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# RELIGIOUS MOTIVATIONS FOR WORK ETHICS. THE AMERICAN CASE

## Initial Remarks

At first glance, everything is obvious. Work after all belongs to the specific forms of human activity towards which no contemporary religion remains indifferent. Yet the question begins to become complicated once the questions being asked are fine-tuned: for example, 1) whether all religions have the same attitude to work, and, if not, 2) whether their different understanding of work implies onto the mundane plane an uneven development of a human civilisation, both in its material sense and that of the realm of symbolic culture, and also 3) remains in direct connection with the eschatological visions proper for the given religion (concerning e.g. the dependence of the posthumous fate of the human on his or her behaviour in the earthly life). Providing convincing answers to these seemingly simple questions is not easy, especially in societies that in the successive phases of their historical development have changed not only their ethnic and racial but also their denominational mix, moving from stable, homogenous states to dynamic heterogeneous structures. Undoubtedly, one such society is the totality of citizens of the United States of America. Here is the simplest of all possible proofs.

From the establishment of Jamestown (on the power of the privileges awarded in April 1606 to the Virginia Company of London by King James I in 1607 by 105 colonists who arrived (on board the *Susan Constant, Godspeed* and *Discovery*) at Chesapeake Bay and the subsequent disembarking of the 102 passengers of the

*Mayflower* at Plymouth Colony in 1620, up to the beginning of the revolutionary years (1760), the inhabitants of the first 13 colonies were white Britons following the various shades of Protestantism, with the exception of Maryland, where nearly every other first settler was Catholic. It is not to be forgotten, however, that not everyone embarked on the long and dangerous road solely in search of religious freedom. That might have been the case with the group who defined themselves as "Saints" or "Separatists", and did not received the moniker of Pilgrim Fathers until the 19th century, who – having escaped from England and spent ten not-too-successful years in Holland – were seeking shelter in America from the tyranny of Anglican priests. The remaining passengers on the ship were known as "The Strangers". They included farmers, servants of feudal lords, and soldiers, most of whom were Anglicans. In the wasteland – which is how they perceived the new continent – they were simply seeking an opportunity for a new life. The rich merchants from the Second Virginia Company supporting them in turn expected profits from fisheries and fur trade.

Similarly, the first political system that the Puritans developed had nothing to do with democracy in any form. Among those who settled in the new colony in the 1640s, they were five times fewer than those who did not subscribe to their religious views. Even though the approximate number of settlers was 15,000, and there were only 3000 puritans, through the theocratic system of power, they were capable of depriving all who did not identify both with their eschatological views and their soteriology of the vote in public matters. In this way, not for the first time in history, from being persecuted, they themselves became the persecutors.

According to estimates, in 1775, nine out of every ten colonists were, at least nominally, Protestants. 230 years later, halfway through the first decade of the 21st century, only 52% of adult US citizens considered themselves Protestants, 24.3% Catholics, and 1.7% Jews. A total of 7.4% subscribe to other religions, from animism, via Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism to Buddhism, and 13.7% do not declare an affiliation to any confession.

Even though there are no precise sources, it is estimated that the approximate population of the English colonies in Northern America five decades after their establishment was 100,000, and early in the 18th century the figure was 250,000. In the last years before the revolution, it exceeded 2 million, which accounts for 500,000 slaves, from which point it began to increase ever more rapidly. According to the first general census conducted (in line with Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution, where it is called "Enumeration") in 1790, the USA was already inhabited by 3,929,214 people. 215 years later, in 2006, the population of the United States had increased 75 times, exceeding 300 million. At this time it is not solely a white population. According to the general census of 2000, 75.1% of Americans believed that they had only "white" forefathers, 12.3% were Afro-Americans, 0.9% Indians or indigenous residents of Alaska, 13% Latinos (mostly Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and persons hailing from the countries of Central and Southern America), 3.6%

Asians (Chinese, Filipinos, and Asian Indians), and 0.1% were descended from the original inhabitants of Hawaii and other Pacific islands. It is to be added here that 2.4 percent of US citizens recognised that their forefathers belonged to more than one race. Finally, as proved by the data quoted above, it is no longer a population of predominantly English pedigree.

As the authors of *The Story of America*[1] would write years later,

> well into the 19th century, whole villages along the Hudson spoke Dutch and no English; Swedes and Finns, the sturdy survivors of short-lived New Sweden, dwelt along the Delaware in America's first true long cabins, and French traders and trappers lent a strong Gallic flavor to Ohio Valley outposts.

As would also be written years later, each new wave of immigrants brought their own elements – ethnic, religious, personality traits, some unknown to the others. Only one thing was common to the immigrants from all the periods of settlement, namely the certainty that individual success – their personal success, as that was what they were most interested in – was possible. And it was for that sake, from that mosaic, and not for the sake of uniformity, that the new unique character of the United States of America was born and continues to be born anew.

Another difficulty of interpretation is connected to the various – as they depend on the assumed theoretical tradition – scope of semantic fields of such notions as ethics, work, and religion. To avoid potential misunderstandings, one needs to choose definitions for them.

