



Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Rendering unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America* by Anthony Gill

Review by: Stathis N. Kalyvas

Source: *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94, No. 1 (Mar., 2000), pp. 213-214

Published by: American Political Science Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2586438>

Accessed: 30-03-2017 21:48 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



American Political Science Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Political Science Review*

powers to the regional governments, first elected in 1992. This sentiment was embodied most clearly in the statement by MRLGH Minister Dr. Libertine Amathila that the regional councillors' most significant role would be to provide the ministries with information about their constituencies, along the lines of "how many chickens and goats there are" (p. 72). But the depth and breadth of such resistance to empowering the regional councils and governors revealed by Forrest is again surprising. For example, the MRLGH interpreted the 1992 Regional Councils' Act in such a way as to grant only part-time status and an allowance (rather than full-time status and a salary with benefits) to regional councillors. In Forrest's view, this was a clear-cut decision by officials of the MRLGH to "denigrate the role of the councillors" (p. 76). In a similar vein, the MRLGH interpreted the role of the regional governors very narrowly—considering them to be governor of their regional council only, rather than governor of their region.

Despite these and many more impediments, both regional and national councils managed to survive and even thrive during their founding year. The National Council established its own set of standing rules and orders, lobbied hard for much needed staff and legal advisors, eventually got its own new space adjacent to the National Assembly, and transcended party divisions in favor of a National Council identity. Most important, it came to perform a significant grassroots transmission role by serving as a "state-society connecting agency," acting on behalf of Namibia's predominantly rural areas. Similarly, the regional councils, councillors, and governors all assumed roles far more significant than the MRLGH ever imagined. Regional councillors and governors alike took their position seriously and made every effort to meet their obligations as they understood them, despite severe resource constraints. Councils in nearly every region tackled significant issues during their first year, ranging from drought relief, to economic development, to their own organizational issues. In the end, according to Forrest, by insisting on challenging the obstacles strewn in their path, the regional and national councils are playing an important role in asserting the concerns of the rural majority and in consolidating democracy in Namibia.

Namibia's Post-Apartheid Regional Institutions provides unique insights into the crucial early years of institution building in Namibia, and at the regional level, which is seldom sufficiently examined. The book is an excellent model for investigations of state building and democratization in Africa and elsewhere. As such, it will very much appeal to a wide audience of political scientists and Africanists alike.

Rendering unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America. By Anthony Gill. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 204p. \$41.00 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

Stathis N. Kalyvas, *New York University*

The allocation of social science research to the issues vying for attention is oddly uneven. Some matters tend to attract great attention, while others remain for a long time in disproportionate obscurity. The allocation process appears not always to take into account the importance of the issue at hand. For example, research in European politics has long privileged the study of left-wing parties despite the fact that right-wing parties have played at least as defining a role in politics. One of the most blatantly underrepresented topics in social science research is religion, particularly church-state relations. Despite its obvious political and social relevance,

this issue has for a long time remained mostly in the hands of antiquarians and constitutional legal scholars rather than social scientists.

There are indications that this is slowly changing. Consider the study of secularization, which has long been the prominent research program in the sociology of religion. As in modernization theory, the main prediction of secularization theory is that economic and social development will cause religion to fade. Since religious practice has failed to vary as predicted, the addition of new sets of conditions to salvage the core of the theory gradually has become dominant. The study of religious practice has been revitalized, however, by the recent infusion of an incentive-based, "microeconomic" approach. Thinking of religion as a "product" produced by "religious firms" is bound to be controversial, but the empirical returns so far have been extremely encouraging.

Anthony Gill successfully adapts and expands insights from this recent wave of research. The empirical puzzle Gill identifies is politically relevant and theoretically compelling: What explains the political position of Catholic churches in Latin America vis-à-vis authoritarian regimes? Why do some churches ally with these regimes while others oppose them? Despite its relevance, this question has not been addressed before, at least never in a systematic and comparative fashion.

By addressing this issue, Gill embarks on the first sustained effort to define the microfoundations of state-church relations and test them systematically. He correctly points out that religious belief per se may be placed outside the realm of rationality, but leaders of religious institutions are subject to concerns and constraints similar to those of their secular counterparts: Bishops are also bureaucrats running large organizations. Gill begins by specifying a model of state-church relations based on simple and highly realistic assumptions. On the one hand, given that states minimize the cost of ruling, ideology is the least expensive method of obtaining popular compliance, and churches specialize in the production of ideological norms and values, it then follows that states will seek to cooperate with churches in order to minimize the cost of ruling. On the other hand, given that churches maximize membership and are vulnerable to both free-riding and competition, they will seek protection from competition through cooperation with states.

This is particularly true for Catholic churches, which are vulnerable to competition for a number of reasons. Because monopolized religion underproduces religiosity, a Catholic church suddenly facing competition from Protestant churches will suffer substantial membership losses. These will trigger a major political reorientation, and eventually the church will dissociate itself from the authoritarian government. The underlying mechanism is this: Protestant growth is typically fueled by mass conversions of the poorest segments of society. Unless the church is willing to oppose a regime that blatantly enacts antipoor policies, it has no hope of retaining its members, let alone bringing those who defect back to its fold. In other words, "if the Church was to remain a spiritual and moral force in Latin American society, it needed to match the pastoral efforts put forth by the Protestant churches. Having been associated with the political and economic elite for so long, a credible commitment to the poor meant publicly distancing itself from abusive governments" (p. 120). A Catholic church in a monopoly position does not face the risk of membership loss, so it lacks any incentive to dissociate itself from the authoritarian regime.

