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**Working Paper**

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GLO Discussion Paper, No. 1505

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

Global Labor Organization (GLO)

*Suggested Citation:* Fazio, Andrea; Reggiani, Tommaso; Santori, Paolo (2024) : "Blessed are the Poor": The Weberian Spirit of Capitalism Under Experimental Scrutiny, GLO Discussion Paper, No. 1505, Global Labor Organization (GLO), Essen

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/304382>

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# ‘Blessed are the Poor’

## The Weberian Spirit of Capitalism Under Experimental Scrutiny\*

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October 15, 2024

### Abstract

This paper empirically tests Max Weber’s thesis on how religious narratives, particularly the Protestant Ethic, influence attitudes toward wealth redistribution. Weber suggested that the Protestant Reformation, led to the belief that economic success was a sign of divine favor, legitimizing wealth inequality. Using a variation of the dictator game with "blessed" framing, we measure how participants’ redistribution behaviors change when primed with this narrative. Our results show that low-income Protestants exposed to the "blessed" narrative are less likely to redistribute wealth compared to Catholics, supporting Weber’s idea that Protestants justify inequality through divine providence. Furthermore, a narrative analysis reveals that Protestants interpret “blessing” as divine election, while Catholics focus more on well-being. These findings suggest that religious narratives significantly shape economic behaviors and preferences for redistribution, providing empirical support for Weber’s thesis.

**Keywords:** dictator game; Max Weber; pro-social behaviour; redistribution.

**JEL Codes:** J14; J15; Z12; Z1.

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\*We are grateful to the participants at the Inequality in Rome Summer Meeting for their precious comments and suggestions. Usual disclaimers apply. IRB approval from the School Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff Business School – ref: 1440. Open Science Foundation pre-registration – ref: <https://osf.io/dcz7r/>.

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# Introduction

In his pioneering study of the Economics of Religion, [Iannaccone \(1998\)](#) distinguished three main directions for this old/new field of study. First, scholars can employ economic categories to interpret religious behavior, for example, applying utility functions to understand personal faith. Second, religious studies and theological ideas can be used as a reference point to evaluate and eventually criticize economic policies – think about the inquiries on the theological notion of debt to foster debt relief for poor countries ([Lysaught, 2015](#)). Finally, another line of inquiry can be used to study the economic consequences of religion. In the present paper, we take this third direction, studying how religious beliefs and narratives might affect preference for redistribution.

Like many of our predecessors – see the section devoted to the literature review – our starting point is Max Weber’s book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Our study aims to test one of Weber’s core ideas empirically. According to Weber, an effect of the Protestant Reformation, especially in its Calvinist and Methodist ramifications, is that believers perceived to be blessed by God through a flourishing economic activity: “God Himself blessed His chosen ones through the success of their labours” ([Weber, 2005a](#)). The Reformation moved the barycentre of religious life from the monastic and extramundane life to the intermundane activity. Protestantism attached a system of psychological sanctions and rewards – the same that religions usually attached to sacred activity – to the fulfillment of daily tasks, above all the duties of a profession. According to Weber, the secularization of this Protestant Ethic is attached to the emergence of the spirit of capitalism.

We are interested in testing one of the consequences of the notion of being ‘blessed’: “A specifically bourgeois economic ethic had grown up [...] the consciousness of standing in the fullness of God’s grace and being visibly blessed by Him [...] gave him the comforting assurance that the unequal distribution of the goods of this world was a special dispensation of Divine Providence which in these differences as in particular grace pursued secret ends unknown to men” ([Weber, 2005b](#)). In other words, people who perceive richness and economic success as the fruit of a ‘blessing’ are more inclined to legitimize wealth inequalities and consequently

less inclined to redistribute. Hence our research question: Is the narrative of ‘being chosen’ so influential on human behavior regarding redistribution matters? As the section devoted to the literature review shows, although we are not the first to answer this question empirically, our sample, methods, and results contribute to the ongoing debate.

We want to empirically test Weber’s thesis through an experiment, specifically a variation of the Dictator Game. In our game, which we fictionally call the ‘Blessed Game’, we modify the framing of the standard dictator game by introducing an entitlement effect. We exogenously vary the wording of the standard dictator game in the instructions: in the treatment group, the participants are told that one – those who play as dictator – will be ‘the blessed’, whereas in the control group, the players are named ‘player 1’ and ‘player 2’. In the treatment and control groups, we measure the recipient’s expectation, i.e., how much the recipient thinks that the other participant (i.e., the dictator) is willing to share and how much the dictator shares.

Our pool is recruited through Prolific, and it is composed of people living in the United States. To make the Weberian hypothesis salient, the pool comprises four groups: Catholics, Calvinists and Methodists, Atheists, and Protestants. The Methodists and Calvinists, and possibly Protestants should perceive the ‘blessing’ of wealth as a signal of being part of the community of the chosen ones (the dictators in our experiment). This narrative should bring the Calvinist, Methodist, and Protestant dictators to be less disposed than Catholics or atheists to share their wealth with the non-elected. In parallel, the ‘blessing’ narrative should also bring Calvinist, Methodist, and Protestant recipients the expectation of a lower amount from the dictator. As a complement to the Weberian framework, we expect the Catholic attitude toward the ‘blessing’ of wealth to be less punchy and to have more to do with the logic of gift. In Catholicism, wealth is one of God’s gifts to humanity, so it is something to share with fellow humans as God commands. Therefore, we expect Catholic dictators to be not affected by the manipulation; if anything, they should be more inclined to redistribute, and Catholic recipients should expect more from the dictators. The two religious narratives are different and complementary and should explain the different preferences and behaviors of the people affected by them.

Our results show an effect of the ‘blessed’ priming, i.e., people exposed to the blessed

narrative tend to redistribute less than those not. This effect is present overall, although not significantly (probably due to the sample size). Our hypotheses are confirmed when we compare the Catholics with the Protestants. The latter tend to expect less and redistribute less. We also find that Calvinists and Methodists tend to expect less than Catholics. The most interesting effect emerges when we include income differences. The low-income participants from the Protestant group seem to be very exposed to the ‘blessed’ narrative because, when they are dictators, they redistribute less, and when they are recipients, they expect to receive less than their Catholic counterparts. This reveals that the religious narratives entailed in the Protestant Ethic legitimize inequalities in the eyes of the ‘poor.’

The paper is organized as follows: We first review the literature to locate our paper among the current studies on the topic and emphasize our contribution. Then we expose our experimental methodology. Consequently, we present our results and discuss our findings, emphasizing the limitations of our analysis and possibilities for future research.

## Literature Review

Our analysis intersects many branches of literature on the economic consequences of religion. Starting from Weber’s analysis, some authors inquired about the effect of Protestantism on economic performance. [Becker and Woessmann \(2009\)](#) employed country-level data from late 19th-century Prussia to show that Protestantism was associated with higher economic prosperity due to better literacy and education than Catholicism. More recently, [Nunziata and Rocco \(2016\)](#) demonstrated that Protestants from Switzerland, a religious minority in comparison to Calvinists and Methodists, had more chance to become entrepreneurs than Catholics. They found similar results ([Nunziata and Rocco, 2018](#)) when they examined the former Holy Roman Empire regions (mainly Germany): Protestants had 5% more chances to start a business than Catholics. Focusing on a slightly different topic, [Spenkuch \(2017\)](#) showed how Protestants work more hours than Catholics (even if this is not reflected in their respective salaries). The affinity of these studies and ours is the willingness to compare Catholic and Protestant economic behaviors.

