Religion and the Rise of Liberal-Democratic Ideology in 17th-Century England

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RELIGION AND THE RISE OF LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY IN 17TH-CENTURY ENGLAND*

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In classical and contemporary sociology, key elements of liberal-democratic ideology are seen as secular extensions of Protestant ideas. This case study provides a different analysis that emphasizes the problem of religious conflict and radicalism in early liberal-democratic ideology. Proponents of the new ideology rejected key tenets of their Puritan heritage, adopting deistic beliefs that legitimated pluralism and tolerance and opposed the older Puritan ideal of godly politics. Building on recent work in the sociology of culture, the paper outlines an analytic strategy for explaining change in ideological systems. Ideological change emerges out of the interaction of contextual pressures and intellectual precedents, as a collective response by ideological innovators to problems of authority. The analysis in this study shows how historical events can form an episodic context which structures this problem of authority.

Religion and the rise of liberal democracy is not a topic that has provoked much controversy among sociologists. Unlike the debates over religion and capitalism, there is a uniform account of the Protestant origins of the democratic culture in Anglo-American society. The fundamental tenet of this culture—the priority of tolerance over revelation as a precondition for the pluralist pursuit of utility—is seen as a secular extension of Protestant beliefs, such as the sanctity of conscience or the priesthood of all believers.

This paper provides a different account of religion and liberal-democratic ideology. It challenges the view that Protestantism was a source of democratic ideas.[1] Liberal-democratic ideology was not a secular extension of Protestant beliefs; it developed explicitly against the application of these

beliefs to politics, rejecting the claim, then prevalent in Protestantism, that politics and religion were inseparable. This rejection, by John Locke (1632–1704) and others, shaped key tenets of the new ideology: in religious matters, tolerance; in politics, the priority of empirical perceptions of utility over revelation.

Still, Locke and other Whig writers came from Puritan backgrounds and maintained Protestant identities. What made their commitment to a secular framework for politics compatible with a Protestant identity was the radically altered version of Protestantism—rational religion or deism—that they adopted in place of Puritanism. Their religion was as far reformed from the Reformation, from the world of Luther, Calvin, and the Puritans, as the Reformation was from medieval Catholicism.

At the core of these developments lay the problem of religious conflict. Liberal-democratic ideology was a response to the radicalism and intellectual dissonance generated by conflicts internal to Protestantism. It was not opposed solely to the divine-right theories of monarchy upheld by the Whig's opponents, the Tories. In response to problems posed by claims to revelation in public life, liberal-democratic ideology secularized political discourse and revised Protestantism so as to excise nearly every element of revelation from religious life. Whereas the standard sociological account points to the Protestant sources of liberal-democratic ideol-

[1] There are aspects of universalism in democracy that do not derive from religion, for example, citizenship as an extension of aristocratic privileges.

ogy, this paper advances nearly the opposite claim: the new ideology developed as its proponents adopted deistic beliefs and rejected central tenets of their Protestant heritage.

These empirical issues raise a broader set of theoretical issues that pertain to the sociology of knowledge and its application in analyzing ideological systems. The standard account derives from Durkheim and Weber. Their specific views on Protestantism and democracy reflect an analytic strategy that analyzes cultural change as an aspect of differentiation (Durkheim) or rationalization (Weber) in history. Obviously, if the standard account is as wrong as I think it is, then the analytic strategy that produces such accounts requires revision. Building on recent developments in cultural sociology, this paper outlines an alternative strategy that leads to subtler and empirically more sustainable analyses of change in ideological systems.

First, I present the analytic strategy and evidence for a new account of Protestantism and liberal-democratic ideology. Next, I describe the older account, its origins in work by Durkheim and Weber, and its empirical shortcomings. In its place, I then develop the new account that has a better fit with the data that disconfirm the older accounts.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL ISSUES

The task of this paper is to explain ideological change. This requires an analytic strategy for drawing causal inferences about the sources of ideological change and evidence that can sustain these inferences.

Theoretical Issues

The analytic strategy in this paper derives from recent work in the sociology of culture (e.g., DiMaggio 1987; Gieryn 1983; Griswold 1983; Swidler 1986; Wuthnow 1987; Zaret 1985). This work is critical of older macrosociological studies of culture that rely on overly simple, reductionist models of the relation of culture to social structure. Causal relations between culture and social structure are held to be sufficiently complex so as to preclude the specification of a simple, invariant relationship. For example, the *mimetic* aspect of culture—as a reflection of its social setting—may be variable. Under

different conditions, artistic genres (see DiMaggio 1987) or beliefs (see Swidler 1986) can possess different degrees of autonomy from their social structural setting.

Order and change in ideological systems cannot be explained directly by social structural or cultural factors. These factors are important, but their influence is mediated by the specific contexts for the specialized tasks of cultural production. It is in these contexts that ideological producers respond to the problem of contested authority. For example, recent studies examine art worlds (Becker 1982), professions (Gieryn 1983), state institutions (Wuthnow 1987), and social movements (Zaret 1985) as organizational contexts in which ideological producers respond to challenges to their authority. Although these contexts, and the problems of authority in them, have social structural and cultural components, neither the contexts nor the problems of authority are reducible to these components. In each instance, empirical specification must establish the parameters of this context in which ideas about the social world (ideologies), as they are defined, invoked, and altered, undergo what Karl Mannheim (1936, p. 78) called their existential conditioning.

This paper furthers this line of research by showing that the context mediating between ideology and social structure can be framed not only by an *organizational* context but also by an *episodic* context—by historical events. Sequences of historical events can provoke changes in beliefs about the social world, such as the French Revolution and the modern idea of revolutionary praxis. Other examples include Fussell's account (1975) of a new literary sensibility etched by the experience of World War I; Elder's analysis (1974) of changing views on family and work as responses to the depression; and Schwartz's argument (1983) that a new type of political leader, the uncharismatic hero, reflected Washington's role in the War for Independence.

Like organizational contexts, episodic contexts influence the probability and direction of ideological change because they present problems of authority for the ideological producers. And in both contexts, the issue of contested authority cannot be reduced either to ideological or social structural factors. Although these factors shaped the English Revolution—the episodic context in this

paper—they predetermined neither its course nor the problem of contested authority in it.

These theoretical reflections lead to the following strategy for explaining ideological change. Specification of an organizational or episodic context should guide descriptions of the contested authority that confronts ideological producers. Ideological change can then be analyzed in terms of the interaction of these contextual *pressures* and the intellectual *precedents* used to alter the ideology (see Zaret 1985). The salience of any given precedent derives from its utility for resolving or minimizing the problem of contested authority. This utility can derive from the conceptual structure, the rhetoric and imagery, or the social distribution of a precedent.

