals.

Table 6: Calculation of Net Impact of Religion on Net Family Income

| Religion | Net Indirect Effect | Direct Effect | Net Impact on Net Family Income |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| LIBERAL | \$8405.30 | \$4773.47 | \$13178.77 |
| MODERATE | 6325.58 | 2842.37 | 9167.95 |
| CONSERVATIVE | -1164.65 | 2273.86 | 1109.31 |
| CATHOLIC | 2862.02 | 6756.21 | 9618.23 |
| OTHER PROT | 2461.54 | 3424.42 | 5885.96 |
| JEW | 13898.56 | 5590.87 | 19489.43 |
| OTHER | 2804.22 | 6320.83 | 9125.05 |
| ATT1 | 4345.23 | 250.51 | 4595.76 |
| ATT2 | 6478.95 | 982.98 | 7461.93 |
| ATT3 | 7647.30 | -473.33 | 7173.97 |
| ATT4 | 9315.55 | -695.41 | 8620.14 |
| ATT5 | 10860.66 | -3376.62 | 7484.04 |

The Conservatives were expected to be similar to the Catholics, but this did not turn out to be the case, as the Catholics had a similar net impact as the Moderates. This would support theory that would argue that Catholics are taking more of a mainstream position, as opposed to the more conservative position with which they have been historically associated. JEW had the greatest positive impact of any of the religious variables. Jews have a reputation for being economically strong, so therefore this result is not surprising.

The results of the attendance variables indicate that any church attendance has a positive impact on Net Family Income compared to never attending. Attending several times a year(ATT1) has the smallest positive impact, but attending anywhere from about once a month(ATT2) to more than once a week(ATT5) has relatively the same impact, which is a rather large positive impact.

The most important result, as can be seen in Table 6 on the previous page, is that in almost every case, the indirect effect is greater than the direct effect. It is nearly twice as much for LIBERAL, about three times as great for MODERATE, over \$8000 greater for JEW, and about \$13,000 greater for ATT5. This suggests that an individual's religion has the greatest impact on economic well-being indirectly through its impact on that individual's values and beliefs.

Having religious values impacts individuals' values towards other things. It impacts their values towards work, education, and family. These work, education, and family values in turn have an impact on economic well-being. Since the direct effect of religion on economic well-being is often times much smaller than the indirect effect, the indirect impact of religion on these values has a greater impact on economic well-being than any direct effect. Being a Liberal Protestant, for example, means that when compared to a non-affiliate there is a positive impact on values towards work, education, and marriage and a negative impact on values toward family size.

When the sum is taken of the impact these values have on economic well-being, it is quite large.

Conclusion

There are many theories on what impact being Christian might have on economic well-being. Some deal with the direct impact that being Christian might have on economic well-being, while others deal with the indirect impact that being Christian might have on economic well-being. Many good arguments can be found as to why being Christian might have a positive impact on economic well-being, why it might have a negative impact, why it might be significant, and why it might be insignificant. This paper set out to examine these theories and see if empirical evidence could be found to support any of them.

Support was found for theories that being Christian might have a positive and significant impact. When compared to non-affiliates, being Christian has a significant, positive impact on economic well-being. How large the impact is varies a great deal with the group the Christian belongs to, with the Liberal Protestants having the most impact, the Conservative Protestants

having the smallest impact, and the mainstream Moderate Protestants and the Catholics falling in the middle.

Does this result suggest that if an individual wants to increase their Net Family Income that they should rush out and become a Liberal Protestant, or perhaps a Jew whose net impact was the greatest of all tested? Not at all. The most significant finding of this paper, and the reason that this strategy would not work, is that the main reason that religion has an impact on economic well-being comes as a result of its impact on an individual's values, a result that was aided in discovery by the fact that 1982 religious data was used with 1993 economic data. Religious values appear to have a profound impact on an individual's values. The extent to which an individual's values are effected is influenced both by the individual's denomination and by how often that individual attends church. Religious values have an impact on values towards work, education, and family, and it is through impacting these values that religion tends to have its greatest impact on economic well-being.

While this might not have many implications for those who want to choose a religion that might help them economically in the short term, it is possible that it could have implications for people who are trying to choose a religion in which to raise their children. For example, a child brought up in a Liberal Protestant denomination compared to one raised a non-affiliate, is perhaps more likely to develop certain values that might influence their economic well-being in their adult life. Since the values associated with belonging to a Liberal Protestant denomination tend to have a positive impact on values towards work and education for example, it is quite possible that the child might develop these positive values towards work and education. As a result the child might work more and get more education than a non-affiliate might. This is not to suggest that if a person wants their child to be economically well-off they should raise them a Liberal Protestant or a Jew; rather, it is to suggest that there might be values associated with being a Liberal Protestant or a Jew, for example, that a parent might want to foster in their child and this might be a reason for raising them in a particular denomination.

There is plenty that can still be done in future research. Other non-Christian religions can be examined, for instance, and the large positive coefficient on CATHOLIC can be researched further. It is possible that a variable, such as a measure for the quality of the education, was overlooked that should have been included as a control variable, and more of these can be looked for. Control variables could also be included in the Model 1 regressions. This paper was a start into empirical testing of the economic effect of being Christian, but it is by no means an end.

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