Closer to our analysis are the studies that focus on the effect of religion on pro-social behavior. In two related studies, [Norenzayan and Shariff \(2008\)](#) and [Shariff and Norenzayan \(2007\)](#) inquired under what conditions religion increases pro-social behavior. They ran a dictator game ([Shariff and Norenzayan, 2007](#)) where the treatment group was implicitly exposed to the concept of God. They discovered that the willingness to give money to strangers increased when the presence of God was implicitly recalled. This result was valid both for the two samples they employed, i.e., students of the British Columbia University and a Canadian community in Vancouver. Interestingly enough, they showed that self-reported religiosity had little or no impact on pro-social behavior compared to the implicit recall of God, secular institutions, or social reputation ([Norenzayan and Shariff, 2008](#)). These results have been critically revised by [Gomes and McCullough \(2015\)](#): they showed that with a bigger sample and a change of wording in the priming, there is no relation between religious priming and generosity in the dictator game. While we also run a dictator game, we find that self-reported religiosity impacts the preference for redistribution between different religious groups. Therefore, we differ from [Shariff and Norenzayan \(2007\)](#) and the similar results found by [Ahmed and Salas \(2011\)](#), who argued that self-reported religiosity is unrelated to cooperation in the dictator and prisoner-dilemma games.

The real target of our analysis is the literature focused on religion and (preference for) redistribution. Indirectly we engage with studies like the one by [Manow \(2004\)](#), which showed how Reform Protestant Movements (Calvinism, Anabaptism, and so on) are suspicious of state authority and want to restrict welfare state development in countries like Britain, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. More directly, our research is built upon [Bénabou and Tirole \(2006\)](#) study that shows how the Protestant work ethic narrative causes religious individuals to opt for low tax rates to avoid income redistribution in favor of non-religious or less-religious citizens. Another example of a study that inspired us is the paper by [Guiso et al. \(2006\)](#), where through a study conducted via the General Social Survey with a sample of United States citizens, it is shown that religious people (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish) have a more negative attitude to redistribution than non-religious people. Something similar has been presented by [Neustadt \(2011\)](#), who conducted a Discrete Choice experiment in Switzerland and found that non-religious people

have a higher marginal willingness to pay than religious people. Similar results are present in [Kirchmaier et al. \(2018\)](#).

Neustadt's analysis also compared different religions: Protestants and Catholics. He found that the connection between Protestantism and the lower willingness to pay of the Protestants with respect to the Catholics is partially confirmed but not statistically significant. Our paper shows different results: low-income Protestants are less inclined to redistribute and to expect redistribution. In this sense, our study confirms the result of [Basten and Betz \(2013\)](#), who through an analysis of the votes to referenda in Switzerland, found that Protestants and Calvinists support less redistribution and government intervention than Catholics. Similar results came from a paper by [Jordan \(2014\)](#). There, the European social survey regarding welfare state attitudes of religious people living in 13 European countries showed that Catholics (both self-declared or people living in countries where Catholicism is still strong in the culture) redistribute more than Protestants. Even if we do not focus on the distinction between the welfare state and private charity or philanthropy, our study clearly contributes to this branch of literature by providing an empirically tested explanation of the Protestant's attitude toward redistribution via the analysis of the 'blessed' narrative.

## **Methodology and Data**

### **Experimental Design**

To investigate the role of religious narrative, we conducted an online experiment building on a standard dictator game (DG) with anonymous recipients ([Forsythe et al., 1994](#)). The dictator game works as follows: each participant is randomly paired with another participant. There are two possible roles: the dictator and the recipient. The dictator receives an endowment of 100 points, each point worth 0.01 USD, and decides how much to give to the recipient. The recipient is asked to guess how many points the dictator will keep for himself/herself. If the guess is correct, the recipients may earn an additional 0.20 USD. The game's rules are the same for both treatment and control groups. However, while the control group receives the standard instructions for the game, where the labels of participants are Participant 1 (who

assumes the role of the dictator) and Participant 2 (who assumes the role of the recipient) and the randomization of the role is stressed, the treatment group receives information where the sentence about randomization is omitted and the participant assuming the role of the dictator is called ‘The Blessed.’

This modification aims to increase the dictator’s endowment effect and possibly activate an underlying narrative that may justify unequal outcomes. After the game, the participants are asked to fill out a short survey. The survey contains three questions. The first one is an open-ended question: ‘What does to be blessed mean to you?’. Then there are two standard questions: one asking whether luck or hard work is more important to get ahead, and the other one asking to what extent people think that inequality is too high in their country.

The open-ended question is crucial to understanding whether individuals in the treatment group—those exposed to the blessed framing—are more or less willing to change the narrative. The other two questions are intended to capture possible self-serving biases that may justify the choice in the dictator game.

## **Experimental Protocol**

The study has been pre-registered on the [Open Science Framework](https://osf.io/dcz7r/) (ref: <https://osf.io/dcz7r/>) and the School Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University has approved it (ref: 1440). The study was administered through Otree ([Chen et al., 2016](#)). The participants were recruited from Prolific, which is a professional platform that allows researchers to recruit participants for surveys or experiments. It has been successfully utilized in economics, psychology, and social sciences in general ([Callan et al., 2017](#), [Marreiros et al., 2017](#)).

Prolific allows research to select the subject pools based on specific characteristics. For our study, we recruited participants based in the US. Furthermore, we selected participants according to their declared religious belonging to investigate possible differences in narratives and whether these narratives affect actual behaviors. Overall, our sample is composed of 837 individuals, where 218 declared to be atheists, 195 Calvinists or Methodists, 217 Catholics, and 207 Protestants. The summary statistics of our sample are displayed in Appendix A, where



also a balance test of the sample is displayed.

## Results

In this section, we first show the descriptive results of the narratives and we then show the results of the dictator game and possible effects on self-serving bias.

### Analysis of Narratives

We analyze the answers to the open-ended questions to understand 1) how different religious groups think about ‘blessing’ and 2) whether our treatment may shift the narrative within specific religious groups. We analyze the open-ended question with artificial intelligence methods to find the dominant topics. Specifically, we employed a powerful language model (GPT-4) to perform topic modeling<sup>1</sup>. We found 5 dominant topics which are:

- **Fortune and Luck:** This topic is likely identified frequently due to common associations between blessings and luck or fortune. Many people may interpret blessings as events or states of being that are significantly influenced by luck.
- **Life Satisfaction and Positivity:** Blessings are often associated with a sense of life satisfaction and positive feelings. This category captures narratives that emphasize personal happiness, contentment, and positive life circumstances.
- **Good Fortune and Luck:** Similar to the “Fortune and Luck” category but might be differentiated by specific emphasis on good fortune. This could involve narratives where blessings are directly equated to good luck or fortunate events.
- **General Well-being:** This topic encompasses broader interpretations of blessings that include overall well-being, health, and general life satisfaction, beyond specific instances of luck or spiritual blessings.
- **Spiritual Blessings:** This category captures the religious or spiritual aspect of blessings. Narratives in this category might highlight divine favor, spiritual growth, or religious interpretations of being blessed.