Empirical Issues

This analytic strategy requires evidence of ideological change as a collective response to the problem of contested authority. The problem and the response should be located in an organizational or episodic context. Causal inferences about ideological change as a response to contested authority should be supported by textual evidence and by other evidence that links the ideologues as a group united by shared experiences (social background, cohort, education), by networks of friendship, patronage, and formal organizations, and by access to the intellectual precedents for the new ideology.

The analysis in this paper refers to two ideological groups that partly overlap: the proponents of natural religion and the Whig theorists. The episodic context commences in the English Revolution, beginning with the Civil Wars between the King and Parliament (1642–48), the Regicide (1649), the creation of the Republic (1649–53) and Cromwell's Protectorate (1653–58), and the Restoration, in 1660, which restored the Stuart monarchy. In this context, sectarian attempts to apply Protestant tenets to politics, to build a holy commonwealth, generated considerable dissonance and radicalism among Protestants. Liberal-democratic ideology developed, along with natural religion, as a collective response to these intellectual and social problems.

The appearance of modern democratic ideas in 17th-century England represents a classic case of ideological change. The new ideology rejected a fundamental premise in the political discourse of both the Puritans and the Royalists. Instead of religious rationales for political choices, the new ideology put at the center of politics the adjudication of empirical claims on individual utility. At a stroke, Locke dismissed the rationale that *both* sides, Puritan and Royalist, had advanced during the English Revolution. The ideology of Locke and other Whig writers— for example, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury (1621–83); Algernon Sidney (1622–83)—did not dominate English political life until well after the 17th century. Complete toleration, the destruction of corporate privileges and royal prerogatives, and a universal franchise occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries. But this only highlights the precociousness of the new ideology and makes its appearance all the more puzzling. Although the subsequent development of early Whig thought is a complex topic (see Ashcraft 1986), it is clear that Locke, Sidney, and the Earl of Shaftesbury developed the fundamental tenets of modern liberal democracy.

The proponents of the new political and religious doctrines constituted cohesive groups within the high cultural establishment of early modern England, united not only by their ideas but also by social background and shared experiences and by friendship, patronage, and formal organizations. They reached adulthood during the revolutionary era and had attended Oxford or Cambridge. They came from the middle to upper levels of English society, from the merchants and tradesmen to the gentry and aristocracy. Most grew up in Puritan families but all rejected Calvinist theology and the sectarian ideal of a holy commonwealth (Jones 1961; Lacey 1969).

Complex interpersonal ties united the Whig ideologues. Shaftesbury, the leader of the early Whigs, was Locke's aristocratic patron and political mentor; and though Shaftesbury and Sidney were not friends, they shared many of the same supporters and friends. The other Whig ideologues cited in this article collaborated with Locke, Sidney, and Shaftesbury (Ashcraft 1986). Similar interpersonal ties also united the proponents of the radically revised Protestantism—natural religion—that was associated with early Whig ideology. Not all proponents of natural religion were Whigs, but most Whig theorists, such as Locke, supported it. The central figures in this development (for details, see below, p. 172)

included prominent individuals in the church establishment after the Restoration, the Royal Society, and the Neoplatonic philosophers at Cambridge. Locke and Shaftesbury belonged to the Royal Society, and Locke was an intimate acquaintance of the liberal churchmen and Cambridge philosophers (M. Jacob 1976; Shapiro 1969).

THE STANDARD SOCIOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

Before Durkheim and Weber codified the argument, it was a commonplace in sociological analysis that liberal-democratic ideology was an extension of Protestantism. Comte, de Tocqueville, and Marx described Protestantism as a symptom of the global forces that leveled *ancien* regimes and established democratic rule. This view guides Comte's negative appraisal of the revolutionary implications in "the dogma of unbounded liberty of conscience" ([1830–42]1896, 2:148–54). It also appears in the more sympathetic observations of Tocqueville, for whom "Puritanism was not merely a religious doctrine, but corresponded in many points with the most absolute democratic and republican theories" ([1835–40]1945, p. 33). Marx saw Protestantism as capitalist ideology: in capitalism, "Christianity with its *cultus* of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism, etc., is the most fitting form of religion" ([1867]1967, p. 79). Puritanism was the ideology of the "bourgeois revolution" in England; and after "the real aim had been achieved, when the bourgeois transformation of English society had been accomplished, Locke supplanted Habakkuk" ([1852]1979, p. 105).

Durkheim and Weber

These views influenced Durkheim and Weber, who saw democratic ideology as a secular extension of tendencies in Protestant religion, liberalism as Protestantism without God. What distinguished their views from the antireligious rationalism of the Enlightenment is the sociological supposition that some varieties of Protestantism inadvertently promoted the liberalizing dissociation of politics and religion. In Protestantism, Durkheim and Weber found a radical individualism that legitimated the idea of individual rights, intellectual tolerance, and the ideal of a universal franchise. The latent liberalism in this religion, admittedly not foreseen or favored by Luther or Calvin, was unleashed by secularization. On this, Durkheim and Weber are essentially of one mind, but then their thinking diverges on three points.

First, Durkheim's analysis of secularization shows how the differentiation of social structures leads to new divisions between the sacred and the profane; Weber emphasizes instead the rationalization of charisma. *Second,* Durkheim adopts a *mimetic* or correspondence theory that makes change in religious and political beliefs a function of social structural change. Weber's doctrine of *elective affinity* points to the mutual influences of economic, religious, and political spheres as they undergo rationalization. *Third,* the two prior points indicate why Durkheim developed a more limited treatment of Protestantism as a *symptom* of modern individualism, whereas Weber saw Protestantism as both a *symptom* and a *cause* of this individualism.[2]

Durkheim held that "if there is one truth that history has incontrovertibly settled, it is that religion extends over an ever diminishing area of social life. . . . gradually political, economic and scientific functions broke free from the religious function, becoming separate entities and taking on more and more a markedly temporal character." This process "has continued uninterruptedly from earliest times," for it "is bound up with the basic conditions for the development of societies" ([1893]1984, pp. 119–21). Differentiation not only separates religious and political functions but also produces moral individualism, which Durkheim regarded as the essence of Protestant ideals ([1897]1951, pp. 158–59). Subsequently, these ideals appeared in politics, in democratic ideologies that displayed, in secular form, the moral ideals of Protestantism. These ideologies are secular religions in which "this cult of man has as its primary dogma the autonomy of reason and as its primary rite the doctrine of free inquiry" ([1898]1973, p. 49).