## Ethics, Work, Religion

Without entering into detailed ruminations, ethics will be treated in this analysis in the tradition of Max Weber (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* 1904–1905) and Richard Henry Tawney (*Religion and the Rise of Capitalism,* 1926), the tradition initiated in research on the relations between the various religious denominations and economy. Looking from this perspective, ethics consists of a certain sum total of philosophical and normative assumptions that allow an understanding of what good and evil are, and moral duty, as well as the individual's conscience and responsibility for our own deeds. In more general categories, ethics generates the answer to the question of the sense of human existence and types of relations between human actions (good or evil) and human nature. The religious version of ethics, unlike the lay one, assumes that the maker and at the same time the safeguard of the moral order is God, even though His relationship with the human can be interpreted in various ways. According to certain denominations, e.g. Catholicism, the human is furnished by God with free will, for which reason he

[1] *The Story of America*, ed. C. C. Calkins, Pleasantville 1975, p. 318.

himself decides about the valency of his deeds, for which he is responsible before God. Under special conditions, the human may even – through the balance of all things good and evil – influence the final assessment of his life by the supernatural being. According to others, for example Calvinism, the fate of the human is finally decided through the act of predestination. The human may only try to guess, mostly through the assessment of the results of his deeds, what fate was determined for him. He is not, however, capable of changing his destiny through these deeds. For he is not equal to God, and therefore may not influence His will.

Work, on the other hand, is of a different nature. Its essence as well as functions in the lives of individuals and societies are decided simultaneously by at least three factors: psycho-physiological, economic, and moral. Thus the action of work is determined not only by the subjective will of the working but at the same time by the existential necessity, from the perspective both of the individual and of the society to which the given individual belongs. At the same time it is through work that the human builds and at the same time gathers a specific human and social capital, which is then passed from generation to generation, and which includes social and economic systems that regulate the relations of governance and exchange. For this reason, work – even though the object(s) being processed, manners, tools, heterotelic goals of work, and skills of the worker undergo continuous changes – belongs to the essence of the *homo sapiens* species, and plays a significant role in the process of anthropogenesis.[2]

From the perspective of certain theories, work is not connected to any concept of God. In the understanding of others, on the contrary, it is an alienable feature of the process of creation and dependence of humans from God. The first includes among others the point of view that in the 19th century was proper for Karl Marx, and in the 20th, for example, for Michel Foucault. According to Marx, work (understood both as an act and as social relation and process) is an attribute of mankind, externalising the potential of the human, creating the human being, and leading to his self-fulfilment. This process is of intrinsic character. Even if in certain phases of the historical process, work – including the relations that people enter among themselves while working and sharing effects of work – is accompanied by religious motivations, it happens so wholly and solely because the man who develops these motivations seeks in them justifications for these manifestations of social life and relations of power, which he does not control. According to Foucault, work is an intrinsic factor that distinguishes and at the same time places that human in a network of connections with other people on the grounds of the state of knowledge (science and philosophy) binding in the given phase of its development.

In the latter understanding, everything that is made of the will of God (that is not only human as such, but also his individual attributes) depends on Him. However, the degree of this dependency is described and explained differently by various philosophical schools and religious denominations. Marie-Dominique Chenu

[2] L. H. Morgan, *Ancient Society,* New York 1877.

claims, for example, that work is "a continuation of the divine work of creation".[3] The two encyclicals of the Roman Catholic Church, namely Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum* (1891) and John Paul II's *Laborem exercens* (1981) refer to human work in a different manner again. According to this tradition, the human

> created [...] in the image and similarity of God Himself among the visible universe, appointed to subdue the earth, is [...] through the same called to work from the beginning. Work differentiates him from the rest of the creation [...]. Only the human is capable of that and only the human performs it [...]. Thus work carries a special mark of the human and humanity, the mark of a person operating in the community of people (*Laborem exercens*: 4).

In these encyclicals, the Catholic Church joins the theological vision of work with the selection of values and social policy. The essence of this *iunctim* is best explained in the following sentence:

> [...] one needs first to recall the principle, which the Church has continued to teach. This is the principle of the priority of 'work' before capital (*Laborem exercens*: 41).

John Paul II exposes also the

> [...] very ethical essence of work. For it goes without saying that a human through the ethical value of work, which remains directly and straightforwardly connected to the fact that the one who fulfils it is a person, is a conscious and free subject, i.e. one that is deciding about himself (*Laborem exercens*: 21).

John Calvin developed and spread the understanding of ethics of work that was his own and proper only for him. In the realm of his future disciples, it yielded among others to the influence of the needs of Calvinist communities living in a dynamically changing world, and underwent certain modifications. For the complete explanation of religious motivations of ethics of work and the changes to be possible, additional detailed explanations are necessary. They include the fine-tuning of the semantic fields of such notions as religion, religious denomination, sect, cult, and civil religion.

This statement is especially important in reference to the United States, where even on the eve of the 200th anniversary of the country's establishment, 223 religious denominations (including various churches and sects; with 52 largest denominations having at least 100,000 members each; see consecutive issues of *The Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*) operated parallel to thousands of religious cults,[4] and religious communities that did not disclose the numbers of their members (for example the First Church of Christ and Scientists).