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<sup>1</sup>We opted for artificial intelligence methods as it is more effective than the usual computational models to perform text analysis ([Rathje et al., 2024](#))

Table 1: Summary of Most Frequent Words Characterizing Each Dominant Topic

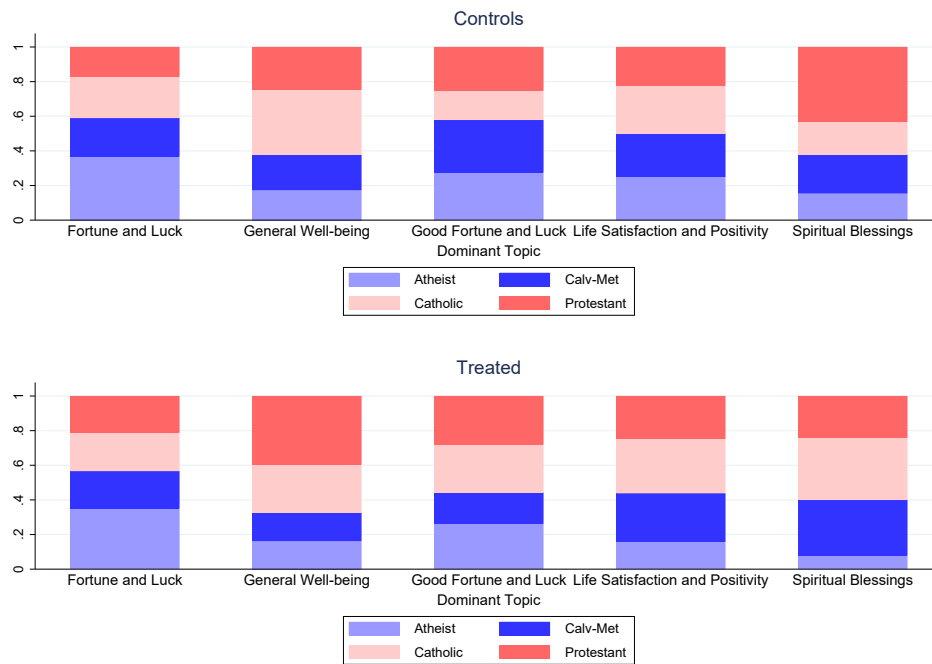
Topic	Most Frequent Words
<b>Fortune and Luck</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Something</li> <li>2. Lucky</li> <li>3. Given</li> <li>4. Fortunate</li> <li>5. Religious</li> <li>6. Someone</li> <li>7. Person</li> <li>8. Life</li> <li>9. Others</li> <li>10. Mean</li> </ol>
<b>Life Satisfaction and Positivity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Life</li> <li>2. Things</li> <li>3. Happy</li> <li>4. Need</li> <li>5. Good</li> <li>6. Feel</li> <li>7. Family</li> <li>8. People</li> <li>9. Everything</li> <li>10. Grateful</li> </ol>
<b>Good Fortune and Luck</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Good</li> <li>2. Things</li> <li>3. Life</li> <li>4. Luck</li> <li>5. Fortune</li> <li>6. Something</li> <li>7. Happen</li> <li>8. People</li> <li>9. Like</li> <li>10. Health</li> </ol>
<b>General Well-being</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family</li> <li>2. Life</li> <li>3. Good</li> <li>4. Friends</li> <li>5. Able</li> <li>6. Love</li> <li>7. Money</li> <li>8. Health</li> <li>9. Also</li> <li>10. People</li> </ol>
<b>Spiritual Blessings</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. God</li> <li>2. Things</li> <li>3. Life</li> <li>4. Blessings</li> <li>5. Good</li> <li>6. Favor</li> <li>7. Blessing</li> <li>8. Gods</li> <li>9. Something</li> <li>10. Given</li> </ol>

Table 1 shows the most frequent words for each topic, while Figure 1 shows the distribution of the answers for each religious group by dominant topic. Interestingly, we do see a switch in the narratives between the control and treatment groups. In particular, in the control group, the Spiritual Blessing topic mainly comprises Protestants, while the General Well-being topic mostly comprises Catholics. These results are reversed for the treatment group, suggesting that the framing of the ‘blessing’ game truly activates the narratives described by Weber. In

other words, Protestants appear to perceive the blessing as something that pertains to a direct relationship with divinity, and among its main features it recurs the idea of 'being chosen.' Catholics appear more inclined to disentangle the idea of blessing as having a good life from the divine intervention and this might be due to one of the core aspects of Catholicism, i.e., mediation (by the Church both in its structure and sacraments) between the person and God.

Surprisingly enough, we find a curious effect when we compare the narratives of Catholics with the ones of Calvinists-Methodists. In the passage from control to treatment groups, we see the Calvinists-Methodists resemble the choices of Catholics, preferring an understanding of blessing as something related to 'spiritual blessing' rather than 'general well-being.' While this seems to contradict Weber's hypothesis, a closer look reveals that things might stand differently. According to Weber, the idea of wealth as a sign of election by God, typical of the protestant world, was a response to a kind of collective anxiety: if the doctrine of predestination is correct, how do I know that God chose me? In the protestant ethic, wealth became one element that signals God's election. When we made explicit to the treatment groups that they were being blessed, we might hypothesize that Calvinist-Methodists refer to this more as a spiritual direct connection with God because the element of uncertainty and anxiety is removed. Moreover, the direct, non-mediated connection between the believer and God is one of the pillars of all the religious movements that started from Luther's Reformation. This is why for Calvinists-Methodists the 'blessing' could have been referred to this spiritual element rather than the wealth/well-being element. It goes without saying that this does not explain the different choices of the protestants. Still, it gives us a hermeneutical key to understanding how, from different starting points, Catholics and Calvinists-Methodists arrived at the same conclusions.

Figure 1: Differences in Narratives



*Notes:* The Figure shows differences in dominant topic by religious group.

## Empirical Analysis

We show our main results in Tables 1-3<sup>2</sup>. Table 2 (Panel a) shows the results of our full sample. Qualitatively, the results suggest that Protestants tend to keep more. However, these results are never statistically significant, suggesting that on average our treatment has not affected behavior in the dictator game. Results in Table 3 (Panel a) also are in this direction, although we find that both Protestants and Calvinists and Methodists expect less money from the ‘blessed’ when compared with Catholics. Table 4 (Panel a) shows also that there are no statistically significant differences in opinions about the level of inequality.

To dig deeper into the possible effects of religious narratives and inequality acceptance, we split the sample by income level. Literature suggests that the psychological cost of inequality –and the consequent willingness to believe in narratives justifying inequality– is mostly beard by low-income people (Bénabou and Tirole, 2006, Mijs, 2019). When we focus on low-income individuals<sup>3</sup>, we find that ‘blessed’ protestants are more willing to keep a higher amount of money for themselves, are more willing to think that the dictators will keep a higher amount and are also more likely to tolerate inequality.<sup>4</sup>. The size of these effects is economically relevant as it ranges from 40 to 50% of the mean in the dictator game and it is around 16% of the sample mean as regards statements about inequality<sup>5</sup>. This result is consistent with the idea that poor people have a higher need to modify their beliefs to bear the psychological cost of inequality (Furnham, 2003).