Weber's analysis of Protestantism's politi-

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[2] The point about Durkheim applies with even greater force to Marx, and to modern Marxist scholars, who regard Protestantism and liberal-democratic ideals as *reflections* of the formal principles of exchange (e.g., Goldmann 1973; Marcuse 1972, pp. 56–78; and, more generally, see Friesen 1974).

cal implications reflects his preoccupation with rationalization. For Weber, the rationalization of religion leads to increasingly dualistic worldviews, to what he calls ethical religion, which sharply separates worldly and spiritual realities. Ethical religion portrays the universe "as a cosmos governed by impersonal rules" and disenchants it as a lawlike order created by a God of, but not in, the world. Evil and suffering appear as consequences of human weakness, not evil or capricious gods. In place of magical and highly ritualized practices, there arises the ethical pursuit of salvation, a venture guided by abstract beliefs that has as its goal the alignment of human conduct with divine will. This is Weber's analysis of the attack on ritualism in the Reformation: "By far the strongest such devaluation of magical and institutional grace occurred in Puritanism" ([1915]1948, p. 282, [1922]1978, pp. 422–39, 506, 574).

Political implications arise from the emphasis on inner religion and the rejection of ritualism.[3] Among the Protestant sects, this led to a general defense of the 'rights' of individual conscience. Weber saw the "charismatic glorification of reason" in the 18th-century Enlightenment as a direct outcome of the highly rationalized beliefs held by the Protestant sects. The Puritan appears in Weber's work as a John the Baptist to Thomas Paine ("My mind is my church"). Liberal-democratic values emerge from the sectarian credenda, for "the genuine sect must demand the non-intervention of the political power and freedom of conscience for specifically religious reasons." The political legacy of "the rationalistic sects" includes the idea of individual rights based on natural law, tolerance, and an insistence on the "separation of church and state" ([1922]1978, pp. 863, 1208–9).

The Standard Account in Contemporary Sociology

Currently, the analysis of Protestantism and democracy reiterates two themes from Durkheim and Weber. First, Protestantism is

linked, as symptom or cause, to modernization; second, the interpretation of Protestant doctrine reveals a manifest and/or latent set of liberal implications for political life.

In work by Parsons and those influenced by him, discussion of Protestant beliefs reflects neo-evolutionary assumptions about long-term historical change. In the "heart and soul of Calvinism," writes Little, "is the idea of a differentiated social order," an idea that leads to voluntarism and consent as organizing principles in the newly demarcated realms of politics and religion (1970, pp. 222–23; see also Bellah 1976; Gould 1987; Parsons 1977). Although writers more directly influenced by Weber display his antipathy toward evolutionary theories, their work retains Weber's abiding interest in rationalization, which emphasizes, though to a lesser degree than neo-evolutionism, elements of continuity, cumulation, and irreversibility in the master trends of modernization (see Roth 1979; Schluchter 1981).

On the Protestant sources of democratic ideology, there is broad agreement that "the origins of the value-commitment within Western democracies derive most broadly . . . from the Protestant Reformation in which each person came to be seen as equally sacred in the eyes of God" (Prager 1985, p. 188). The standard account defines this value-commitment, common to Protestantism and democracy, in terms of universalism (Nelson 1969, pp. 73–87; Parsons 1978, pp. 199–204). Minor variations in this account reflect the many aspects of Protestantism that are cited as sources of universalism in democracy.

Bellah states that "the 'priesthood of all believers' . . . was applied to secular politics in the course of the Puritan Revolution in England and eventuated in the secular democratic theory of John Locke" (1970, p. 68, but cf. 1986, pp. 142–43; Hawthorn 1976, pp. 11–12). Bendix links the doctrines of 'justification by faith' and 'the priesthood of all believers' to "the constitutional transformation of England during the seventeenth century" (1978, pp. 309–13). Little (1970) sees similar implications in the ecclesiological doctrines of the early Presbyterians in England. Parsons found democratic implications in the doctrines of 'justification by faith' and predestination (1977, p. 132). In a recent commentary on Parsons, it is the sanctity of conscience whose secular extension is said to give rise to "theories of democratic rights"

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[3] How the rationalization of worldviews interacts with the rationalization of economic, legal, and political institutions, and whether it leads to democratic outcomes, are for Weber empirical questions.

(Alexander 1983, pp. 130, 384). According to Tiryakian (1975, pp. 24–25; and see Hammond 1980), Puritan thinking on the covenant is infused with voluntarism, which "underlies the basic American value orientation of individualism"; "our emphasis on civil liberties can be shown to derive from basic Covenant premises of the Puritan mind." Skepticism on this appears in Berger, but he identifies tolerance as a secular extension of the belief in the sanctity of conscience (1977, pp. 150–51). Finally, Martin (1979, pp. 25–29) cites Arminian trends in Protestantism as a source of egalitarianism in liberal democracy: it was a secular extension of the theology of universal grace.

However, two important studies dismiss the claim that Puritan ideas inspired democratic conceptions of politics. Walzer argues that Calvinism was a repressive response to the disorder and anxiety in modernization. "The triumph of Lockean ideals, on the other hand, suggests the overcoming of anxiety. . . . The struggle against the old order seems largely to have been won by Locke's time. . . . Lockean liberals found it possible to dispense with religious, even with ideological, controls" (1965, p. 303). More recently, Fulbrook advances a structural analysis which concludes that there "was not anything inherent in the religious or social characteristics" of Puritanism that set it in opposition to efforts by the Stuarts to create an absolutist monarchy (1983, p. 16). It was the monarchy's control over the church—this enforced prerogative rule—that led the monarchs to oppose Puritan plans for reforming the church, and this made Puritanism an opponent of absolutism.

Although these two studies contradict the standard account, they do not adequately address the central issue in this paper: what *was* the relationship between liberal-democratic ideology and the religious factor?[4] Fulbrook shows why religious groups, such as the Puritans, supported or opposed the absolutist monarchies; but this does not establish why or even whether the anti-absolutist Puritans supported a liberal-

democratic view of politics. Walzer thinks there is a relation between Puritanism and Lockean liberalism: "it is perhaps one of historical preparation," in which the internalization of moral controls by Calvinism made plausible "liberal confidence" (1965, pp. 301–3). My analysis revises this view: Lockean liberalism did not, *pace* Walzer, emerge when anxiety dissipated; it was a response to anxiety, generated by sectarian attempts to implement the Puritan ideal of godly politics.