The empirical prediction yielded by the model (high levels of religious competition will trigger official Catholic antiauthoritarianism) is falsifiable, and Gill proceeds to check it

against the available evidence. His empirical analysis is exemplary. He combines an impressive array of tools and approaches typically found in isolation: regression analysis, controlled comparison, short case studies, and an historical overview informed by a good grasp of the large relevant secondary literature and a number of interviews. He is able to disqualify alternative hypotheses, such as repression, poverty, and internal church reform, as well as scrutinize the outliers. The statistical test provides very strong correlation support for the competition hypothesis. A carefully controlled comparison between Chile and Argentina (in which the Catholic church responded to military regimes in opposite ways) sheds light on and confirms the plausibility of the causal mechanism at work. Finally, the hypothesis is extended both vertically, through a discussion of the future of Catholic Progressivism in Latin America, and horizontally, through a preliminary exploration of the challenges faced by Orthodox churches in Eastern Europe. Overall, this is a superior demonstration of how to combine deductive thinking with rich, comparative empirical research.

Gill's model has yet to be fully specified. This is clear with respect to three broad issues. First, the focus on legitimacy understates the fundamental reality of authoritarianism, namely, its coercive nature. At the same time, stressing legitimacy risks reducing religion to little beyond an "opiate of the people." And while the focus on authoritarian states is fully appropriate to the question at hand, the real challenge is to specify a model of church-state relations under democracy. Such a model will have to take into account the role of parties (which in Gill's model are largely substituted by the state), democratic institutions, and cleavages and issue dimensions.

Second, the mechanism of individual defection and the ways in which it affects the options of both church and state remain opaque. A key assumption is that cooperation with authoritarian regimes hurts churches that operate in competitive religious markets. This is not part of the model's core assumptions but derives from an additional implicit assumption, namely, that the poor maximize ideology (broadly understood to include policy). Yet, the mechanism of individual defection toward Protestant churches turns out not to be driven by ideology. What is being maximized by the poor is the quality of the religious product, including such non-ideological features as the density of interaction with priests and pastors. But the nonideological utility function of the poor is incompatible with the ideological response of the church to competition (i.e., its opposition to authoritarianism): The church would be providing the kind of inducement that the poor would be disregarding. Indeed, the church could be more successful by improving its services, such as increasing the number of priests and making priesthood a more attractive career option. Gill points out (p. 186), however, that the church is unwilling to act rationally in this respect; it faces such constraints as a conservative pope and a centuries-old doctrine and tradition. These constraints are not exogenous to the church and ought to be specified in the model.

Finally, it is unclear why competition is the only option available to a church that faces membership losses. It presumably can lobby an authoritarian state to quell competition. Assuming that Protestantism and Catholicism are interchangeable legitimization devices (i.e., equally strong opiates), then the state will be indifferent between them and will have no incentive to provide preferential treatment to any of them; instead, it will encourage competition. If the church turns antiauthoritarian to fend off competition, then the state will have a strong incentive to favor Protestantism over the newly

progressive Catholic church. Knowing this, the Catholic church should think twice about opposing the regime. Backward induction, however, does not seem to be part of the church's calculus. Assuming that Protestantism is somehow more harmful to the regime than Catholicism, the church can credibly threaten to withdraw its support from the regime in order to obtain the restriction of competition. These examples illustrate the need to introduce a dynamic dimension into the model, possibly through the use of game theory.

The points I raise suggest that the payoffs from specifying a full-fledged model of state-church relations are likely to be considerable. Such a model will generate interesting empirical predictions about the configuration of "religious regimes," both across countries and within countries across time, especially under a democratic regime. *Rendering unto Caesar* is, thus, not just an exemplar of imaginative, theory-driven, and solid comparative research; it is also the first step in what promises to be a novel and exciting research program.

The Emergence of Insurgency in El Salvador: Ideology and Political Will. By Yvon Grenier. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999. 222p. \$40.00.

William Stanley, *University of New Mexico*

Yvon Grenier has written a critique of what he calls the "dominant paradigm" regarding causes of insurgency in El Salvador. Many writings from the 1980s argue that the Salvadoran revolutionary movement developed because of a combination of economic inequities, worsening social conditions for the poor majority, and violent repression. Scholars depicted the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN) as having emerged as an organic extension of peasant organizations, labor unions, and Christian base communities (CEBs) too long repressed by the government. This bottom-up account, according to Grenier, misses the crucial role played by a core group of revolutionary leaders drawn from the middle class. His book seeks to demonstrate that these revolutionary elites triggered an otherwise avoidable internal war. He traces the bellicosity of the Salvadoran Left to a particularly dogmatic ideology and argues that war resulted because the would-be revolutionaries, as well as far Right elements of the oligarchy and military, eschewed moderate solutions during a crucial period in 1979 and 1980.

Grenier makes a number of valuable contributions, largely by pulling together arguments now widely accepted among close observers of Salvadoran affairs but so far seldom incorporated into published scholarship. Among these correctives is a clarification of the relationship between the emerging guerrilla groups and the "popular organizations." Grenier points out what scholars familiar with the Salvadoran Left already knew or should have known, that the guerrilla cells infiltrated and dominated many popular organizations, using them to foment revolution, often at the expense of the organizations' own goals. He also argues convincingly that by focusing on the influence of Catholic liberation theology on the political values of the rural poor, scholars have wrongly neglected the radicalizing effect of the liberation Church on the urban middle class. Similarly, he goes into greater depth than other scholars in highlighting the political role, and extremely rigid ideological environment, of the national university.

Unfortunately, Grenier does not seriously test whether his ideological approach offers a better explanation than alternatives, such as rational actor and opportunity structure approaches. He asserts the importance of ideology and proceeds to tell a story about ideology. His argument would