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<sup>2</sup>The Tables displaying the full list of controls can be found in Appendix B, while in Appendix C we replicate our main results using Tobit models

<sup>3</sup>To split the sample, we categorize low-income individuals as those who have a household income lower than 50,000 USD, as the guidelines suggest (Shrider and Creamer, 2023). In Appendix D, we show the results interacting income levels with the treatment variables and the results do not change significantly.

<sup>4</sup>We also show in Appendix E that low-income individuals drive the shift in narratives examined above.

<sup>5</sup>However, we find no effects on the question asking whether luck or merit is the driver of economic success. This may suggest that, at least in our case, if treated, low-income Protestants are more willing to accept inequality, but they are less likely to change beliefs about the source of inequality.

Table 2: Effect of Blessing (Dictators)

	Keep	Keep	Keep	Keep
<i>Panel a: All</i>				
Treated	2.915 (4.434)	2.205 (4.587)	2.675 (4.568)	2.697 (4.574)
Treated $\times$ Atheist	-0.684 (6.268)	-0.562 (6.430)	-1.330 (6.403)	-1.362 (6.412)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist	0.268 (6.529)	1.041 (6.655)	-0.299 (6.654)	-0.363 (6.666)
Treated $\times$ Protestant	1.559 (6.349)	1.604 (6.497)	0.185 (6.491)	0.204 (6.499)
Observations	416	416	416	416
R2	0.069	0.160	0.179	0.179
<i>Panel b: High Income</i>				
Treated	5.786 (5.460)	4.891 (5.818)	4.762 (5.735)	4.797 (5.731)
Treated $\times$ Atheist	-2.191 (8.353)	-1.606 (9.078)	-2.748 (8.980)	-2.981 (8.976)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist	4.511 (8.350)	2.087 (8.723)	1.753 (8.622)	1.925 (8.616)
Treated $\times$ Protestant	-8.345 (7.809)	-9.503 (8.265)	-11.098 (8.143)	-11.045 (8.137)
Observations	274	274	274	274
R2	0.072	0.168	0.210	0.215
<i>Panel b: Low Income</i>				
Treated	-5.254 (7.656)	-7.182 (8.765)	-7.107 (8.783)	-5.277 (8.651)
Treated $\times$ Atheist	6.924 (9.626)	9.844 (10.683)	9.597 (10.796)	8.099 (10.606)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist	-4.020 (10.506)	3.673 (11.630)	1.272 (11.596)	-2.073 (11.469)
Treated $\times$ Protestant	26.018** (11.220)	34.435*** (12.850)	38.725*** (12.841)	38.618*** (12.590)
Observations	142	142	142	142
R2	0.137	0.337	0.382	0.412
Mean Dep. Var.	66.17	66.17	66.17	66.17
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Labour Market Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Orientation Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Subjective Social Status	No	No	No	Yes

Notes: OLS Estimates. Basic controls are total approvals, gender, age, age squared, ethnicity, education, and marital status. Labor market controls include employment status. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Table 3: Effect of Blessing (Recipients)

	Guess	Guess	Guess	Guess
<i>Panel a: All</i>				
Treated	-6.070 (5.000)	-7.003 (5.159)	-6.387 (5.208)	-6.322 (5.227)
Treated $\times$ Atheist	4.184 (7.081)	4.338 (7.344)	3.385 (7.407)	3.319 (7.427)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist	7.288 (7.239)	6.449 (7.383)	6.342 (7.422)	6.202 (7.473)
Treated $\times$ Protestant	9.361 (7.225)	9.494 (7.361)	9.176 (7.384)	9.143 (7.396)
Observations	417	417	417	417
R2	0.042	0.138	0.143	0.144
<i>Panel b: High Income</i>				
Treated	-1.961 (6.336)	2.280 (6.550)	2.917 (6.673)	3.180 (6.687)
Treated $\times$ Atheist	-7.050 (9.731)	-10.896 (9.993)	-10.677 (10.149)	-11.086 (10.172)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist	2.953 (8.876)	-5.184 (9.022)	-5.606 (9.096)	-6.017 (9.119)
Treated $\times$ Protestant	0.124 (9.337)	-5.486 (9.421)	-6.389 (9.565)	-6.240 (9.575)
Observations	266	266	266	266
R2	0.044	0.250	0.254	0.256
<i>Panel b: Low Income</i>				
Treated	-13.638 (8.319)	-9.184 (9.362)	-6.278 (9.619)	-7.429 (9.710)
Treated $\times$ Atheist	17.646 (11.124)	9.407 (12.701)	6.285 (12.897)	7.015 (12.933)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist	14.680 (13.110)	7.566 (14.622)	6.519 (14.902)	9.483 (15.268)
Treated $\times$ Protestant	31.505** (12.541)	24.568* (13.786)	22.894 (13.871)	23.824* (13.920)
Observations	151	151	151	151
R2	0.086	0.244	0.268	0.274
Mean Dep. Var.	55.17	55.17	55.17	55.17
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Labour Market Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Orientation Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Subjective Social Status	No	No	No	Yes

Notes: OLS Estimates. Basic controls are total approvals, gender, age, age squared, ethnicity, education, and marital status. Labor market controls include employment status. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Table 4: Effect of Blessing on Opinions

	Ineq. too large	Ineq. too large	Ineq. too large	Ineq. too large
<i>Panel a: All</i>				
Treated	0.113 (0.134)	0.076 (0.136)	-0.039 (0.124)	-0.051 (0.124)
Treated $\times$ Atheist	-0.093 (0.189)	-0.058 (0.193)	0.063 (0.175)	0.078 (0.175)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist	-0.014 (0.195)	0.025 (0.197)	0.110 (0.179)	0.131 (0.179)
Treated $\times$ Protestant	-0.313 (0.192)	-0.312 (0.194)	-0.288 (0.176)	-0.276 (0.176)
Observations	833	833	833	833
R2	0.099	0.137	0.295	0.298
<i>Panel b: High Income</i>				
Treated	0.079 (0.165)	0.083 (0.173)	-0.015 (0.156)	-0.036 (0.156)
Treated $\times$ Atheist	0.105 (0.253)	0.079 (0.271)	0.195 (0.245)	0.224 (0.245)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist	0.016 (0.241)	0.005 (0.250)	0.094 (0.226)	0.116 (0.225)
Treated $\times$ Protestant	-0.165 (0.238)	-0.190 (0.246)	-0.184 (0.223)	-0.178 (0.222)
Observations	540	540	540	540
R2	0.100	0.150	0.314	0.320
<i>Panel b: Low Income</i>				
Treated	0.241 (0.228)	0.326 (0.244)	0.163 (0.227)	0.165 (0.227)
Treated $\times$ Atheist	-0.401 (0.294)	-0.369 (0.312)	-0.221 (0.290)	-0.222 (0.291)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist	-0.153 (0.333)	-0.316 (0.349)	-0.257 (0.324)	-0.262 (0.325)
Treated $\times$ Protestant	-0.668** (0.335)	-0.801** (0.353)	-0.770** (0.327)	-0.772** (0.327)
Observations	293	293	293	293
R2	0.122	0.221	0.347	0.347
Mean Dep. Var.	4.071	4.071	4.071	4.071
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Labour Market Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Orientation Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Subjective Social Status	No	No	No	Yes

Notes: OLS Estimates. Basic controls are total approvals, gender, age, age squared, ethnicity, education, and marital status. Labor market controls include employment status. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$