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[3] *Mały słownik terminów i pojęć filozoficznych,* Warszawa 1983, p. 287.

[4] According to research by Robert Marquand and Daniel B. Wood, there were approximately 5000 of those; see the article *Rise in Cults as Millennium Approaches,* "Christian Science Monitor", 28th March 1997, p. 1 and 18.

The mosaic described above has been complemented in recent decades by the movements described with the common name *New Age "spiritual seekers"* or *New Age spiritualists*.

In spite of appearances, we do not have a universal understanding of religion, but numerous definitions and quasi-definitions hailing from various realms of culture and scientific disciplines, especially religious studies, psychology and sociology, and also from different philosophical schools. Thus for example Sigmund Freud was ready to believe religion to be "a universal, obsessive neurosis", which will disappear as soon as humanity has conquered its infantile biases and weaknesses (*The Future of an Illusion,* 1923). In Émile Durkheim we find a more developed understanding of religions. He believes that

> [...] any religion is a solitary system of beliefs and practices related to the sacred things [...], beliefs, and practices, which unite into a single moral community, known as church, all those who belong to it (*Les formes élémentarires de la vie religieuse,* 1912).

Joachim Wach was moving in a similar direction when he wrote that religion is an experience of the sacred, whose theoretical and practical elements are so closely connected that primacy can be awarded to neither. "There may be no act of cult without any representation of any deities, nor any religion without certain, at least cult, forms of expression" (*Socjologia religii,* Polish edition of 1961). With time, attempts were made to refer all the known definitions of religion to one of the two basic categories: minimalistic and complex definitions. Due to their construction, the first were akin to the classical model. A good example of the first category might be the definition proposed by Taylor: the essence of religion is "belief in spirituals beings".[5] Here, "belief" plays the role of *genus proximus,* and "spiritual beings" that of *differentia specifica.* The latter, on the other hand, gathers the definitions of the descriptive type, thus, for example that of Clifford Geertz. According to Geertz,

> religion is: 1) a system of symbols which acts to 2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by 3) formulating a conception of general order of existence and 4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that 5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.[6]

It is not difficult to notice that neither the first nor the second definition allows us to solve the dilemma as to why the believers – even within a single monotheist religion, not to mention all the three, even though such an attempt was made in the United States already in the mid 20th century – are not capable of breaking denominational differences and on these grounds piece together a joint religion course book that could be introduced in public schools. It is so possibly because the

[5] J. Goody, *Religion and Ritual: The Definition Problem,* "British Journal of Sociology" 1961, No. 12, p. 143–164.

[6] C. Geertz, *Religion as a Cultural System*, [in:] *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion,* ed. M. Banton, London 1968, p. 4.

general definitions are possible only at the level of ideal types (in the understanding of Max Weber), yet they are not sufficient at the level of the *hic et nunc* reality. What exist there are not "religions per se", but those that received further adjectival clarification, and it is in their name that their followers are capable of instigating even religious wars. A simple yet very important corollary can be brought from here: still in the 19th century, America played a similar role towards Protestants as Geneva did in Calvin's time – yet to a much greater scale with consequences going further. In the case of Maryland (established in 1634), the English Catholics also benefited from that, as they were allowed by Cecilius Calvert to settle in his territory (his, as it was his father, Lord George Calvert, who received it from King Charles I).

In the American understanding, *church* is perceived, according to Ernst Troeltsch[7], as a type of religious organisation focused around holy things, yet at the same time accepting the basic lay dimensions of reality. God is perceived by the members of the church in intellectual categories (among others as the source of good), and the moral standards are taught by the clergy in such a way that they are compatible with the potential of everyday life and leading to no – wherever possible – excessively far-going controversies. Moreover, in American conditions, no church may aspire to the role of the state church.

Denomination is a denominational organisation that is independent of the state, operating in the conditions of religious pluralism, and in line with constitutional standards, and also in a way similar to church. This is why the distinction between churches and denominations in most cases it is not a sharp one. In certain situations, "denomination" refers neither to an organisation nor to a religious community, but encompasses primarily the contents of the faith, for which reason it becomes a part of complex names of the type: Christian denominations, Protestant denominations, non-Christian denominations, etc.

Sect is differentiated from other denomination wholes, primarily by its separation from the global society, as a sect is not distinguished from the remaining members of the society only with one strictly defined aspect, but is in most cases an alternative – more or less complete – to it.

Names like *cult*, *New Age*, *civil religion*, and even "*good ol' time religion*", have little to do with the religion in its understanding so far, and become rather quasi-religions.

The specific characteristic of the cult is based on the fact that – mostly under the influence of a charismatic leader – the group that forms it becomes isolated from the majority cultural tradition, or even remains in a harsh conflict with these traditions. In this case, the charismatic leader and sudden civilisation changes also play a vast role. Moreover, many later adjectival religions began a process of formation as cult movements.

[7] E. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches,* New York 1931.