HISTORY AND THE STANDARD SOCIOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

Recent historical research provides little support for the standard account. Some historians regard assertions about an intrinsic link between Puritanism and democracy as residues of an old historiographic tradition— Whig history—that survive in the feckless generalizations of sociologists (e.g., Hexter 1979, pp. 231–33, 237–40; Macfarlane 1979). More recently, there is the ultimate anti-Whig view: the events of the English Revolution had no major impact on intellectual habits (Finlayson 1983; Sommerville 1986, p. 238).

The standard sociological account receives some support in work by other historians who, not coincidentally, look more favorably on the uses of social science in history. They argue that Puritanism supported democratic developments, but they also call attention to the nonreligious factors that imparted to Puritanism ideas on political equality and justice (see Hill 1973). For example, popular aspirations to participate in politics inspired Puritan efforts to democratize the church (Manning 1978).

Many historical specialists think that Puritanism had only fortuitous links with democratic developments, as it had strongly authoritarian tendencies that opposed any liberalizing withdrawal of religion from the political arena. For these historians, neither was there anything in English Puritanism that led inevitably to Locke, nor was this development surprising (Stone 1972; Underdown 1985; Zagorin 1970). This is the conclusion to be drawn from Fulbrook's argument,[5] and it also applies to Puritanism in

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[4] In part, this is because Walzer covers the period from 1540 to 1640 and Fulbrook covers 1560–1640, although both allude to later developments. As noted above, liberal-democratic ideology appears later.

[5] Puritanism opposed absolutist rule "not be-

17th-century New England, where "the Congregational system was developed by men who were allied with those financial and political leaders whose ends were best served by an extension of the people's liberties" (Ziff 1968, pp. 27–28).

The Christian Commonwealth

The historical flaw in the standard account is a narrow view of Protestantism. In associating Protestant tenets, such as 'justification by faith', and democratic principles of equality, tolerance, and voluntarism, the sociological account refers to Puritan thinking about the *elect* and the virtues of *renewing* grace. But for the great majority of *reprobates*, there were coercive discipline, enforced by church and state, and God's *restraining* grace.[6] To infer from Puritan remarks on the elect and renewing grace—emphasizing equality and voluntarism in religion—liberal political commitments is a great mistake, for the business of politics is, after all, the governance of the outward actions of the masses. The same mistake would lead one to find an affinity for tolerance and voluntarism in Lenin's writings on the party.

Central to the Puritan view of politics was a community united in obedience to its austere God. It distinguished between church and state, but this only pointed to the religious ends of politics: enforcing a holy commonwealth. In Christian commonwealths, "there may be no toleration of any other religion. For that which is the end of God's laws must also be the end of all good laws in all commonwealths and kingdoms, namely, to shut up the people in the unity of one faith" (Perkins 1608–9, 2:289). Puritans wanted "the godly magistrate not only to countenance the painful ministry but also to compel all the people to yield obedience thereunto" (Brinsley 1622, p. 471). As "God's vice-regent," a magistrate must not only suppress offenses "against public peace and human society, but

blasphemies, heresies, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, and such sins as more directly oppose God and his worship" (Taylor 1612, sig. *3).

Recent studies (for examples, see Zaret 1985, pp. 82–83) describe the Puritan agenda for godly politics. Efforts to enforce piety and social discipline appeared in regulatory initiatives in towns ruled by Puritan oligarchs and in rural areas where Puritan clerics built alliances with local magistrates. These initiatives attacked prevailing mores in a popular culture that the Puritan mind associated with the immorality and irreligion of the alehouse. A coercive, intolerant politics of moral reform lay at the heart of Puritanism, which saw public enforcement of piety and social discipline to be a way for the elect to honor its God. In its theory and practice, the Puritan vision of godly politics had little, if any, relevance to liberal-democratic principles of tolerance and voluntarism.

Radicals and Sectaries

These principles are often associated with the radical sectaries who diverged from the Puritan mainstream. But this development also offers little support for the standard sociological account. Radical opposition to the Presbyterians and Independents in the English Revolution upheld the right of the *godly* not to be coerced by the state. Like the Puritan mainstream, the radicals upheld the ideal of godly rule (Solt 1959). This ideal, in all its authoritarian implications, animated the Independents, whose titular head was Cromwell. "The impulse to form Independent congregations was, at root, disciplinarian in nature, not libertarian: to create, not asylums from tyranny, but superior vehicles for godliness" (Lamont 1986, p. 78; see Jordan 1936, pp. 291–92). The same point applies to the initial emigration of the Puritans to New England: their inability to impose a coercive moral regime in England led them to try to establish it elsewhere (Miller 1956, pp. 5–11).

Calls for toleration did appear among some sectaries. But this was a concession to necessity, forced by sectarian conflicts among the godly, not a principled call for full religious liberty. Twenty years ago, Wolff noted, "It is now an historical commonplace that the great Anglo-American tradition of religious liberty can be traced to just such a

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cause of specific ideas about the role of individual conscience . . . but because of the peculiar structure of the society and the state in which it arose" (Fulbrook 1983, p. 176).

[6] A famous Puritan divine wrote that restraining grace "bridles and restrains the corruptions of men's hearts from breaking forth into outward actions, for the common good, that societies may be preserved" (Perkins 1608–9, 2:131).

grudging acceptance of *de facto* heterodoxy and not to early Protestant devotion to the freedom of conscience" (1965, p. 15). Sectarian arguments for toleration noted that regimes with a state religion inevitably harmed the godly and, worse, usurped the divinely appointed day of judgment. Tolerance was proposed by some sectarians who regretfully noted the inability of human institutions to accomplish the chief aim of all sectarians: to separate the saints and the sinners (Jordan 1936; Lamont 1986). Thus, the strongest support for toleration in a few of Puritanism's sectarian offshoots reflects a radical sense of religious intolerance. And among *most* of the sectarian groups spawned by Puritanism, in Old and New England, "it seems clear that their toleration does not extend beyond the unity of belief which only the saints . . . have" (Solt 1959, p. 64).

The Levellers were a radical group that advocated toleration and democratic ideas.[7] During the Civil War, they arose as activists in the New Model Army that fought against the King. Under their influence, the Army became the bulwark of support for defeating and executing the king, for toleration, and for proposals to enlarge the political franchise. Although the Levellers had social and organizational ties to the religious radicals, their ideology was not an extension of Puritan ideals. It had several important secular sources that enabled it to go beyond the authoritarianism in godly politics.