## Discussion

To appreciate the relevance of our results, we can distinguish two meanings of ‘Protestant’: one narrow and one broad. The latter refers to the title of Weber’s book, where he identifies with Protestants all those religious confessions that followed the schism in the Christian world. In this sense, the ‘Protestant Ethic’ is opposed to a ‘Catholic Ethic,’ the latter being more connected to what happened before (Scholasticism) and after the Reformation (Counter-Reformation and so on). This broad understanding of Protestant is testified by Weber’s more acute critics like Michael Novak who wrote ‘The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism’ (Fanfani, 1984, Novak, 1993). Adopting this broader definition, our experiment shows that the US ‘Protestant’ world composed of Protestants exposed to the priming of blessing is less inclined to redistribute than the Catholic counterpart. Also, when compared with Catholics, we find that Protestants, Calvinists and Methodists expect less money from the ‘blessed’. Although not significant, this effect suggests that the narrative activates a self-understanding of being in a direct relationship with God, of being chosen or elected. In turn, this brought Protestants (broadly speaking) to interpret what they have as something deserved, i.e., they receive a validation of their hard work. The blessed priming put a veil of divine social justice on wealth, making individuals less inclined to redistribute or to expect redistribution.

Under the light of the broader notion of Protestantism, the narrow version acquires even more significance. The Protestants of our experiment, as distinct not only from the Catholics but also from the Calvinists and Methodists, are less inclined to redistribute. We find a statistically significant effect when we analyze the low-income Protestants with the low-income Catholics. The latter exposed to the blessed narrative are less inclined to share what they have or to expect sharing from the other players in the game. While the income level might appear a nuance, it has profound implications in the research on how the religious element impacts the moral psychology of poor people. In the narrow Protestants of our experiment, the blessing narrative activates a divinely inspired ‘just world belief’ (Furnham, 2003), i.e., the idea that wealth inequalities are not simply a fact of life but how things are supposed to be because God wants so. The lower willingness to redistribute seems to pair with the acceptance of inequalities and

poverty as something ‘deserved’ while this element is less evident in the Catholic participants.

To sum up, the narrow notion of Protestants statistically confirms the Weberian hypothesis that the broader idea of Protestants was visible but not significant. Religious narratives, like many other kinds of narratives ([Hillenbrand and Verrina, 2022](#), [Shiller, 2020](#)), do play a role in people’s preferences for redistribution. While describing a general trend that develops throughout centuries, Weber’s hypothesis on the economic impact of the protestant ethic seems to remain, to a certain extent, a valid heuristic tool to understand contemporary phenomena.

The limitations of our analysis emerge more or less explicitly in the discussion. On the one hand, the reduced sample size of our experiment might be related to the statistical (non) significance of our results concerning the broad Protestant group. On the other hand, the religious confessions that constitute the US Protestant world are many more than the three we inquired about (see [Steensland et al., 2000](#)). While we focus on Protestants (narrowly speaking), Calvinists, and Methodists, we leave aside Evangelicals, Baptists, Nondenominational Protestants, Pentecostals, Episcopalians/Anglicans, Adventists, Anabaptists, and so on. Moreover, Weber was very clear in stating that the spirit of capitalism is a secularized version of the protestant ethic. This means that the economic impact of religious notions such as ‘calling’ or ‘blessing’ extended beyond the scope of established religions. In the US, this might also be connected to the fact that even certain Catholic spheres were indirectly impacted by the Weberian spirit of capitalism as testified by many catholic authors such as [Novak \(1993\)](#), [Gregg \(2001\)](#), and [Sirico \(2012\)](#) who express very pro-free market society doctrines.

As often happens in this kind of study, our limitations constitute patterns for future research. The experiment might be extended both quantitatively (enlarging the sample) and qualitatively (including more religious confessions or comparing US believers to other countries’ believers). What is sure is that in a world of growing inequalities, the religious/spiritual component is a determinant that cannot be anymore marginalized or ignored.

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## Appendix A

Table A1: Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
<b>Atheist</b>			
Kept	65.556	21.414	108
Guess	55.596	24.736	109
Inequality Too Large	0.912	0.283	217
Luck Most Important	0.226	0.419	217
Total Approvals	1557.472	1094.097	218
Female	0.5	0.501	218
Age	36.436	11.693	218
Full Time	0.472	0.5	218
White	0.784	0.412	218
Tertiary Education	0.505	0.501	218
Married or Civil Union	0.225	0.418	218
Republican	0.05	0.219	218
Household Income	7.037	3.875	218
Socioeconomic Status	4.509	1.812	218
<b>Calvinist/Methodist</b>			
Kept	65.083	22.158	96
Guess	56.98	24.859	99
Inequality Too Large	0.703	0.458	195
Luck Most Important	0.087	0.283	195
Total Approvals	1173.308	1064.889	195
Female	0.544	0.499	195
Age	41.093	14.526	193
Full Time	0.523	0.501	195
White	0.897	0.304	195
Tertiary Education	0.251	0.435	195
Married or Civil Union	0.672	0.471	195
Republican	0.354	0.479	195
Household Income	8.497	3.644	195
Socioeconomic Status	5.413	1.623	195
<b>Catholics</b>			
Kept	66.704	24.34	108
Guess	53.495	29.163	109
Inequality Too Large	0.747	0.436	217
Luck Most Important	0.101	0.303	217
Total Approvals	1887.028	1273.225	217
Female	0.502	0.501	217
Age	42.134	14.361	216
Full Time	0.636	0.482	217
White	0.839	0.369	217
Tertiary Education	0.207	0.406	217
Married or Civil Union	0.23	0.422	217
Republican	0.336	0.474	217
Household Income	8.189	3.477	217
Socioeconomic Status	5.452	1.661	217
<b>Protestants</b>			
Kept	67.226	25.794	106
Guess	54.752	25.737	101
Inequality Too Large	0.696	0.461	207
Luck Most Important	0.087	0.282	207
Total Approvals	2360.546	1825.083	207
Female	0.488	0.501	207
Age	43.807	12.891	207
Full Time	0.618	0.487	207
White	0.763	0.426	207
Tertiary Education	0.271	0.445	207
Married or Civil Union	0.773	0.42	207
Republican	0.329	0.471	207
Household Income	8.279	3.557	207
Socioeconomic Status	5.396	1.615	207

Table A2: Balanced Test

	Control	Treatment	Difference
Kept	64.400 (23.381)	67.952 (23.436)	3.552 (2.290)
Guess	55.834 (25.525)	54.535 (26.804)	-1.299 (2.562)
Ineq. Too Large	0.776 (0.417)	0.758 (0.429)	-0.018 (0.029)
Luck most important	0.130 (0.337)	0.124 (0.329)	-0.007 (0.023)
Total approvals	1,792.178 (1,376.436)	1,712.531 (1,449.521)	-79.648 (97.737)
Female	0.516 (0.500)	0.500 (0.501)	-0.016 (0.035)
Age	40.688 (14.083)	40.948 (13.223)	0.259 (0.946)
Full-time employment	0.557 (0.497)	0.569 (0.496)	0.012 (0.034)
White	0.814 (0.389)	0.825 (0.381)	0.010 (0.027)
Tertiary education	0.311 (0.463)	0.310 (0.463)	-0.000 (0.032)
Married/Civil union	0.434 (1.553)	0.498 (1.677)	0.064* (0.112)
Republican	0.282 (0.450)	0.246 (0.431)	-0.035 (0.030)
Household income	7.889 (3.570)	8.076 (3.788)	0.187 (0.255)
Socioeconomic status	5.167 (1.783)	5.199 (1.671)	0.032 (0.119)
Observations	415	422	837