*New age* is the search for spirituality outside traditional organisations and denominational institutions that has intensified in recent decades. This is "spirituality without formal religion", or in other words one that has grown from the conviction about the existence of a higher force and a reality that is alternative towards "the physical world", and also about a universal connection between everything that results from the will of a higher force. People – if they become more "spiritually aware" – may experience the spiritual dimension that exists beyond the earthly world. To become like that and experience transcendence, one needs to learn to do yoga, conduct meditations, and also develop meditative concentration in oneself.

*Civil religion* is a complex name introduced by Robert Bellah.[8] It defines the types of communities with quasi-religious solidarity that develop in societies that are to a high level secularised. Interpreting this phenomenon, John J. Macionis writes "in other words, even in a largely secular society such as the United States, citizenship has taken on religious qualities".[9] The external semblances of civil religion are, for example, the behaviour of fans during international sports championships, including the singing of anthems and mass demonstrations of national flags.

Finally, the phenomenon defined as "good ol' time religion" is a form of a contemporary religious revival. This is primarily a reaction to the fall in the number of the congregations and the position of mainstream liberal churches. At the same time, while churches similar to the Episcopal Church (as the Anglican Church, e.g. the Church of England, was called after it was transferred together with its structures and settlers to American colonies; George Washington and two thirds of all the signatories of the Declaration of Independence belonged to this church) and Presbyterians (whose name comes from the elder = *prebsbyteros*, as the lay people participating in the management of church were referred to in the Scottish current of Calvinism) lose their influence and membership (in 1960–2000, they lost nearly 50% of their earlier possessions), "conservative religious organisations (including the Mormons, The Seventh-Day Adventists and especially Christian sects) has risen just as fast".[10] It is significant that these conservative religious organisations that strengthen under the influence of the religious revival include primarily those whose roots are solely American. Besides those mentioned by Macionis, these include the Disciples of Christ (established in Pennsylvania by Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander early in the 19th century), The First Church of Christ, Scientists (founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1789) and Jehovah's Witnesses (established in Pittsburgh by Charles Taze Russell in 1872).

[8] R. Bellah, *The Broken Convenant,* New York 1975.

[9] J. J. Macionis, *Sociology,* tenth edition, Upper Saddle River NJ 2005, p. 508.

[10] *Ibidem, p.* 510.

## The Calvinist Syndrome

The ideological grounds for the American work ethic were laid down not only by believers following the path paved by John Calvin, but also by other Protestant communities. Nevertheless, Calvinism was of fundamental significance here. Before this manner of understanding of the human and his relationship with God reached Massachusetts Bay Colony, it travelled a long way from Geneva to London, from where it reached Antwerp and Amsterdam. Influenced by these migrations, it contained not only the ethos of work of Geneva burghers, but also the experience generated by religious conflicts and wars in France (the case of approximately 400,000 Huguenots, who not only formulated their *Confessio gallicana*, but also called into life an autonomous church structure and established a political party), in England (visible especially in the teaching of the Presbyterian cleric Thomas Cartwright and in Puritanism) and Holland (a group of dissidents from the Anglican Church gathered around William Brester, known as Separatists or Pilgrims, had by then emigrated illegally, seeking a more tolerant atmosphere in Amsterdam).

John Calvin (1509–1564; original name Jean Chauvin or Caulvin), a Frenchman by birth, later connected to the French community in Geneva discriminated against by King Francis I and later considered the most European of all the Protestant reformers, included the essence of his religious reform in the work entitled *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, whose last edition (1559) was composed of 80 chapters, while the first one, of 1536, consisted of only six. An important complement to the work was the *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques* treaty of 1541, reforming the Church. In neither was Calvin afraid of changes. He opposed Rome and the office of the Pope, assuming four principles as the grounds for his searchers: *sola fide* (only faith), *sola gratia* (only grace), *sola Scriptura* (only Scripture), and *solus Chrystus* (only Christ). He did not believe science and religion to be antithetic to each other.

The specific interpretation of the predestination doctrine became the foundation of Calvinism. The phenomenon defined under this name had already been known in other religions, for example in the old-Iranian Zurvanism, where it meant unlimited time or, to put it differently: eternity, reigning over life and death, and also "space, heavens, fate, and destination".[11] In ancient Greece, as *kairos,* it meant "the present moment" that could not be foreseen. It is through predestination that destiny manifests itself in a specific experience, and it is predestination that decides on the situation of the human in a unit of time, physical space, and social environment. The notion of predestination is encountered also in Catholic theology. Its synonym is then "destiny" [in the New Testament – the calling or summons – HK], that is "God's eternal decision directing the human towards salvation".[12]

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[11] K. Banek, *Historia religii. Religie niechrześcijańskie,* Kraków 2007, p. 145.

[12] *Mały słownik terminów i pojęć filozoficznych...*, p. 306.

It pertains to the whole of humanity, yet its acceptance or its lack depends on specific individuals, as by God's will they are empowered with "free will".

