

Response to Box-Steffensmeier

Janet Box-Steffensmeier has raised several objections to my comments regarding Catholic monopolies. She argues (a) that Catholicism's internal diversity is *less*, not greater, than that of established Protestant churches; (b) that church-state ties are *not* weaker in Catholic countries than in countries with established Protestant churches; (c) that regression results refute my explanation for the relative success of some Catholic monopolies; and (d) that these results are better explained by her alternative hypothesis that the "degree of choice" offered by Catholicism does not vary from place to place. I respectfully disagree with all four claims for the following reasons.

First, Catholicism's internal diversity is a matter of record. Consider, for example, the following scholars' statements regarding the range of products available to Catholic Church customers. Hanson (1987) observed that in order to be truly "Catholic," the Church always "has tolerated large variations in the content and style of

Author's Note: *I am grateful to Roger Finke, Eric Hanson, and Rodney Stark for helpful suggestions.*

belief as long as its members publicly professed ecclesiastical unity and loyalty to the institution" (p. 120). This has led to the availability of numerous expressions of Catholicism stressing different styles of worship (liturgical and pentecostal), different beliefs, different political philosophies (monarchist and democratic), and radically different economic orientations (ranging from quasi-Marxist "liberation theology" to the right-wing economics of "Opus Dei"). What appears to the untrained (Protestant) eye as a "Roman monolith" is in fact a "mosaic" of local parishes with widely divergent practices and orientations (Finke and Stark forthcoming). Hence, as Andrew Greeley (1977) noted in his statistical portrait of American Catholics, "every generalization that begins with the word 'Catholic' is likely to be misleading, if not erroneous, precisely because the generalization will mask substantial differences in values that exist among the Catholic subpopulations" (p. 252). Research on Catholicism abounds with statements like these. Papal pronouncements and Protestant presumptions notwithstanding, it is simply not true that the Church "offers no choice" to its customers.

Choice and diversity likewise confront the Catholic clergy. For centuries, the Church has been home to a "bewildering diversity" of "radically different" religious orders: isolationist Benedictines and Trappists, mendicant Franciscans and Dominicans, militant Jesuits, and many more (Gannon 1979, 22, 27). In the United States alone, there are some 150 orders of men and 400 orders of women. In 1969, there were enrolled more than 22,000 priests, 12,000 lay brothers, and 170,000 sisters (Mead 1970, 193). Moreover, as Thomas Gannon (1979), a Jesuit priest and sociologist of religion, emphasized "The major religious orders each contain a distinct character . . . [and] are quite jealous of their identity" (p. 27). Many of these orders began as potentially schismatic movements of protest or revival (Stark and Bainbridge 1985, 114), and virtually all maintain a substantial degree of autonomy. Hanson (1987) summarized the situation as follows:

Religious orders like the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits do not fit neatly into the regular ecclesiastical structure. They form parallel hierarchical structures from their generals in Rome to their provincial superiors who head various geographical jurisdictions. Religious orders thus remain exempt from certain types of control by the local bishop. They also project a special esprit de corps from following the spirituality of their founders. . . . Religious orders and [local] diocesan clergy also have a long tradition of friction. (P. 85)

These are the facts that stand behind my original conjecture that "competition *within* the Catholic church . . . substitutes for competition *between* Catholicism and other denominations," thereby enabling some Catholic monopolies to avoid the religious indifference that characterizes every established Protestant church.

Consider next my claim that most Catholic monopolies are less regulated and less thoroughly nationalized than their established Protestant counterparts. Here again, the experts speak with one voice. For example, the religious historian Paul Johnson (1976) argued that the German Lutheran clergy readily capitulated to Hitler because "they had no anti-state tradition. . . . Since Luther's day they had always been in the

service of the State, and indeed in many ways they had come to see themselves as civil servants. . . . [T]hey had not been able . . . to distinguish between being part of a national church, and totally subservient to the government” (p. 484). In contrast, political scientist Eric Hanson (1987) chronicled the political-religious struggles of Catholicism in Spain, Italy, Portugal, France, Poland, and numerous other countries — struggles over education, public morality, political philosophy, economic policy, the appointment of bishops, and financial support for the Church. Sociologist David Martin (1978) aptly summarized the contrast when he observed that “Protestant churches, especially Lutheran and Anglican ones, are more subject to the state than the Catholic church” (p. 23). According to Martin, church-state relations in Protestant Scandinavia are characterized by submission to the state, whereas relations in Catholic countries are “strained or broken,” characterized by constant “disputes,” “polarization,” “struggle,” and even “social warfare.” I therefore repeat my original claim that compared to established Protestant churches of Scandinavia, Catholic church-state ties are “nowhere as close, its status nowhere as secure, and hence its employees nowhere as poorly motivated.”