## **Appendix B**

Table B1: Effect of Blessing (Dictators)

	Keep	Keep	Keep	Keep
Treated	2.915 (4.434)	2.205 (4.587)	2.675 (4.568)	2.697 (4.574)
<i>Religion (ref: Catholic):</i>				
Atheist	-0.400 (4.476)	-3.225 (5.703)	-0.710 (5.768)	-0.958 (5.833)
Calvinist	1.473 (4.629)	4.905 (10.985)	3.792 (11.001)	3.882 (11.019)
Protestant	-0.247 (4.515)	6.327 (11.473)	4.095 (11.478)	4.235 (11.502)
<i>Interaction Effects:</i>				
Treated × Atheist	-0.684 (6.268)	-0.562 (6.430)	-1.330 (6.403)	-1.362 (6.412)
Treated × Calvinist-Methodist	0.268 (6.529)	1.041 (6.655)	-0.299 (6.654)	-0.363 (6.666)
Treated × Protestant	1.559 (6.349)	1.604 (6.497)	0.185 (6.491)	0.204 (6.499)
<i>Total Approvals and Demographics:</i>				
Total approvals	0.003*** (0.001)	0.002*** (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)
Sex	5.072** (2.321)	3.163 (2.462)	3.655 (2.473)	3.660 (2.476)
Age	-0.194 (0.506)	-0.410 (0.570)	-0.425 (0.568)	-0.445 (0.572)
Age <sup>2</sup>	-0.001 (0.006)	0.002 (0.006)	0.002 (0.006)	0.002 (0.006)
<i>Ethnicity (ref: White):</i>				
Asian	.	3.076 (4.659)	2.924 (4.690)	2.885 (4.698)
Black	.	3.466 (4.879)	4.664 (4.994)	4.574 (5.009)
Mixed	.	-2.836 (5.549)	-3.037 (5.532)	-3.107 (5.543)
Other	.	-8.819 (6.855)	-9.787 (6.876)	-9.900 (6.894)
<i>Education (ref: Doctorate degree):</i>				
Graduate degree	.	9.956 (8.221)	9.646 (8.203)	9.483 (8.231)
High school diploma/A-levels	.	4.453 (8.989)	4.145 (8.981)	3.868 (9.039)
No formal qualifications	.	0.092 (15.701)	-2.086 (15.821)	-2.497 (15.898)
Secondary education (e.g. GED/GCSE)	.	-2.153 (8.539)	-1.507 (8.495)	-1.851 (8.581)
Technical/community college	.	8.778 (7.989)	8.967 (7.956)	8.764 (7.994)
Undergraduate degree (BA/BSc/other)	.	7.810 (9.335)	7.638 (9.306)	7.562 (9.321)
<i>Marital Status (ref: Married):</i>				
Divorced	.	-0.118 (6.377)	0.316 (6.343)	0.023 (6.424)
Engaged	.	-0.359 (7.242)	0.485 (7.210)	0.159 (7.299)
In a civil partnership/civil union or similar	.	0.152 (6.168)	0.677 (6.143)	0.561 (6.163)
In a relationship	.	9.026** (4.087)	9.037** (4.105)	8.966** (4.117)
Never married	.	9.420 (7.971)	11.640 (8.019)	11.396 (8.070)
Rather Not Say	.	2.692 (4.608)	2.942 (4.592)	2.819 (4.616)
Separated	.	-7.160 (14.072)	-9.963 (14.062)	-10.278 (14.118)
Single	.	6.516 (5.415)	6.175 (5.399)	6.180 (5.405)
<i>Employment Status (ref: Due to start a new job):</i>				
Full-Time	.	-27.443** (13.528)	-29.489** (13.546)	-29.233** (13.589)
Not in paid work (e.g. homemaker, retired, or disabled)	.	-29.179** (13.915)	-29.993** (13.925)	-29.866** (13.949)
Other	.	-31.816** (14.573)	-33.182** (14.587)	-33.197** (14.605)
Part-Time	.	-34.515** (13.888)	-36.303*** (13.894)	-36.104*** (13.927)
Unemployed (and job seeking)	.	-32.787** (14.032)	-35.731** (14.073)	-35.765** (14.091)
<i>Political Affiliation (ref: Democrat):</i>				
Independent	.	.	-1.568 (2.854)	-1.531 (2.860)
None	.	.	8.998 (7.892)	9.041 (7.903)
Other	.	.	-3.421 (9.174)	-3.382 (9.186)
Republican	.	.	6.483** (3.104)	6.535** (3.113)
Socioeconomic status	.	.	.	-0.230 (0.761)
Observations	416	416	416	416
R-squared	0.069	0.160	0.179	0.179

Table B2: Effect of Blessing (Recipients)

	Guess	Guess	Guess	Guess
Treated	-6.070 (5.000)	-7.003 (5.159)	-6.387 (5.208)	-6.322 (5.227)
<i>Religion (ref: Catholic):</i>				
Atheist	-1.619 (5.188)	-4.215 (6.448)	-2.604 (6.605)	-2.473 (6.654)
Calvinist	0.719 (5.159)	3.924 (15.567)	6.111 (15.739)	6.374 (15.829)
Protestant	-5.072 (5.183)	-6.613 (15.933)	-3.549 (16.166)	-3.334 (16.232)
<i>Interaction Effects:</i>				
Treated × Atheist	4.184 (7.081)	4.338 (7.344)	3.385 (7.407)	3.319 (7.427)
Treated × Calvinist-Methodist	7.288 (7.239)	6.449 (7.383)	6.342 (7.422)	6.202 (7.473)
Treated × Protestant	9.361 (7.225)	9.494 (7.361)	9.176 (7.384)	9.143 (7.396)
<i>Total Approvals and Demographics:</i>				
Total approvals	0.003*** (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)
Sex	1.257 (2.577)	1.937 (2.724)	1.568 (2.793)	1.564 (2.796)
Age	-0.438 (0.605)	-0.885 (0.652)	-0.954 (0.655)	-0.949 (0.657)
Age <sup>2</sup>	0.002 (0.007)	0.006 (0.007)	0.007 (0.007)	0.007 (0.007)
<i>Ethnicity (ref: White):</i>				
Asian	.	3.156 (6.674)	3.025 (6.709)	3.048 (6.719)
Black	.	3.039 (7.317)	2.640 (7.501)	2.477 (7.567)
Mixed	.	1.670 (8.028)	0.602 (8.132)	0.534 (8.152)
Other	.	0.759 (9.641)	1.511 (9.705)	1.426 (9.729)
Chinese	.	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
<i>Education (ref: Doctorate degree):</i>				
Graduate degree	.	-17.959** (7.862)	-19.154** (7.958)	-18.989** (8.022)
High school diploma/A-levels	.	-11.422 (8.031)	-12.219 (8.097)	-11.946 (8.251)
No formal qualifications	.	-8.824 (12.728)	-11.338 (12.902)	-10.936 (13.116)
Secondary education (e.g. GED/GCSE)	.	-2.461 (8.250)	-2.789 (8.317)	-2.561 (8.425)
Technical/community college	.	-13.699* (7.369)	-14.580* (7.424)	-14.489* (7.452)
Undergraduate degree (BA/BSc/other)	.	-12.251 (8.881)	-12.714 (8.972)	-12.643 (8.992)
<i>Marital Status (ref: Married):</i>				
Divorced	.	-3.758 (6.971)	-3.987 (7.001)	-3.894 (7.030)
Engaged	.	2.551 (7.377)	1.302 (7.443)	1.444 (7.496)
In a civil partnership/civil union or similar	.	-0.560 (6.241)	-1.424 (6.287)	-1.364 (6.304)
In a relationship	.	-2.041 (4.711)	-2.126 (4.732)	-2.084 (4.745)
Never married	.	-2.126 (8.053)	-2.135 (8.078)	-2.044 (8.105)
Rather Not Say	.	-14.202** (5.651)	-14.063** (5.687)	-13.926** (5.746)
Separated	.	-8.731 (10.170)	-8.479 (10.198)	-8.287 (10.268)
Single	.	-2.083 (5.980)	-2.980 (6.029)	-2.891 (6.058)
<i>Employment Status (ref: Due to start a new job):</i>				
Full-Time	.	5.250 (26.351)	4.958 (26.475)	4.693 (26.552)
Not in paid work (e.g. homemaker, retired, or disabled)	.	-1.347 (26.465)	-1.953 (26.588)	-2.102 (26.636)
Other	.	3.910 (27.332)	4.142 (27.464)	4.057 (27.505)
Part-Time	.	-0.284 (26.522)	-0.338 (26.630)	-0.512 (26.682)
Unemployed (and job seeking)	.	-1.448 (26.574)	-2.056 (26.718)	-2.234 (26.771)
<i>Political Affiliation (ref: Democrat):</i>				
Independent	.	.	0.632 (3.407)	0.670 (3.418)
None	.	.	8.927 (7.724)	9.012 (7.749)
Other	.	.	-4.751 (8.939)	-4.710 (8.954)
Republican	.	.	2.652 (3.508)	2.576 (3.539)
Socioeconomic status	.	.	.	0.156 (0.876)
Observations	417	417	417	417
R-squared	0.042	0.138	0.143	0.144