Three secular sources were central to Leveller thought. First, popular aspirations for political participation (see above, p. 168, and Hirst 1975) led to speculation on democracy in religious life.[8] Second, the doctrine of "native birthrights" and the myth

of the "Norman Yoke" (see Hill 1964, pp. 75–82) provided a rationale for political and religious liberty by presenting it as a recovery of the rights lost long ago by the Anglo-Saxons. Finally, there was a modern doctrine of natural rights, possessive individualism (Macpherson 1962), based on 'right reason' which "neither morality nor divinity among men can or may transgress." From this doctrine, Leveller writers justified religious and economic rights, arguing that if there are "penalties and restrictions put on men's consciences, they cannot be termed free-born people . . . but rather . . . men barred of all propriety and goods" (Wolfe 1967, pp. 158, 309). Democratic ideas among the Levellers, though tied to religious concerns, derived their distinctively modern features from nonreligious sources (Ashcraft 1986, pp. 161–64).

THE NEW ACCOUNT

The historical evidence clearly does not sustain the standard sociological account. In the Puritan vision of godly politics, principles of consent and tolerance apply only to a spiritual elite; for the rest of the political community, there is a coercive theocracy. In most of the sectarian groups spawned by Puritanism, the authoritarian implications of godly rule are even more pronounced.[9] And for those radicals with modern democratic ideals, secular influences were decisive. The inescapable conclusion is that there may be a relationship between Puritanism and democratic ideology but the standard sociological account of it is wrong.

An alternative hypothesis begins with the problem of contested authority in the revolutionary era, 1640–60. The problem was Protestantism, more specifically, the intellectual dissonance and social radicalism that arose from godly efforts to apply religious tenets to politics. Liberal-democratic ideology solved this problem by removing religion from politics, by rejecting Puritan theology and its vision of godly politics, substituting in its place natural religion. Thus, the relationship between Protestantism and democratic

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[7] Proponents of a republic also appeared in more elite social circles, for example, James Harrington (1611–77), Henry Marten (1602–80), and Henry Neville (1620–94), the editor of the English edition of Machiavelli's collected writings. They moved away from Christianity toward Deism and, as was said about Marten (Williams 1978, pp. 126–27), their general attitude toward religion was "one of detachment, sometimes amused, sometimes not."

[8] In politics, said Milton, there is knowledge of "the general reason of that government to which . . . subjection is required; how much more ought the members of the church . . . seek to inform their understanding in the reason of the government which the church claims to have over them" (1953, 1:747).

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[9] Some sectarian groups—for example, the Quakers—renounced political agendas and retreated from the political realm (see Hill 1984).

ideology is that the latter was a response to perceived failures in the former.

Sectarian Conflict and Doctrinal Anxiety

Religious conflict among the godly was the inner dynamic of revolutionary politics and a critical problem for the Puritan opponents of absolutism. Parliament's war with the King gave Puritanism an opportunity to implement its vision of godly politics. But as the godly seized control of Parliament and its army, and destroyed the authority of the state church, Puritanism itself disintegrated into rival factions, for example, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Seekers, Ranters, Muggletonians, Quakers, and Fifth Monarchists. Lacking institutional controls, the emphasis on inner religion, on 'justification by faith', led to sectarian conflict, as the tenets and practices of any one sect could be seen by others as further instances of the worldliness that oppressed the saints. In this context, sectarianism was a fertile ground for social radicalism (see Hill 1973), which developed as a charismatic revolt against those worldly institutions—for example, the universities, the church, law, and the state—that were seen as impediments to the creation of a holy commonwealth.

Sectarian conflict created *doctrinal* anxiety. This followed the widespread perception of dissonance in the competing claims of rival, but equally godly, sects. This doctrinal anxiety was as acute as the *salvation* anxiety that Max Weber saw in Calvinism. Whereas salvation anxiety refers to the problem of knowing one's spiritual destiny, doctrinal anxiety is a problem posed by conflict among essentially similar groups. In *The Protestant Ethic,* Weber finds evidence for salvation anxiety in writings by Richard Baxter and other Puritans. But, oddly, Weber says little about the evidence for doctrinal anxiety in these writings, which is, in my judgment, even more apparent.

Doctrinal anxiety dominates religious life in this era. "What can appear more ugly, than to see among the professors of religion, children opposing their fathers, scholars contesting with their masters, inferiors slighting and crossing their superiors?" asked Isaac Barrow (1630–77), a moderate churchman, mathematician, and teacher of Newton (1859, 4:36–37; see Whichcote 1751, 2:24). According to Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715), a bishop

and Whig politician, "There is nothing that defeats the ends of religion more, and does more naturally lead to all manner of sin and impiety . . . than intestine heats and divisions about it" (1681, p. 3). Baxter, the Puritan divine, also thought that religious conflict was a principal cause of sin (1653, pp. 4–5, 352).

This doctrinal anxiety is not limited to religious texts by Puritans and others. It is also a major theme in the scientific and philosophic literature of this era, as in Thomas Sprat's propaganda for the Royal Society, *The History of the Royal Society,* which was, in part, a response to "the great ado which has been made in raising, confirming, and refuting so many different sects and opinions of the Christian faith" (1667, p. 25). This problem appears in Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* where the sensationalist epistemology addresses the following question: "Where shall one find any, either controversial debate or familiar discourse, concerning honor, faith grace, religion, church, & etc., wherein it is not easy to observe the different notions men have of them?" ([1690]1894, 2:109).

In some writers, doctrinal anxiety reflects a prior attraction to sectarian religion, as it did for Milton (1608–74) and Bunyan (Hill 1978; Bunyan 1841, 2:157, 209). A friend of Locke and Sidney, Benjamin Furley (1636–1714), had tried many sectarian groups before joining and, at last, quitting the Quakers: "I am sick of anything that looks like sectism," he told Locke (Locke 1976, 3:625–26). In an influential treatise against religious enthusiasm, the renowned Cambridge philosopher and church intellectual, Henry More, confessed that "I have a natural touch for enthusiasm in my complexion" (More, 1662a, p. vi).

Doctrinal anxiety could also express elite disdain for the popular milieu of sectarian religion. This is evident in Locke's reaction when, as a young man, he saw a Quaker fanatic, James Nayler,[10] who had been seized by officials; in Hobbes, who had nothing but scorn for the enthusiast's claims to revelation;

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[10] In 1656, Nayler rode a donkey into Bristol, claiming that he was the messiah. Puritan Parliamentarians deliberated more than a week before deciding not to execute him. Instead, he was branded, bored through the tongue, whipped, and imprisoned.

and in Robert Boyle (1627–91), when, in 1647 as a young man, he discovered sectarianism in London (Locke 1976, 1:43–44; Hobbes [1651] 1962, p. 562; Westfall 1958, p. 115). A founding member of the Royal Society, John Evelyn (1620–1706), recorded in his diary, in 1653, the "feculent stuff" of a sermon by a lay preacher, a "mechanic," whose "purport was that no danger was to be thought difficult when God called for shedding of blood, inferring that now the saints were called to destroy temporal governments" (Evelyn 1857, 1:286–87).

At the Restoration, the political problem posed by the sectaries was solved by the execution of the regicides, the reestablishment of the church, censorship, and the punitive laws against the godly (now known as dissenters). But "it was a commonplace that in the 1660s that Church itself was an inadequate instrument for the policing of consciences" (Shapin and Schaffer 1985, p. 296). The problem of sectarianism led to a shift in the thinking of educated elites on the relationship between religion and society. It was no longer possible to assume that religion would stabilize the social order: in politics, religion could facilitate the mobilization of popular grievances. The problem inhered in Protestantism, for when poorer Protestants consulted their consciences, they did not always find the abiding respect for property that God seemed to implant in more affluent consciences.

Tolerance

One response to doctrinal anxiety was more tolerant attitudes toward religious truth. Tolerance resolved this problem when conflicts among the godly led some observers to the view that the same piety might apply to otherwise hostile parties. Doctrinal anxiety receded before the claim that there was no singularly true creed, only a plurality of reasonable beliefs.

This response to sectarian conflict was the Latitudinarian position, held by moderate church leaders after the restoration,[11] by prominent members of the Royal Society,

such as Boyle, Evelyn, and Isaac Newton (1642–1727),[12] and by the Cambridge Neoplatonists who had strong intellectual and personal ties to the first two groups[13] (see M. Jacob 1976). According to Glanvill, "All opinions have their truth, and all have what is not so." The sectarian inability to acknowledge this was the cause of conflict among the godly.

> All are in the truth, and all mistaken; every sect is in the right . . . and everyone is out, by the sentence of all the rest. Here's religion, says one. Nay but its here, says the next; and a third gives the lie to them both. And then they scuffle and contend, till they have talked themselves out of sense, out of charity, and out of breath. (1661, p. 65, 1681, p. 313; and see Barrow 1859, 9:577–86; Sprat 1667, p. 346)

The influence of these views is even evident in the writings of Richard Baxter, a staunch Calvinist. But he was also an acquaintance of Boyle and Locke, and dismayed that "you see so many godly men on this side, and so many on that." Baxter advised lay readers to seek guidance from tolerant clerics: "Let him be Lutheran, Calvinist, Arminian, Episcopal, Independent or Presbyterian, so he be sound in the main and free from division" (1653, pp. 509–10, 1677, p. 97).

Not all Latitudinarians were Whigs, but their views influenced the liberal thinkers, such as Locke ([1690]1894, 2:109–10, 120, [1689]1983). The commitment to tolerance by Locke, Neville, and Sidney "sprang as much from distrust of any law but the natural law of reason, and dislike of fanatic, presbyterian, . . . Laudian or papist, as from any interest in personal revelation or in rule by the good" (Robbins 1969, p. 50).

Reason and Revelation

Tolerance was legitimated by a renewed emphasis on the role of reason in religious life. In this context, reason denoted secular knowledge — knowledge derived from experience, of the laws and maxims that governed

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[11] They included Archbishop John Tillotson (1630–94); Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715), the Bishop of Salisbury; Thomas Sprat (1635–1713), the Bishop of Rochester; and John Wilkins (1614–1672), the Bishop of Chester.

[12] Many members of the Royal Society were Latitudinarian clerics, including the clerics listed in n. 11, Isaac Barrow (1630–77), and Joseph Glanvill (1636–80).

[13] Their leader, Henry More (1614–87), collaborated with Glanvill. Other members included Ralph Cudsworth (1617–88) and Benjamin Whichcote (1609–83).

the natural and social worlds. New Protestant doctrines that emphasized reason in religion were developed by members of the Royal Society, the Cambridge Neoplatonists, the Latitudinarian clerics, and the Whig ideologues. They did not replace religion with reason; they held that nothing in religion was incompatible with reason. Still, this radically revised Puritan thinking—and the broader Protestant tradition laid down by Luther and Calvin—which emphasized the corruption of reason and its limited role in religion (see Morgan 1986, pp. 43–61).

For Locke and the other Whig ideologues, there are "no suggestions of the Holy Spirit but what are always agreeable to, if not demonstrable from, reason" (1976, 2:504; see Hunt 1680, p. 13; Tyrrell 1692, Sig. A7). The same point, almost word-for-word, was made by Henry More (1662b, p. 39). So argued Bishop Wilkins and the Latitudinarian churchmen (Shapiro 1969), and Boyle and leaders of the Royal Society (Westfall 1958, p. 175; see also J. Jacob 1977).

Intolerance and radicalism were inevitable when religion rejected reason in favor of unbridled revelation (Barrow 1859, 3:399; Glanvill 1661, pp. 95–105; More 1662b; Whichcote 1751, 2:215). Locke wrote that "to this crying up faith in opposition to reason, we may, I think, in good measure ascribe those absurdities that fill almost all the religions which possess and divide mankind." The danger of revelation was that it legitimated irrationality in religion. "If such groundless thoughts as these concern ordinary matters, and not religion, . . . we call it raving and everyone thinks it a degree of madness, but in religion men accustomed to the thoughts of revelation make a greater allowance to it" ([1690]1894, 2:426, 1976, 2:500).

This appeal to reason was a means for attacking sectarianism. But it must be emphasized that this was not intended to uphold atheism. Attacks on enthusiasm frequently cited the problem, real or imagined, of atheism. According to More (1662b, p. 2), "atheism convinces enthusiasm that reason is enemy to faith; enthusiasm's ravings convince atheism of the opposite case" (see also Glanvill 1661, pp. 103, 209). When these writers argued that nothing in religion is incompatible with reason, they were certain that reason would reveal God's existence as well as the irrationality of the sectaries.

This confidence in reason clearly reflects the role of Baconian science as an intellectual precedent. The appeal to reason in religion relied on the growing prestige of science in the Royal Society and the Universities. Advocates of science developed the Baconian theme that order in nature pointed to God's existence (Merton [1938]1970, pp. 82–86, 102–7). The well-publicized successes of the new science (see Webster 1976) further fueled confidence in the potential of reason and its compatibility with religion. Finally, there were the many ties, noted above, that linked the scientists to the Latitudinarians, the Neoplatonists, and the Whig theorists. It is, then, hardly surprising that the appeal to reason in religion relied on the theme of providence-in-nature.

From Providence-in-Society to Providence-in-Nature

The appeal to reason and the theme of providence-in-nature were not entirely novel,[14] but they led to a rejection of an old idea that was central to the Puritan vision of godly politics or to any scheme that provides a place for religion in politics. This is the idea that some political institutions have a divine mandate.

The existence of such a mandate was called into question by the events of the English Revolution. Many found it difficult to discern the hand of providence in any human institution, group, or event because of the drastic reversals in policy and regime, from 1640–1660, that frustrated the Puritan goal of a holy commonwealth. Midway through that era, Baxter complained:

> We have looked for wonders from Scotland, and what is come of it? We looked that war should have even satisfied our desires, and when it had removed all visible impediments, we thought we should have had such a glorious reformation as the world never knew! And now behold, a Babel, and a mangled deformation! (1653, sig. A10)

The Restoration, with its ungodly monarchy and repression of nonconformists, intensified this sense of failure (see Hill 1984). "In historical writing it became increasingly unfashionable after the mid seventeenth

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[14] For medieval precedents, see Chenu (1979) and Murray (1985).

century to explain events in terms of God's providence" (Thomas 1973, p. 127).

The eclipse of providence-in-society by providence-in-nature was a response to the same issue of contested authority that had led some to emphasize the virtues of reason and tolerance in religion. Providence-in-society connoted the sectarian aim of godly rule. Providence-in-nature referred to the visible, well-advertised discoveries of the scientists. Order and harmony in nature were evidence of God's existence; and in nature God's glory was not troubled by the religious conflicts that had disturbed the social order.

Thus, when More described the evidence of God's existence, he reiterated old arguments about the harmony of elements in nature. But there is conspicuously little evidence of harmony in More's discussion of religion and the social order. Among the "external effects" of religion are "bloody massacres, the disturbances and subversion of commonwealths . . . most savage tortures . . . the extirpating and dispossession of whole nations, as it has happened in America." Religion's "internal effects" include the terrorizing of conscience and "making bitter all the pleasures and contentments of this life." More concludes that "it is manifest that if there were no God, no spirit, no life to come, it were far better that there were no such religious propensities in mankind" (1662a, pp. 83–84; see also Glanvill 1661, pp. 245–48, 1681, p. 276; Wilkins [1675]1693 pp. 78–82, 173–75). A similar point was made to Locke by his friend James Tyrrell, a Whig theorist. Tyrrell praised Locke's intention to return to "the study of natural things," for this gives us "the highest reasons to admire the wisdom and goodness of their creator, whereas few civil histories show one any more than the great corruption and pravity of human nature" (Locke 1976, 4:243).

This shift from providence-in-society to providence-in-nature used several intellectual precedents. The Baconian theme of providence-in-nature was the most important precedent because, as noted above, religious conflict had no place in nature. This amiable idea led Barrow, Boyle, and Glanvill to argue that "the proper study of nature bridges religious and political divisions among men" (J. Jacob 1977, pp. 117–18; Barrow 1859, 3:399; Glanvill 1661, pp. 229–31). Other intellectual precedents reinforced skepticism about

providence-in-society. These were established by the growing sophistication of historical and philological studies,[15] which showed that all social institutions and languages were historical accretions of circumstance and custom, devoid of any evident mandate from God.

Natural Religion and Liberal Democracy

Natural religion was the term contemporaries used for the doctrine that elevated reason over revelation and located providence in nature and not society. The doctrine's adherents included the liberal-democratic ideologues, who used it to justify tolerance in public life as a precondition for the pluralist pursuit of utility. Natural religion was antithetical to the Protestant ideal of godly politics because the emphasis on providence-in-nature prevented any specific religious creed or political arrangement from laying claim to a divinely privileged status. This was the ideological basis of the separation of religion and politics in liberal democracy.

In natural religion, the idea of providence-in-nature implied that religious sentiments reflected human nature and were not imposed on it by grace. Whichcote argued that religion "is no stranger to human nature," a point commended in a preface to his writings by the Earl of Shaftesbury (Whichcote 1751, 3:5–7, 181). This is source of the "liberal confidence" in human abilities that, according to Walzer (1965, p. 302), separates Puritanism from Lockean liberalism. An optimistic appraisal of human nature replaced the pessimistic Puritan doctrines, so central to its godly politics, that underlined the corruption of reason and humanity's abject dependence on divine grace. In rejecting this pessimism, natural religion taught that we are reasonable creatures who live in the best of all possible worlds.

This optimistic religion was antithetical to nearly every key tenet of Puritanism. Natural religion rejected the doctrines of predestination and covenant theology (see Shapiro 1969, p. 62; M. Jacob 1976, pp. 41–42). It also neglected "the central doctrine of Christianity, the mediation of Jesus to redeem

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[15] At this time, the chief English figure in philology was John Wilkins, the Latitudinarian bishop and fellow of the Royal Society.

man," and "instead of religiosity" natural religion focused on "a code of social conduct" (Westfall 1958, pp. 118–25, 134, 157, 161). This may only slightly overstate the case. Beyond the existence of God and an afterlife, the core tenets of natural religion constituted a utilitarian creed with a few ethical maxims, such as the golden rule. "The laws of God," said Tillotson, "are reasonable, that is, suitable to our nature and advantageous to our interest" (1728, 1:57). It is "not possible for us to contrive any rules more advantageous to our own interest than those which religion does propose" (Wilkins [1675]1693, p. 393).

Although this jettisoned the formal theology of Calvinism—indeed, of most of Protestantism—the utilitarian framework in natural theology accommodated many of the social values in Puritanism, stressing asceticism in everyday life and obedience to authority (see Tillotson 1728, 1:37, 2:297–98; Whichcote 1751, 3:219–224; Wilkins ([1675]1693, pp. 293–94, 336–37). But unlike the conflict between society and Puritanism or its sectarian offshoots, there is a complete lack of tension between natural religion and society. From here it is only a short step to the world of the Enlightenment, where the union of morality and utility, in that best of all possible worlds, has no religious veneer.

This is why Locke and other Whig writers had no trouble with the Puritan principle "that religious experience must be granted a place in any adequate doctrine of authority" (Cragg 1975, p. 300). Their religious thinking lacked any specifically religious commitments beyond the bland acknowledgement that providence created a wonderful world. For this reason, Locke advocated civil tolerance for all, except those who denied the existence of providence. Even so, Lock stated unequivocally that "there is absolutely no such thing . . . as a Christian commonwealth"[16] (Locke [1689]1983, pp. 73, 93).