According to Calvin, God decides *ex ante* on which individuals will be saved as well as which are sentenced to damnation. Thus, there are two dimensions to their destination, and the human has no capacity of influencing God's will and the destination that he has been assigned. He may only, knowing about the lack of alternatives, yield to his destination, and – through the results of work and asceticism – only guess what fate awaits him. Later theologians would gradually reduce the severity of the original dichotomy contained in the Calvinist understanding of predestination, and – on certain conditions – would give the sinners an opportunity for salvation. Yet no unambiguous decisions in this question had been made until the document of concordance between the denominations derived from Calvinism and Lutherans signed in Leuenberg in 1973. In the document, we find a claim that "the testimony of the Scriptures on Christ forbids us to assume that God issued a decree condemning specific persons or a people for ever".[13] Before it came to that, implications resulting from the orthodox version of the doctrine of predestination were in force, and encompassed not only the participation in religious services on holidays and times of prayer, but also the day-and-night rhythm of life and all its dimensions, and among them – especially work. Sanctifying life, Calvinism made work its buttress.

The obligation of hard work rested on everyone, as it proved their yielding to the will of God. Moreover, those working should – of their own will and not under the pressure of supervision – perform the jobs entrusted to them (as well as those done from their own choice), as thoroughly as they only could. At the same time workers must refrain, as this resulted directly from the dictate/commandment of asceticism, from ostentatious consumption. The goods they develop should be on the one hand reinvested, and on the other earmarked for those in the care of the deacons: the ailing, the poor (especially not of their own will), biological orphans, and those fleeing religious persecution.

In the Calvinist understanding, asceticism had both a spiritual dimension and one which fulfilled itself in – as Émile Durkheim defined early in the 20th century – the realm of the profane, that is that of everyday life. The following were turning into virtues: the severity of tradition and the abstemious lifestyle subordinate to it (without prodigality and demonstrative consumption), work (also manual) treated as a calling and sanctified in this way, professional reliability (for it was not only the act of work itself, but also professions that resulted from the calling), frugality, and the gathering of goods for their appropriate use (investments and among others philanthropic activities).

Reforming the Church, Calvin (much like Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) in his 34th thesis from among the 67 declared in Zurich) started from the assumption that the teaching of Christ gives no grounds for the Church authority to bathe in

[13] *Enchiridion Oecumenicum,* Edizioni Dehonine, Bologna 1988, p. 342–343.

splendour and luxury. For this reason, bishops in his version of Christianity were redundant. Moreover, he understood clergy in a different manner, considering – much like Luther – that they are simply the effect of the division of duties within the communities of the faithful. It would be sufficient for every community of the faithful to have four offices collaborating with one another yet at the same time independent from each other – pastor, doctor, elders, and deacons. None of them was a sacrament, and the persons playing these roles did not need any ordaining. The obligations of the first included preaching the gospel and exercising the sacraments. Of the second – teaching and supervision over the correctness of interpretation of the Holy Scripture, of the third – maintaining obedience to the rules binding in the community. Finally, the fourth group – performing the activities that are today known under the name of social care. The place relinquished by the bishops and the hierarchically ordered clergy, the power in the church was now to be taken over by the *consistory* (the highest spiritual, yet also administrative and judicial, power). The path to this new institution led through elections, and both the active and passive right of election were the prerogative both of the persons holding the four officers mentioned above in a reformed Church, and the general body of the faithful. Besides that, the election regulations were complemented with an entirely new principle of rotation on all the posts manned through elections. Calvinism gathered its first experiences with this system of power in Geneva.

Doing away with the clergy, Calvin reinforced the role of the lay within the denominations he created. From the proverbial sheep, led by the priests ordained for that role, they were turning into active subjects of a religious community deciding about themselves and participating in its management. Using today's terminology, one could say that this was not only a right but also an obligation of participation, which practically anticipated one of the important constitutive elements of contemporary democracy.

Devoting so much attention to the religious community, John Calvin exposed at the same time the role of the individual as an active subject that was simultaneously responsible for his actions – in the final reckoning – before God. Hence individualism was one of the principles of his philosophical anthropology.

Calvin required from the faithful that they read the Bible, as it contains the word of God meant for them, and that they live in accordance with its imperatives. Reading in turn also imposed the duty of common learning, thus establishing schools for boys and girls (which two centuries later, yet at the same time decidedly earlier than in other denominations, translated into the open attitude of reformed churches to the question of emancipation of women) and also higher schools, including those preparing to the interpretation of the Bible. These for example were the beginnings of the Geneva Academy, and later the first higher schools in American colonies, which *nota bene* belong today to the top of the American Ivy League.

Doing away with the clergy solved another problem, which for example the Catholic Church struggles with to this day, namely the problem of celibacy (in the

Western Church, the practice of celibacy of the clergy having taken holy orders had been generally obeyed since the 7th century). Under the influence of Calvin, Geneva, which had already earlier become the centre of the contemporary version of civil movements (among others, in the result of Zwingli's actions aimed at moral autonomy and liberation of the Swiss Confederation from the Habsburg rule) became the capital of Protestantism, an alternative to Lutheranism. Established here in 1559 was the Academy, whose intellectual influence embraced the milieus of reformed Catholicism in France, Italy, England, Scotland, Hungary, southern Germany, the Netherlands, and also Poland. It was here that the dissidents banished from the countries for dissent from the earlier binding Catholic or Lutheran standards of Christianity found refuge. The rules of the church included primarily spiritual and also social care. What belonged to the state included external defence and guarantees of the internal order (it is worth reminding here that Calvin was a lawyer by education), protection of safety of economic activity, especially trade, and support of the development of education. Thus conceived, the division between the state and the church provided also for normative grounds of the freedom of choice of religion and gathering in denominational alliances, breaking the *cuius regio, eius religio* principle of the Augsburg Religious Peace (1555), which, though in fact not appearing in the German text of the compact, appears in its first printed interpretation.

What still remains to be explained is the genesis of the name Calvinism. The reformer from Geneva did not use it, nor did he approve of it. It made an appearance in the mid-16th century in the writings of the Lutheran theologian Joachim Westphal, and had a decidedly negative connotation in the language of his contemporary religious disputes. It was only later that it became an axiologically neutral term, yet the continuators of the spirit of reforms initiated by Calvin continued not to use it, and named both their churches and denominations differently. The case with the name Protestantism was similar. This term too was not born as the proper name at once, even though it originated from the word "we protest" (Latin: *protestado),* used in Spira in 1529 by the new churches against the law and power (both church and lay) that could force people to proclaim faith contrary to their conscience, at the same time, violating their autonomy in the face of God, The denominations divided from Rome through the successive phases of the Reformation – even though on account of many basic truths of the faith, the anthropological concept of the human and his attitude to the realm of the sacred, the individual and community styles of life are similar – exist through the plurality of churches / denominations, and enjoy identities proper only for themselves. Moreover, under the influence of dynamic civilisation processes, they live to their own rhythms, changing, connecting, and dividing. In the American circumstances, this process is frequently accompanied by the belief that "No such thing exists on the face of the Earth as Christianity in the abstract [...] No one is a Christian in general".[14]

[14] Opinion delivered by a Presbyterian, Charles Hodge; quoted after *The Story of America...,* p. 96.

## Calvin's Doctrine on American Soil

Calvin's version of Protestantism was brought to American soil by the Pilgrims who arrived on board the Mayflower in Plymouth Colony in 1620. It was reinforced by Puritans, who were organised by the Massachusetts Bay Company to travel across the ocean in 1629. The motivation of the two groups (and also of those who joined them later) to leave Europe was of an ideological nature. In both cases, these were dissidents from the Anglican Church in pursuit of the right to confess their own religion in the "new Jerusalem" they were to build. Following such ambitions, they were also beginning to break from under the control of the British Crown. It was they, using the Geneva models, who began the long march to democracy on the shores of Northern America. The formula of power they developed was originally of a decidedly theocratic character, with voting rights enjoyed only by male members of a certain wealth of the puritan religious community, the political leadership being entrusted mostly to clerics and ardent believers, and their church – known as Congregationalist, from congregation meaning "parish" and treated as the only form of authority in the church, even before their emigration from England – being recognised in 1648 as state church in the whole of New England. Yet it was here that models and customs of local self-government in communities and the system of schools were developed. It was also here that in 1636 the Massachusetts General Court decided (after a vote) to earmark £400 to establishing the first American "schoale or colledge" educating spiritual elites in Newetowne (today's Cambridge). The first (and initially the only!) lecturer was the local pastor, John Harvard. As a legacy from him, the school received a library of 400 volumes and £779 (actually, the trustees of his testament surrendered only half of the sum), and the General Court – as a token of its gratitude – gave the school his name.

The first decades were not free from other dissensions and from internal religious tensions. Three examples follow. In 1635, a young, Puritan "godly minister", Roger Williams, was banished from the colony for preaching "dangerous opinions". Together with his 13 supporters, he established Providence, which soon provided the foundation for Rhode Island. Under the influence of Williams this new colony, which entitled every household to participate in voting, separated lay authority from spiritual, and guaranteed religious tolerance – became another attempt at future democracy. The story of Anne Hutchinson did not go that well. In 1638, for organising discussion meetings in her own house after Sunday sermons, for frequent criticism of the religious leader of the colony, and – as it was called – for preaching heresy, she was excommunicated. After a brief stay in Rhode Island, she moved to the Dutch New Amsterdam. A year later, together with six children, she was killed by Indians. The third, and at the same time most tragic case were the events that took place in Salem, where in 1692 a special court was summoned to examine "the likelihood of an epidemie of witchcraft". Of 150 persons incarcerated, 15 women and four men were hanged, and one was "slowly pressed to death

by weights". Even though four years later the court expressed regret for the evil it did, it was not until 1714 that all the executed were officially acquitted. The image of this lack of tolerance, cruel in its aftermath, was reinforced in the collective memory by Arthur Miller in his play *The Crucible* (1953).

Besides Massachusetts (which devoted itself to a single faith and provoked the development of many, with Boston being treated e.g. by Samuel Eliot Morison as "provincial Geneva") and Rhode Island (for many the symbol of religious freedom and intellectual daring), the remainder of the original 13 colonies do not have such dramatic events in their history. Nevertheless, they also have their important share in the formation of the American denominational/religious system, together with its implications for the American ethics of work. The merits of all four colonies of New England certainly include the development of education. To teach the children to read the Bible, a system of free schools was established in nearly every settlement. Yet schools not only helped in mastering the skills of reading and writing, but also shaped the personality of their students: including the cultural ideals of personality, systems of values, models of social roles, and, lastly, attitudes towards work). To provide teachers for these schools and ministers for the denominations, first the Harvard College was opened, and, when some considered it too liberal, Yale was chartered by the Colony of Connecticut (1701). For similar reasons, even though inspired by the Episcopal Church, the College of William and Mary was opened in Virginia in 1693, King's College in New York in 1754 (transformed in 1784 into Columbia University), Princeton in New Jersey (established in 1747 as the College of New Jersey), Philadelphia Academy and Charitable School (1751, which in 1779 became the nation's first university).

Pennsylvania performed a role analogous to that of Rhode Island, and its founder – a wealthy Quaker by the name of William Penn – established thanks to good governance, religious freedom, good soil, and the advantageous situation of the colony, an asylum for Quakers (English and Irish) and German dissenters (known later as the "Pennsylvania Dutch"). As the largest city, not only in the state but in all colonies, Philadelphia became the city of Benjamin Franklin. Virginia, the oldest of all the colonies that long remained under the direct influence of London and the Church of England (which, though under a changed name – as the Episcopal Church, in fact played the role of the governing church also in Maryland, both Carolinas, Georgia, and in much of New York) played an exceptional role in transferring the British political institutions and legal traditions (including criminal law), and also standards of policing services and forces to American soil. To quote Samuel Eliot Morison, Virginia also had – through the standards of "amenity, statesmanship, and military strategy" – an influence over the formation of the American character, comparable to New England with its public spirit and private gain, independence and inhabitation, reverence and self-righteousness.[15]

[15] S. E. Morison, *An Hour of American History*, Boston 1959, p. 3.

Georgia and North and South Carolina faced different problems. Slavery in fact developed here two ethics of work: one for the whites, and the other for – as they were then called – the *Negros*.

With the passage of time, the intellectual climate of former British colonies evolved. Of increasing significance were now not only the imperatives of Calvinism and the pressure of the Church of England but, especially in Virginia, the ideas of enlightenment: the cult of rational thinking, education, belief in progress, and natural (i.e. inalienable) human rights. Information about the direction of the evolution of the attitude to religion can be found in the following opinion expressed by Thomas Jefferson: "It does me no injury for my neighbors to say there are twenty gods or one God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg".[16] In this context, it becomes clear why, among the 55 members of the Constitutional Convention in 1776, there was no member of the clergy from any of the churches/denominations operating at the time, while the constitution mentions the word "God" in no context, and the words "religion" and "religious practices" appear only in the First Amendment (the Bill of Rights, ratified in l791) stating that the "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof". We should recall here that the standards of the Bill of Rights referred only to the Federal Government, and not directly to the individual states. Before revolution, there were only four colonies that legally warranted religious freedom. During the struggle for independence, five more states joined them. Virginia ceased to consider Anglicanism the ruling religion supported by the colonial powers from taxation only in 1786.

Congregationalism in the role of the ruling religion survived longest in New England (in Massachusetts until 1833). Explaining the Founding Fathers' intentions of religious liberalism to the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island, George Washington (already in the capacity of US President) wrote in 1790 in a letter addressed to them that the United States did not accept bigotry, did not support persecution, and expected from everyone who resorted to their protection that they would behave as good citizens. The constitutional norms did not operate automatically, and violent religious conflicts did not die down immediately in the United States. Sometimes they would break out between the new denominations and the followers of churches and sects that the public opinion had previously considered American. Sometimes religious turmoil resulted as an expression of protest against the new immigrants who brought these churches to US soil. The first case is most fully illustrated by the history of Mormons from 1830 (the date of the uprising in Fayett, NY) to 1896 (the date of the inclusion of Utah in the US with the rights of a state). The other is the Protestant-Catholic conflict.

Mormons (the official name of the community: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), one of the best-known American religious groups, was repeatedly attacked by the crowds, and once even by a detachment of the National

[16] Quoted in: *The Story of America...,* p. 94.

Guard. Under the onslaught of these attacks, they moved the headquarters of the church successively to Kirkland, Ohio (1831), Independence, Missouri, and Nauvoo, Illinois, where they planned to build "the new Zion". Yet history followed a different path. After five years of prosperity in Nauvoo, on 24th June 1844 the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith, and his brother Hyrum, were arrested under the charge of treason, and three days later lynched by a mob, while the settlement built by the community was burned down in 1846. These events enforced their further roaming in search of their place on earth. There began the Mormon Trail that led to the shores of the Great Salt Lake, a "wagon train" of 148 people ridding on 72 wagons pulled by 93 horses and 66 oxen.