Table B3: Effect of Blessing on Opinions

	Ineq. Too Large	Ineq. Too Large	Ineq. Too Large	Ineq. Too Large
Treated	0.113 (0.134)	0.076 (0.136)	-0.039 (0.124)	-0.051 (0.124)
<i>Religion (ref: Catholic):</i>				
Atheist	0.609*** (0.136)	0.683*** (0.170)	0.389** (0.156)	0.346** (0.158)
Calvinist	-0.015 (0.139)	-0.003 (0.346)	0.082 (0.313)	0.056 (0.313)
Protestant	0.122 (0.137)	0.179 (0.357)	0.296 (0.324)	0.278 (0.323)
<i>Interaction Effects:</i>				
Treated × Atheist	-0.093 (0.189)	-0.058 (0.193)	0.063 (0.175)	0.078 (0.175)
Treated × Calvinist-Methodist	-0.014 (0.195)	0.025 (0.197)	0.110 (0.179)	0.131 (0.179)
Treated × Protestant	-0.313 (0.192)	-0.312 (0.194)	-0.288 (0.176)	-0.276 (0.176)
<i>Total Approvals and Demographics:</i>				
Total approvals	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Sex	-0.194*** (0.069)	-0.181** (0.072)	-0.070 (0.066)	-0.068 (0.066)
Age	0.003 (0.016)	-0.003 (0.017)	-0.002 (0.015)	-0.005 (0.015)
Age <sup>2</sup>	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
<i>Ethnicity (ref: White):</i>				
Asian	.	0.117 (0.154)	-0.026 (0.140)	-0.032 (0.140)
Black	.	0.130 (0.164)	-0.249 (0.152)	-0.246 (0.152)
Mixed	.	0.062 (0.183)	0.043 (0.166)	0.044 (0.166)
Other	.	0.151 (0.226)	0.189 (0.205)	0.184 (0.205)
Chinese	.	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
<i>Education (ref: Doctorate degree):</i>				
Graduate degree	.	-0.450** (0.225)	-0.365* (0.204)	-0.399* (0.204)
High school diploma/A-levels	.	-0.294 (0.238)	-0.311 (0.216)	-0.370* (0.218)
No formal qualifications	.	-0.623 (0.382)	-0.637* (0.350)	-0.744** (0.353)
Secondary education (e.g. GED/GCSE)	.	-0.450* (0.236)	-0.381* (0.214)	-0.438** (0.216)
Technical/community college	.	-0.285 (0.215)	-0.243 (0.195)	-0.272 (0.196)
Undergraduate degree (BA/BSc/other)	.	-0.284 (0.255)	-0.298 (0.232)	-0.314 (0.231)
<i>Marital Status (ref: Married):</i>				
Divorced	.	0.118 (0.187)	0.170 (0.170)	0.132 (0.170)
Engaged	.	0.039 (0.203)	0.108 (0.185)	0.060 (0.186)
In a civil partnership/civil union or similar	.	-0.247 (0.173)	-0.207 (0.157)	-0.227 (0.157)
In a relationship	.	-0.138 (0.123)	-0.143 (0.112)	-0.158 (0.112)
Never married	.	-0.142 (0.224)	-0.281 (0.204)	-0.308 (0.204)
Rather Not Say	.	-0.075 (0.143)	-0.104 (0.130)	-0.131 (0.131)
Separated	.	-0.438 (0.319)	-0.338 (0.289)	-0.394 (0.290)
Single	.	-0.367** (0.160)	-0.352** (0.146)	-0.364** (0.145)
<i>Employment Status (ref: Due to start a new job):</i>				
Full-Time	.	-0.698 (0.499)	-0.286 (0.453)	-0.242 (0.453)
Not in paid work (e.g. homemaker, retired, or disabled)	.	-0.652 (0.505)	-0.323 (0.459)	-0.309 (0.458)
Other	.	-0.735 (0.529)	-0.292 (0.481)	-0.293 (0.480)
Part-Time	.	-0.547 (0.507)	-0.077 (0.461)	-0.050 (0.460)
Unemployed (and job seeking)	.	-0.672 (0.509)	-0.161 (0.463)	-0.156 (0.462)
<i>Political Affiliation (ref: Democrat):</i>				
Independent	.	.	-0.500*** (0.080)	-0.502*** (0.079)
None	.	.	-0.322 (0.196)	-0.327* (0.196)
Other	.	.	-0.433* (0.228)	-0.437* (0.228)
Republican	.	.	-1.116*** (0.084)	-1.103*** (0.084)
Socioeconomic status	.	.	.	-0.040** (0.021)
Observations	833	833	833	833
R-squared	0.099	0.137	0.295	0.298

## Appendix C

Table C1: Tobit Model

Dependent Variables:	Keep Full Sample	Guess Full Sample	Keep HI	Guess HI	Keep LI	Guess LI
Treated	1.461 (5.788)	-6.763 (5.785)	6.759 (7.526)	4.678 (7.207)	-10.085 (8.867)	-10.609 (9.158)
Treated $\times$ Atheist	1.043 (8.111)	3.610 (8.172)	-1.820 (11.731)	-14.869 (10.934)	14.858 (10.701)	10.032 (12.286)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist	0.761 (8.396)	7.343 (8.254)	3.968 (11.223)	-7.507 (9.833)	1.373 (11.980)	13.421 (14.595)
Treated $\times$ Protestant	4.327 (8.233)	9.047 (8.141)	-10.019 (10.748)	-9.219 (10.319)	43.122*** (13.019)	26.409** (13.164)
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Labour Market Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Orientation Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Subjective Social Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	416	417	274	266	142	151
Uncensored Observations	309	353	192	222	117	131

