Book Review/Compte rendu

Kees van Kersbergen and **Philip Manow**, eds., *Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States*. Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 318 pp. $US 24.99 paper (978-0-521-72395-4), $US 80.00 hardcover (978-0-521-89791-4)

Religion, Class Coalitions and Welfare States is undoubtedly the most interesting and useful analysis of the formation of modern welfare states I have read in many a year. Once begun, I found it difficult to put the volume down and, for whatever reason, I find that is increasingly rare. As Andrew Gould writes in his cover blurb: "If you think you know everything about class coalitions and social policies, think again." My reaction when I put the book down was: "How could we have ignored all this for so long?" Although this is an edited volume, it is integrated by a grand theoretical perspective and analysis of how Catholicism and Protestantism shaped (and explain) the differential evolution of social policies in Europe and the United States.

Political sociologists have not entirely ignored the deep social cleavages that flowed from the Reformation onwards. Modernization theorists such as Peter Flora highlighted the role of forces of secularization (aided and abetted by Protestantism) that led the "church" to surrender its role in welfare provision, family support, and education to the "state." But this was mainly a story about the decline of religious influence. In contrast, some early accounts (Stephens, Wilensky) highlighted the important positive influence of Catholic social doctrine and its rejection of the more abhorrent effects of "market society" on family and social life of the poor especially.

But for my generation of welfare state scholars associated with the power resources perspective from the late seventies to the early nineties the dominant narrative was about classes and class mobilization. Where the working classes successfully mobilized in unions and political parties and later struck alliances with the emergent middle classes, one got "big" welfare states that marginalized markets and "decommodified" workers; otherwise not.

Gøsta Esping-Andersen's influential *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990) significantly expanded the power resource perspective and identified the "Christian Democratic" welfare states of continental

Europe as a distinct variant to the "Social Democratic" welfare states of the Nordic countries and the "liberal" welfare states of the Anglo-Saxon countries. His argument was that a combination of Christian Democratic (i.e., Catholic) parties and Catholic social teaching led to the creation of generous welfare states, albeit of a different sort than the Nordic variety. Catholicism's "preference for the poor" was muted by its emphasis on the patriarchal family and the principal of "subsidiarity" which left welfare services and education subject to "voluntary," "societal" organizations rather than to state-based organizations, i.e., to the churches.

Christian Democratic welfare states, in his account, tend to be "transfer-rich" but "service poor." Wages *cum* social benefits should be sufficient to allow the male wage earner to support a family. As Kimberly Morgan points out in a superb chapter on work-family policies (must reading for those interested in gender and the welfare state), in Germany and the Netherlands mothers' employment was widely viewed as a sign of government failure in this duty. But Christian Democratic states were slow to recognize, much less promote, women's equality through the expansion of welfare state services (that employ women) or to provide support services such as child care (that enable women to be employed).

The major aim of Manow and van Kersbergen in a theoretically powerful introductory chapter is to challenge Esping-Andersen's characterization of the homogeneity of the Christian Democratic model that, after all, encompasses most of continental Europe and countries that, in his version, range from Austria to France and from Germany to Portugal. Hardly a homogeneous bunch.

Their starting point is Karl Polanyi's powerful analysis of the "welfare state" countermovement against 19th century liberal ideas about individualism and the minimalist state. Their aim is to fill in lacunae in Polanyi's account to emphasize who exactly executed the countermovement. In the Nordic countries, the (Lutheran) church was mostly absent because of extreme religious homogeneity and Lutheran disinterest in such matters. The result was early and advanced secularization so that the class narrative becomes the only game in town. But not so elsewhere where "reformed Protestants" (especially Calvinists) and Catholics played a major role.

The first part of their story concerns the evolution of electoral rules — the sharp distinction between "majoritarian" systems (like Canada and other Anglo-Saxon countries) and "proportional representation" systems. PR systems had a strong positive influence on the success and survival of "confessional" (i.e., religious) parties.

A key insight of the volume, in my view, comes from Kimberly Morgan's essay on work-family policies. In the religiously homogeneous

(i.e., Lutheran) Nordic countries, there was basically a church-state fusion and early secularization. Church influence was sidelined and there was little religious contestation. The second model appeared where Catholics were dominant and Protestants a minority. In these nations (France, Italy, Belgium) the basic division was between clerical and anticlerical forces. Major political conflicts were organized around who — church or state — would control welfare programs and, especially, education of the young. In Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands, in contrast, the main result was "accommodation" of religious forces and religious parties gained the upper hand. Secular "republican" liberals committed to individualism played a lesser role. To illustrate the flavour of the essays, I will focus on two that I found especially provocative.

Kees van Kersbergen's essay on the Netherlands tries to unlock two puzzles. First, why was the Dutch welfare state such a laggard before the Second World War? Second, why did it develop so rapidly after the war to become one of the most comprehensive and generous among Western countries? The answer to the first question is that, prior to the war, Protestants dominated Dutch politics — but not just any Protestants. These were "reformed Protestants" of Calvinist persuasion (not Lutheran) who were "liberal," antistatist individualists (cf. Weber's Protestant Ethic) and opposed both socialist and Catholic policy initiatives. The answer to the second question is the mirror image of the answer to the first. In the postwar decades, Dutch politics were dominated by an alliance between Social Catholics and Social Democrats while liberal Calvinists were marginalized.

Having spent much time in Italy puzzling over Italian politics and Italian social policy, I found Julia Lynch's essay on Italian Christian Democracy equally informative and provocative. By the standards of Germany or the Netherlands, the evolution of the Italian welfare state is very strange, dominated by a very generous, occupationally based pension system and little else. Lynch shows that Catholic social doctrine and its "preference for the poor" had little influence on postwar Christian Democratic policy initiatives. Instead, the postwar Christian Democrats built on an earlier liberal and anticlerical social policy legacy in an effort to build a "party organization independent of the Church…" (p. 103). The strategy was "clientalism": building local and fragmented constituencies with favourable tax concessions and particularistic (mainly pension) benefits.

There are many other fine essays in this volume. Ertman offers an historical account of how Reformation patterns affected subsequent political party formation. Karen Andersen shows the importance of the absence of both religious cleavages and (Lutheran) church influence in

the Nordic countries. Manow and Palier explain why there is "no Christian Democracy in France." Obinger explores how Swiss federalism intersected with national ethnic and religious cleavages to "protect" the Catholic minority against 40 years of rule by Swiss Liberal Radicals. Jill Quadagno and Deana Roglinger examine how the religious cleavage regained political importance in US politics in recent decades.

Canadian scholars are well aware of the "religious roots" of Canadian welfare state politics. Canadian history does not fit easily with a major thesis of the volume — that "reformed Protestantism" was a major obstacle to welfare state development. C.J. Woodsworth, Tommy Douglas, and Stanley Knowles were all "reformed" Protestant ministers. There is a doctoral dissertation here for someone. And is it possible that the pro-welfare state preferences of contemporary (often anti-Catholic) Quebeckers is an historical residue of their Catholic origins?

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