Proponents of liberal-democratic ideology insisted that "Christianity had no special teaching in connection with politics" (Gooch 1927, p. 279) *and* they maintained a

Protestant identity, which was vital to the Whigs' opposition to absolutism. They were Protestants, God's Englishmen, but divinity was irrelevant to politics because their religion held utility, not revelation, to be the basis of the political order. Government was ordained by God, but "God having in the institution of magistracy, confined such as shall be chosen rulers, within no other limits in reference to our civil concerns, save that they are to govern for the good of those over whom they come to be established, it remains free and entire to the people . . . to prescribe and define what shall be the measure and boundaries of the public good" (Ferguson 1689, p. 6; and see Hunt 1680, p. 8; Tyrrell 1681, p. 243).

For the Earl of Shaftesbury, the defense of England's liberties was inseparable from the cause of Protestantism. Yet he thought that neither religion nor politics "has been much advantaged by the union, it having never yet appeared that divinity has been greatly bettered by policy or that policy has been anywhere mended by divinity" (in Whichcote 1751, 3:3–4). Algernon Sidney saw nothing incompatible in his adherence to Protestantism while he argued that civil liberties derived, not from divinity as Filmer argued, but from nature, utility being the measure of politics ([1698]1805 1:313–314, 423).

Certainly Locke had little difficulty in reconciling his belief in providence with a utilitarian doctrine that upheld individual rights: "I find no difficulty to suppose the freedom of mankind, though I have always believed the creation of Adam." Political institutions derive from natural rights that are revealed by reason, not revelation. Entry into civil society merely secures these rights and does not create new ones. The irrelevance of theology in this theory makes plausible the almost complete toleration advocated by Locke, for "men of different professions may quietly unite . . . under the same government and unanimously carry the same civil interest, and hand-in-hand march to the same end of peace and mutual society, though they take different ways to heaven" ([1690]1960, pp. 169, 375–76; 1976, 1:110).

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[16] Locke thought that atheists would not observe their oaths and contracts (see also Wilkins, [1675]1693, p. 298). In the early 18th century, proponents of toleration, such as Mandeville, included atheists within its scope.

CONCLUSION

The main empirical issue is whether Protestantism was a source of liberal-democratic tenets, as the standard sociological account

maintains, or whether it was an obstacle to democratic ideas, a political failure and the source of problems for which Lockean ideology was intended as a solution, as I have argued. Clearly, the relationship between religious and democratic ideas in 17th-century England is far more complex than the standard sociological account of it. Although that account correctly points to the importance of religious factors, it is flawed in emphasizing the continuity between Puritanism and liberal-democratic ideology. The continuity is more mythical than real, and emphasis on it obscures the shift from Puritanism to natural religion among liberal thinkers. This shift eliminated religious obstacles to a pluralist view of politics as the pursuit of individual utility; yet it also provided this essentially secular conception of politics with a religious rationale and, more specifically, with a Protestant identity.

Walzer (1965) and Fulbrook (1983) are therefore correct in claiming that Puritanism did not have inherently democratic implications. Both point to structural factors, to modernization (Walzer) or the political sociology of absolutism (Fulbrook), in explaining why Puritanism became inadvertently allied with democratic developments. This study has not addressed these claims, but it has shown that the origins of liberal-democratic ideology are bound up with religious problems that neither Walzer nor Fulbrook discusses.

The persistence of the standard account of Protestantism and democracy requires a brief comment. What other aspects of sociology have survived as long and as intact as this? In part, the persistence and stability of the standard account reflect factors internal to sociology, namely, the influence of Durkheim and Weber. Factors external to the discipline may be equally important. The standard sociological account has a popular analogue, civil religion (see Bellah 1976, pp. 168–89), which traces—in ritual iterations of Mayflower history in classrooms, Sunday schools, and political rhetoric—democratic ideas to religious sources. Its resonance with this civic mythology may further explain the persistence and stability of the standard account in our academic discipline.[17]

The main theoretical issue in this study pertains to the sociology of knowledge and its application to the analysis of ideological change. Building on recent work in the sociology of culture, this study has outlined an analytic strategy for explaining change in ideological systems. The strategy focuses on the episodic and organizational contexts for cultural production, analyzing ideological change in terms of the interaction of intellectual *precedents* and contextual *pressures*. By treating episodic and organizational contexts as variables that mediate between ideological change and its cultural and social structural determinants, this strategy leads to subtler and more sustainable analyses than can be obtained by seeking to establish direct links to cultural and structural factors. For the analysis of ideological change, this avoids the problems associated with reductionism and intellectual history, which respectively place too much weight on social structural or cultural factors.

In analyzing the relationship between religion and democratic ideology, I have therefore not argued that structural factors are unimportant. But their causal relevance lies in the way they enter into the episodic context in which the ideologues responded to the problem of contested authority. Certainly, one could expand my account to show, for example, the relevance of early capitalism for liberal-democratic ideology. In destabilizing the balance of power between Crown and Parliament, capitalism was a cause of the English Revolution; and in creating a broad entrepreneurial stratum, it provided a strong basis of support for the Puritan clerics (Zaret 1985) and Whig leaders (Ashcraft 1986). These are wholly unobjectionable assertions, but they are also useless for explaining the origins of a Lockean conception of politics. As we have seen, these origins lie in a collective response by innovators to problems of contested authority that were resolved with the aid of several intellectual precedents. The relevance of capitalism, then, is determined by its role in shaping the relevant context and problem of contested authority. The same point applies to other analyses that, following

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[17] Another part of the explanation may lie in the Protestant origins of many U.S. sociologists

(Vidich and Lyman 1985). Alexander (1983, pp. 132, 384) thinks that "Parsons' complex relation to the Puritan heritage is evident"; Parsons cited Bellah's essay on civil religion (1976) "more than any other statement on 20th-century culture."

Durkheim, emphasize differentiation or, following Weber, rationalization, instead of the capitalist connection.

Thus, the theoretical issues raised by this study go beyond the case at hand to some of the broadest questions in sociology. How are cultures related to social structures? What is the relationship between cultural change and other types of change? Is there always a discrepancy between the manifest interests upheld by ideological systems and the latent interests of the ideologues? Answers to these questions will not emerge from one or a few case studies. But the promise for our discipline at large contained in recent developments in the sociology of culture is that they point to a reexamination and possible resolution of these larger macrosociological issues.

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