## Appendix D

Table D1: Effect of Blessing HH Income Interaction (Dictators)

	Keep	Keep	Keep	Keep
Treated	-8.690 (12.251)	-10.766 (12.689)	-8.723 (12.670)	-8.188 (12.693)
Treated × Atheist × Household Income	-1.349 (1.818)	-1.415 (1.854)	-1.217 (1.848)	-1.169 (1.850)
Treated × Calvinist-Methodist × Household Income	1.659 (1.918)	0.708 (1.960)	0.725 (1.954)	0.783 (1.957)
Treated × Protestant × Household Income	-3.897** (1.893)	-4.226** (1.985)	-4.030** (1.981)	-4.022** (1.982)
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Labour Market Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Orientation Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Subjective Social Status	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	416	416	416	416
R-squared	0.099	0.185	0.202	0.203

Table D2: Effect of Blessing HH Income Interaction (Recipients)

	Guess	Guess	Guess	Guess
Treated	-19.007 (12.038)	-23.334* (12.749)	-22.761* (12.909)	-22.292* (12.956)
Treated × Atheist × Household Income	-3.437* (1.910)	-3.586* (2.015)	-3.472* (2.043)	-3.433* (2.046)
Treated × Calvinist-Methodist × Household Income	-1.171 (1.989)	-1.809 (2.064)	-1.812 (2.085)	-1.694 (2.100)
Treated × Protestant × Household Income	-5.045** (2.023)	-5.891*** (2.111)	-5.836*** (2.125)	-5.764*** (2.132)
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Labour Market Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Orientation Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Subjective Social Status	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	417	417	417	417
R-squared	0.065	0.164	0.168	0.169

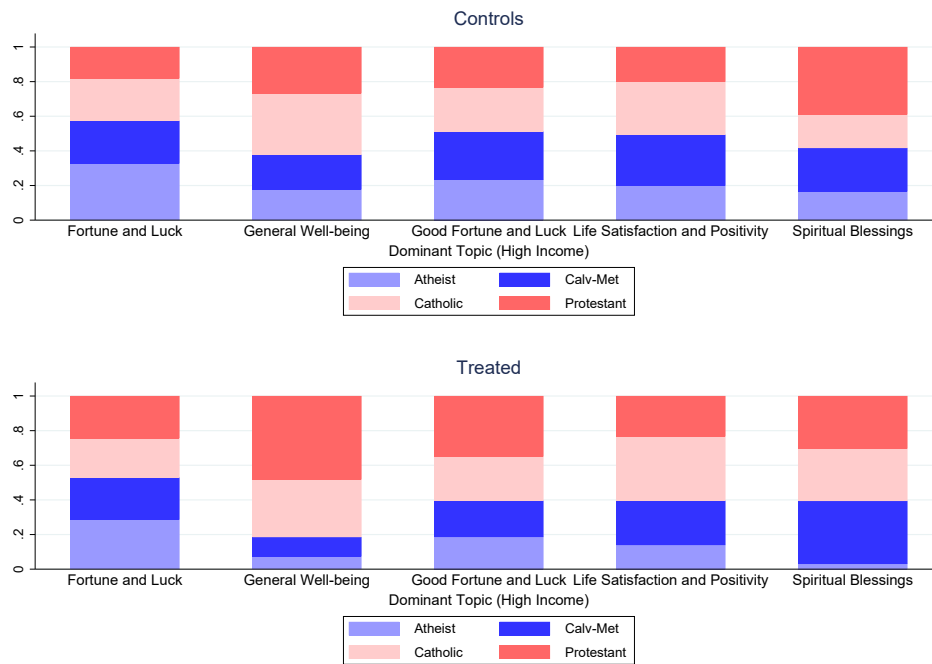


Table D3: Effect of Blessing HH Income Interaction

	Ineq. Too Large	Ineq. Too Large	Ineq. Too Large	Ineq. Too Large
Treated	0.314 (0.342)	0.226 (0.352)	-0.037 (0.321)	-0.040 (0.321)
Treated $\times$ Atheist $\times$ Household Income	0.064 (0.052)	0.042 (0.054)	0.024 (0.049)	0.024 (0.049)
Treated $\times$ Calvinist-Methodist $\times$ Household Income	0.028 (0.055)	0.022 (0.056)	0.011 (0.051)	0.010 (0.051)
Treated $\times$ Protestant $\times$ Household Income	0.092* (0.055)	0.093* (0.056)	0.077 (0.051)	0.077 (0.051)
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Labour Market Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Orientation Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Subjective Social Status	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	833	833	833	833
R-squared	0.116	0.160	0.309	0.310

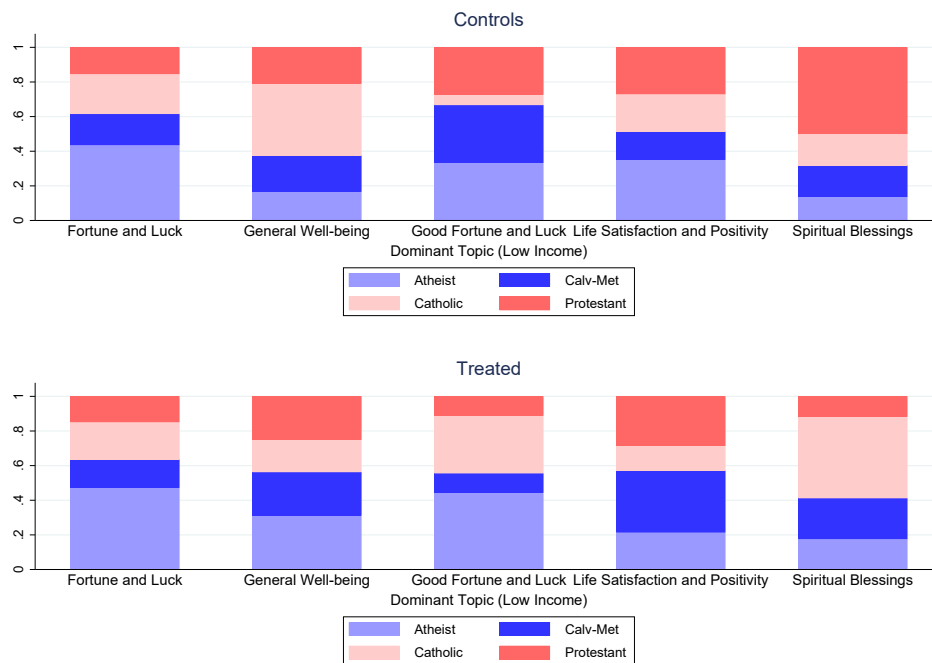
## **Appendix E**

Figure E1: Differences in Narratives (High Income)



Notes: The Figure shows differences in dominant topic by religious group.

Figure E2: Differences in Narratives (Low Income)



Notes: The Figure shows differences in dominant topic by religious group.