Turning to Box-Steffensmeier’s statistical results, I would note that a regression is never more valid than the variables it employs. But Box-Steffensmeier’s critical regressor, Barrett’s (1982) measure of “religious liberty,” is crude and implausible. As can be seen in Table 1, it assumes only three values over the entire 17-country regression sample (Ireland having been excluded as an outlier). Moreover, many values defy common sense. Does anyone really believe that the Republic of Ireland has the freest religious market in this sample? Are church-state ties really as weak in France as in the United States? Should Italy, home of the papal states, really be lumped together with Canada and Australia? Are the cozy church-state relationships of Scandinavia really equivalent to that of Spain, whose civil war resulted in the politically motivated murders of more than 4,000 priests (Hanson 1987, 128-29)? Note also that whereas the other regressor variables all measure objective quantities, “religious liberty” is a subjective code that Barrett applies to each country *without explanation or justification*. We have no way to replicate or even define its determination. In light of these problems, it is hardly surprising that “religious liberty” proves statistically insignificant when added to regressions that already have R^2 values over .93! (“Religious liberty” is significant and does manifest the predicted sign in regressions that omit the market concentration regressors. These results are available on request.) Based on such weak and problematic statistics, it is impossible to “flatly reject” my original conjecture.

On the other hand, the data and regressions *do* refute Box-Steffensmeier’s alternative hypothesis. According to that hypothesis, increased Catholic market concentration fails to reduce religiosity because the character of Catholicism is essentially invariant across every market. Catholicism is “uniform,” “rigid,” and “authoritarian,” and hence “offers no choice.” But if so, then how do we account for the fact that religiosity varies even more dramatically across Catholic nations than across Protestant nations? (See Table 1: The Catholic countries of France, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Ireland have weekly church attendance rates of 12, 20, 30, 36, 41, and

TABLE 1: National Measures of "Religious Liberty" and Religiosity

Country	Religious Liberty ^a	Church Attendance ^b	Percentage Catholic ^b
Austria	2	20	89
Belgium	2	30	92
Denmark	2	3	1
Finland	2	4	0
Norway	2	7	0
Spain	2	41	98
Sweden	2	5	1
Switzerland	2	25	50
West Germany	2	21	45
Australia	3	21	29
Britain	3	14	13
Canada	3	31	46
Italy	3	36	91
Netherlands	3	27	43
New Zealand	3	20	18
France	4	12	80
United States	4	43	26
Ireland	5	82	95

a. From the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Barrett 1982).

b. From Iannaccone (1991).

82%, respectively.) Box-Steffensmeier's regressions give the initial impression that Catholic religiosity is constant because the estimated coefficients for Catholic market concentration are all near zero. But the *standard errors* of these coefficients are huge and nearly twice those of the Protestant market concentration variable, $H(PS_{\text{prot}})$. It is impossible to "explain" this pattern of Catholic variability with an appeal to the Church's invariance. One must instead look toward alternative sources of variation.

This leads back, once again, to my original conjecture that Catholicism's internal diversity and complex relationships with the state may explain the success of some Catholic monopolies. I in no way wish to suggest that this conjecture has been proved. I wish only to emphasize that its underlying assumptions remain reasonable and that its conclusions are consistent with economic theory. It is a conjecture worth testing, but one that requires more and better data than those that appear in my original article and in the preceding comment. As Box-Steffensmeier notes, it would certainly help to work with data sets that disaggregate each country's religiosity at the level of individuals or denominations. It would also help to have data from different regions within a country, as this holds constant the influence of numerous cross-cultural factors. In this regard, note that Stark and McCann's (1989) analysis of American Catholic commitment across 102 Roman Catholic dioceses found a strong *negative*

correlation between Catholic "market share" and the fraction of male Catholics who join the priesthood. They conclude, "Even where the Catholic 'monopoly' is the informal accident of immigration rather than a creature of state policy, the organizational response is one of reduced vigor with a concomitant reduction in commitment. Conversely, where the church is numerically weak it is far more vigorous and effective" (p. 19).

The Catholic conjecture is still very much alive.

— Laurence R. Iannaccone
Santa Clara University

REFERENCES

- Barrett, David B. 1982. *World Christian Encyclopedia*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. Forthcoming. *The churching of America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Gannon, Thomas. 1979. The religious order in American Catholicism. *Annual Review of the Social Science of Religion* 3:2-57.
- Greeley, Andrew M. 1977. *The American Catholic: A social portrait*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hanson, Eric O. 1987. *The Catholic church in world politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Johnson, Paul. 1976. *A history of Christianity*. New York: Atheneum.
- Martin, David. 1978. *A general theory of secularization*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Mead, Frank S. 1970. *Handbook of denominations in the United States*. 5th ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.
- Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge. 1985. *The future of religion: Secularization, revival, and cult formation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stark, Rodney, and James McCann. 1989. The weaknesses of monopoly faiths: Market forces and Catholic commitment. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco.