Introduction

Waiting for his next customer, a Costa Rican taxicab driver is parked by the curb. While he waits, he reads an informational pamphlet on the CAFTA-DR, the Central America–Dominican Republic–United States Free Trade Agreement. Although not considered leisurely reading material in the United States, literature on trade agreements was popular in Costa Rica from 2004 to 2008. Citizens disagreed on the potential impact of CAFTA-DR for the country, but all agreed the stakes were high. Former Costa Rican Catholic bishop Ignacio Trejos Picado declared in his protest against CAFTA-DR: "We must always protect life, even when it affects our business and trade ... The church must be on the side of life, and not the culture of death" (2007d). The treaty became the most polarizing issue in the nation's recent history, and the first public referendum ever in the country was held in 2008 to determine the treaty's fate in Costa Rica – with a majority of citizens voting.

Some proponents of economic liberalization around the globe have sought to avoid discussion of the moral questions associated with free trade. They have minimized discourse on the ethics of markets, arguing that economic policies are technical matters, best dictated by values of efficiency and growth. In this book, I focus on one subset of actors who have challenged this view of policies and economic markets. Representing a variety of voices from Christian religious traditions, they have politically engaged issues of globalization, the political economy, and trade policy. By participating in political discourse about market decisions, these religious organizations have produced sacred visions of how economic life should be structured.

Such morally centered discussion of our political economy looms all the more crucial in light of the current vigorous critique of the decades-old rise of economic inequality. How do we measure who are the winners and the losers in the new economy? What does it mean to have equality of opportunity for all? Whose job is it to protect the interests of the most marginal, and what roles do the state and the market play in the process?

Although religious groups are increasingly involved in a number of advocacy efforts in the world, many view them as disconnected from issues related to the

political economy (and perhaps, more importantly, consider this perceived distance the proper role). The reality is that many religious communities *do* speak on such political topics and contribute in important ways to public dialogue on the economy. As both Hart (2001) and Wood (2002) have argued, religious groups can play a crucial role in economic and political life through their discourse; such discourse is a central way that they produce the sacred in the economic realm (Wuthnow 1994b). This is true across a range of religious traditions and organizations.

In this book, I follow three Christian organizations that differ in their theologies, audiences, structures, and national locations: Kairos, an ecumenical organization in Canada; the Presbyterian Church (USA), or PCUSA; and the Episcopal Conference of Costa Rica (CECOR), a Catholic council of bishops in Costa Rica. This book is centrally concerned with the ethical and political voice of these organizations when it comes to free trade and free trade agreements. First, I analyze the ethical values they are using to ground their political positions, with special attention to how such values are shaped by religious commitments. I find that even though the groups rely on different religious traditions, they converge on many foundational values they bring to bear on the economy, including responsibility to the community, just relationships among people, and the importance of human dignity and human rights.

Second, I consider how such discourse is produced. Each of these groups has challenged the underlying values of capitalist markets, even as they rely on slightly different sources of moral authority, such as scripture, lived experiences, and tradition. These groups also vary in who has the authority to speak for the group, whether it is the hierarchical structure of Catholic leadership, or a more democratic polity in the case of the PCUSA. As a result, I also consider whether official voices are representative of the membership of these communities.

Third, I investigate how organizations assert and legitimate their moral authority to speak into trade debates, and the different strategies they employ in their political engagement. All of these groups embrace a responsibility to engage political questions, yet they do so in markedly different ways. This reflects different understandings of both the role of economists and policy makers, and the church in the secular realm. Religious actors are not unified in how they conceive of their authority vis-à-vis the state. Different understandings of engagement explain different strategies religious actors employ. Investigating such dynamics is critical for scholars interested in the public roles that religious organizations have – and might have – in our modern society.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the content, production, and use of religious discourse on trade issues, I have employed a case study approach. Ragin notes that a case study approach is a good way to generate new conceptual schemas and look at the complexity involved in what he terms the "constellations, configurations, and

conjunctures" (1987, x). Religious configurations are shaped by the relationship between the church and the state, the type and structure of the religious organization, the theological tradition, and the national context. A case study approach allows one to determine what rhetoric is used in trade debates, how it is formed, and how it is used. Through multiple in-depth cases, I can also make hypotheses about the effect of different organizational variables on discourse and economic engagement. Although this method is not the best for addressing questions about the consequences of different combinations of conditions, it does raise questions and help in explaining and interpreting some of the variation that exists.

Case Selection

Before selecting the cases to be studied in this book, I analyzed a number of religious organizations across the Americas that were involved in trade policy discussions. I selected thirty-one denominations, mission-oriented groups, and ecumenical alliances associated with the Christian tradition in some way (Reynolds 2010). Based on their published statements, these groups fell into four key categories: support of the status quo, no position, cautious critics, and radical reformers. Table A.1 lists the different positions found. Although I do not claim this sample is a representative sample of Christian actors, the organizations do

TABLE A.1 *Overview of Religious Responses to FTAs*

Response to FTAs	Discourse on FTAs	National Location	Religious Tradition	Organization Type
Quiet Support	Rarely speak of trade directly, but endorse increased global capitalism and U.S. power	Mostly the United States	Mainline Protestants and evangelicals	Denominations and political groups
No Official View	Rarely speak of international economic issues	All countries	Mostly evangelical	Denominations
Criticism	Speak about specific policies; discuss development issues	All countries	Catholics, mainline Protestants, and evangelicals	Development groups and Catholic Church
Opposition	Speak about specific policies; discuss technical matters	All countries	Catholics, mainline Protestants, and evangelicals	Political groups and some denominations

capture much of the variance within the broader Christian community. I found that those who are contesting trade are the most vocal, and are producing (and have produced) a lot of discourse about trade and economic life. By contrast, those supportive of the status quo have produced less discourse. As a result, I decided to focus on those publishing, writing, and speaking in critique of the status quo, which included cautious critics and radical reformers.

As also noted in Table A.1, these groups vary by location, tradition, and organization. Organizations in the United States, for example, are more likely than those in Canada and Latin America to be supportive of current international trade policies. Religious traditions are important, but not via a clear pathway (similar to Hart's [1992] finding about individual connections between theological tradition and economic perspectives). Often religious ideas associated with political stances, but groups with similar theological claims vary in their political and economic assumptions. I found that Protestant denominations (especially evangelicals) are less vocal than ecumenical alliances and the Catholic Church. From this exploratory analysis, I determined that national location, theology, and organizational structure all merited further attention.

Three cases were selected to represent three regions within North and Central America: an ecumenical justice coalition in Canada (currently named Kairos), the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUSA), and the Costa Rican Conference of Catholic Bishops (CECOR). These cases varied in denominational affiliation (ecumenical, Protestant/Reformed, and Catholic) as well as organizational type (grassroots coalition, democratic denomination, and hierarchical denomination). Table A.2 provides more detail on these selected religious organizations.

All three groups have challenged dominant market paradigms and have been involved in progressive action on the political economy. They have connected religious values with public policies, bringing their religious authority to bear in struggles for progressive economic action in the political realm. Yet they have varied in their action. As a result, these cases offer insight into some of the ways that religious communities have engaged in activism over the scope and ethical outcomes of increasingly liberalized and globalized markets.

Data Collection

Internal texts of the organizations, research reports, policy memos, and official public statements compose the core of this analysis. Utilizing qualitative comparative-analysis software (Atlas.ti), I examined statements from the mid-twentieth century through 2008, although I focused more attention on documents from 1990 to the present. (Chapters 2, 3, and 4 provide further detail on the documents under analysis for each case, and the primary bibliography at the end of the book lists each of these documents that were part of the textual

TABLE A.2 *Religious Case Studies*

Organization	Religious Tradition	Organization Type	National and International Ties	Attitude toward FTA
GATT-Fly/ ECEJ/ Kairos	Ecumenical Liberation theology	Religious coalition (Staff create policies and action)	Canadian	Opposition
PCUSA	Mainline Protestant Reformed	Denomination (Democratic vote determines policies)	United States (connected with international alliances)	Criticism (and opposition)
CECOR	Catholic CST	Representative of the Catholic Church (Bishops are the official voice)	Costa Rica (connected to Latin American conference and under authority of Church)	Criticism (no political position)

analysis). Texts were coded for different references to authority, invocation of values (religious and nonreligious), attitudes about the political economy, and groups' particular political positions on trade. In order to capture the full range of variation in these categories, such coding was done without a defined set of initial codes; by this practice, I induced the prominent elements of discourse for each group.

I complemented this analysis of written texts with participant observation and interviews. The twenty-seven interviews with organizational leaders and individuals specifically dealt with issues of economic and social justice. I attended conferences within both the PCUSA and Kairos dealing with economic justice issues, and I spent time at the CECOR offices in Costa Rica. Preliminary fieldwork started in the fall of 2006, interviews started in the spring of 2007, and all fieldwork was completed by the spring of 2008. I received institutional review board (IRB) approval for the interview process and fieldwork in May 2007. I spent the summer of 2007 in Costa Rica interviewing Catholic leaders and accessing the archives of the Catholic Church. Interviews were conducted mostly in Spanish in Costa Rica and in English in the United States and Canada. In the cases of interviews with male priests and bishops in Costa Rica, I conducted these interviews with a male researcher. Interviews lasted between thirty minutes and two hours (the average length was about an hour). I traveled to various regions in Canada and the United States to speak with members of Kairos and the PCUSA; this included the organizations' respective headquarters in Toronto and Louisville.

Each of these groups spoke on behalf of a particular religious community, so understanding the relationship of organizational leaders with other co-religionists within each group was important. For Kairos, whose members join because of many shared political beliefs, I examined denominational reports and conducted interviews with denominational actors to see how rhetoric produced by Kairos was used. In the case of the PCUSA, I consulted Presbyterian Panel Data (2006b), and I analyzed such data, with the help of a statistical software package (Stata), to determine the representativeness of the official positions of the church. Finally, in the case of the Costa Rican bishops, I consulted a Catholic periodical, *Eco Católico*, which has published a number of nonofficial articles on trade treaties in the past five years, as well as some published texts from an active antitrade Catholic contingency in the country.

BOOK OVERVIEW

To begin, Chapter 1 considers the current knowledge about how values shape economic structures and ideology. Economic sociology has increasingly focused on the idea that markets are cultural constructions. While not seeing values as the only – or even central – shaper of market ideology, I do argue that markets are deeply shaped and molded by underlying foundational values. For example, people within a market may determine the appropriate boundaries of economic behavior, develop regulations to control markets, and/or promote strategies emphasizing individual freedom. I consider how the moral authority of cultural producers matters for such societal discussions. Chapter 1 also examines the contexts in which these organizations operate as they bring their theology to bear on the economy. This includes attention to the role of institutional settings and internal organizational structures.

I turn in the last part of Chapter 1 to an examination of why religion is an especially important voice to consider in discourse about trade. Imbued with moral authority, religious traditions have often engaged in public discourse about political and economic issues. Latin American liberation theology gained attention for its political message and critique of economic systems, and the larger Catholic tradition has dealt with what they deem to be "the social question" for some time. More broadly speaking, the Christian ecumenical movement also has grappled extensively with issues of industrialization, has been important for the Reformed tradition, and has been connected with the Social Gospel in North America. Religious traditions are an important part of the cultural repertoires of the religious organizations that I study here.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are case studies of the three religious organizations. Each chapter first focuses on the group's political response to issues of international trade. I then turn to the question of what religious values were used to support positions, how institutional factors influenced the production of discourse, and how such discourse was both employed and received.

In Chapter 2, the reader is introduced to Kairos. Originally founded as GATT-Fly due to their opposition to international trade policy (including the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT]) in the 1970s, Kairos has visualized and espoused total reform of the economic system. Protestant denominations, the Catholic Church, Catholic religious orders, and Christian development groups are among the eleven member organizations that make up this coalition committed to social justice and political change.

Kairos has demanded markets that focus on the poor, transparent and democratic systems, and increased state sovereignty in economic management decisions. Their central religious values have remained consistent: solidarity, community, equality, and the sacredness of creation. Just as important as the content of their values, the *practice* of their religion has defined their identity and been maintained by action. They are heavily influenced by the tradition of liberation theology, applying it to their own Canadian context. Although their organizational structure has changed over time, they consistently have been staff-led, allowing key religious actors a high degree of autonomy in their discourse production. Their strong stance against state policies also has been facilitated by their weak connection to the state and influenced by a broader civil society movement.

The PCUSA is the topic of Chapter 3. The PCUSA has leveraged their moral authority in efforts to reform powerful political systems. Governed by institutionalized democratic processes and part of an international Reformed community, the PCUSA is one of the most established mainline denominations, representing about 2–3 percent of the U.S. population. Multiple task forces and programs have dealt with international economic issues since the 1970s. As part of the interfaith community in Washington, DC, they have lobbied against current free trade agreements (FTAs), with discourse intended to both speak to those in power and educate their members. Citing religious values alongside empirical research, they have endorsed more market protection and regulation, an expanded definition of rights to include economic rights, and increased global governance of the economy. Values of God's sovereignty, covenant, and hope have been central to their message.

Chapter 4 follows CECOR in Costa Rica. The Catholic Church enjoys a high level of authority within this society, even as the percentage of Catholics in the population is in decline, with an estimated 70 percent of citizens still claiming a Catholic identity. In the numerous statements issued by the eight bishops who make up this Catholic council, concerns over free trade have involved the fate of the poor, the protection of culture, a power imbalance between negotiating nations, and a lack of dialogue within society over trade. Religious principles of human dignity, solidarity, concern for the poor, and peace have been foundational, with CST a central source of authority. On CAFTA-DR, CECOR has taken a neutral stance, utilizing their position of power to offer a development framework for society, to exist within and alongside trade agreements.

In Chapter 5, I return to the dialogue about moral discourse and the market, using the three case studies to explain why different religious groups have chosen to engage differently in political debates about economic life. In this chapter, I make three central arguments. First, for religious groups that are critical of current economic globalization efforts, a core set of values seems to motivate involvement, with concern for the community being the most central. Second, both national identities and organizational structures are important in explaining the different modes of discourse in which organizations engage. That is, while each of the groups is a transnational actor in some respects, they all engage with national audiences and are influenced by national values. I also suggest that different understandings about the role of religion and the role of economists have lent themselves to three very different styles of engagement in political life – from influencing the values of debate to crafting actual policy. Chapter 5 provides a more generalized typology of engagement, highlighting the different ways religion can be used as a frame, lens, or practice to guide economic policy decisions.

In Chapter 6, I focus on the implications of this research for both religious practitioners and political activists. Beyond the organizations profiled in this book, a host of other religious organizations are seeking economic change. I suggest four specific actions that such groups should prioritize: emphasizing the Christian notion of community, using their prophetic voices, personalizing market activity, and working ecumenically.

Religious groups are clearly active on economic issues; the case of trade policy provides an example of how such groups have framed economic issues as religious concerns. Religious organizations are important actors when it comes to the moral space of globalization, as they raise attention to the ethical issues involved in crafting markets. Far from being relegated to the private domain, such organizations create spaces to discuss the common good, human dignity, and their relationship to market policies. These conversations, although not sufficient for political change, are essential to the cause of democratic politics and are a vital way that religious communities are engaged in public life. As FTAs continue to proliferate, understanding what religious communities can bring to the public dialogue – as well as the challenges and processes they confront in creating discourse – is central for scientists and activists alike in the construction of richer democratic discourse over economic policy decisions in today's globalized world.

1

Producing Market Discourse

> Rowan Williams [Anglican archbishop of Canterbury] called for a challenge to "naive confidence in free trade." ... The archbishop would do well to hearken to the advice of his own top spiritual leader. "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's," said Jesus, thus making clear his belief that church and state should stick to their core competencies.
>
> – *The Economist* (2005)

Economists are often charged with decisions regarding economic policies ranging from human development agendas to macroeconomic stability. And as articulated in this epigraph from *The Economist*, such decisions and policies are often viewed as the private domain of technical experts, and markets themselves as purely technical structures. But markets are social constructions. They are inescapably composed of people, as well as the products of particular historical processes and specific political action.

How markets should function, and how they should be constructed, is therefore often contested. Throughout time, the economic status quo has been open to debate. In the current phase of increasing economic liberalization and globalization, questions are increasingly being raised about previously accepted free-market principles. Such questions often lead to public discourse. A premise of this book is that such discourse can influence, facilitate, and drive social-economic change.

In this book, I analyze the discourse of religious actors surrounding free trade and free trade agreements, current policies being debated in the public realm. Religious voices historically have been vocal in challenging market paradigms. Although *The Economist* targeted Archbishop Williams, many other religious actors could have been called out instead. Religious communities have been involved in discursive action on the economy, and insisting it be otherwise is unlikely to silence them. The resources of religious groups can give them special authority to speak to the value-laden nature of markets. As described

in the Introduction, this book follows three specific religious actors: Kairos in Canada; the Presbyterian Church (USA), or PCUSA, in the United States; and the Episcopal Conference of Costa Rica (CECOR), the Catholic council of bishops in Costa Rica.

These three cases reveal how religious actors are using their moral authority to speak into market life, as they engage in discourse on the political structures and social consequences of markets. As also noted in the Introduction, I focus on three central questions. First, how is religion (and religious ideas) used within economic discourse? Second, how is this discourse produced and legitimated, and who has agency in this process? Finally, how are organizations engaging in trade debates, and how do they legitimate their authority?

Before delving into the moral and political discourse of religious actors, in this chapter I argue that religious actors must be considered as actors that have the potential to re-image market life. Agreeing with other economic sociologists, I first examine the ways that social and political ideas have shaped the structure of markets. That is, particular moral sentiments have been articulated to support change in economic structures; concrete political actions often support certain market values over others. In this section, I also examine the ways the current market dynamics came to be. Second, I argue that discourse itself should be considered an important political action, even as it is not a sufficient action for political change. Rarely have scholars examined the importance of religious actors, and their discourse, in economic policy. But religious actors play an important role in shaping sacred conceptions of the market. Given the importance of such actors and their discourse, I conclude this chapter with attention to some of the different organizational, national, and cultural factors that influence and shape the discursive involvement of religious communities toward the political economy. This includes a discussion of some of the different ways Christian communities have thought about political and social engagement in modern history, and nuances among different theological traditions.

THE STRUCTURE OF ECONOMIC MARKETS

The Values of Modern Market Life

If we define markets as social constructions, we must accept that they are full of moral ideas and assumptions about the allocation of goods. Many have problematized the separate spheres or hostile worlds logic that would designate the economic market as merely an efficient structure for the exchange of goods and services. As economic sociologists Fourcade and Healy (2007) suggest, moral understandings are a part of foundational market values, and are important in the governance and evaluations of markets as well.

Although some would frame markets as merely technical structures for the allocation of goods, historically scholars have long recognized the connection between market structures and other aspects of the social life. Even when