The conflict between Protestants and Catholics was played out in repeated episodes. In the collective memory of the first colonies, and later also of successive generations of Americans, its reasons were connected to the successive phases of European Reformation. Catholics were also competitors of the English to the territory of North America: the French were coming from the north along the valley of the Mississippi and through the Louisiana Territory down to New Orleans, and Spaniards were going from the South – from Florida via Texas to the Pacific Coast. Not counting the first Catholics settled in Maryland (approximately 100 colonists in 1634), and the French living on the ground purchased from Napoleon in 1803 (as a part of Louisiana purchase), the Catholic Church in the United States was actually developed by the Irish immigrants, and beginning with the 1840s also Germans (migrating from Europe after the Spring of Nations), and the increasingly numerous Italians and Poles coming to the states from the Civil War to the outbreak of the first world war. The millions of newcomers being at the same time "infidels", were treated by many Protestant churches and denominations as a real threat to their religious beliefs and established lifestyles, including work ethics.

Using a broad range of means on a large-scale, fighting against Roman Catholicism began with the attack on the nuns and pupils of the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts and burning down its buildings in 1834. The next acts of violence followed soon after. In 1844, a mob inspired by Native Americans (established in New York in 1835 promoting – also in the papers – a "fight against the evils of Popery") attacked several Catholic churches in Philadelphia, burning down two of them – St Nicholas and St Augustine. Attacks were launched also against the Irish ghetto, houses were burned and inhabitants killed. In this case, the attack was channelled primarily against the Irish. While the houses and churches defended by the Irish militia were burning, the nearby churches of German Catholics – even though not guarded – found themselves in the peaceful eye of the storm. The tension was so powerful that, in order to halt it, Bishop Kenrick decided to call off all masses throughout Philadelphia on Sunday, 12th May. Seven years later, in 1851, clashes inspired by the Know Nothings began in Providence, Rhode Island. Here, a convent was attacked by night and its building devastated. Even though the organisers of the riot announced their continuation, city authorities refused police pro-

tection of the indicated buildings (including the bishop's house). Bishop O'Reilly organised self-defence groups, thus preventing further violence.

Major riots took place in 1853 in Boston, Baltimore, Wheeling, St Louis, and Cincinnati. The direct reason for the disturbances was a visit by the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Bendini. They culminated in Cincinnati, where an armed crowd approximately 600-strong marched towards the cathedral planning to hang the nuncio and burn the church down. The police brought the situation under control, yet not without opening fire and wounding several mobsters.

Moreover, a wave of turmoil passed through Manchester, NH, Sidney and Massillon in Ohio, Lawrence and Chelsea in Mass., Norwalk in Conn., and Brooklyn and Saugerties, NY. In the same year, the riot in Louisville, KY expanded to such a scale that the day when it occurred passed into the history of American Catholicism as "Bloody Monday".[17] The paradox of these events was that after the Civil War, it was clear that Catholicism – despite the rebirth of Protestant opposition – became a fact in the United States. The share of Catholics in the United States grew from 1% in the late 17th century to nearly 10% of all residents of the states in 1816, and was still rising rapidly in the subsequent decades under the influence of intensifying immigration from southern, central, and eastern Europe. Thus the United States were entering the developed form of capitalism – at least in the blue collar stratum – with new Americans whose religious-cultural makeup had nothing in common with the Calvinist syndrome of work ethics. From the latter half of the 20th century to the early 21st century, the share of Catholics in the American system grew again, this time by the addition of Catholics of a different culture and ethnicity, namely Latinos.

Two almost parallel processes could be recorded at the same time. The first of them was the gradual liberation of the syndrome of Calvinist norms conditioning the ethics of work from denominational connotations. Initially, it spread into numerous Protestant churches and denominations of origin other than Calvinist, and was subsequently supported, among others, by the representations from Manifest Destiny and convictions inspired by the American Dream; it became a part of the American cultural archetype as an important symptom of the birth of American civil religion. The latter process was manifested through the relatively quick assimilation of the Irish and also by the Americanisation of Catholicism. Part of the Catholic clergy, unwilling to lose out to Protestant denominations, at the same time desiring to prove that Catholicism was not anti-American by its nature, began to promote ways of participation of the lay people – as tested earlier by Protestants – in the life of religious communities, and the learning of forms of operation favourable for Catholics and the Church in the conditions of the American political and economic system. In that, there were no fears of increased subjectivity of the individual nor of emphasising work as the earthly fulfilment of the human vocation.

[17] R. A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade,* Macmillan 1938; J. Higham, *Strangers in the Land. Patterns of American Nativism 1860–1925,* New York 1975.

These priests knew already that no religion could become part of the American democracy unless it assimilated. The watchword of this new orientation was activism, and its face was Isaac Thomas Hecker (1818–1888, originally a Methodist, later Catholic Redemptorist, and finally the founder of the Missionary Society of St Paul the Apostle). In the Vatican, this mainstream was known as Americanism. In fact there had been no objections against it until it crossed the borders of the United States. Americanism was decidedly opposed in the 1890s, when it began to spread into other countries, including especially France. During the Congress of Catholic Intellectuals in Freiburg held in 1897, the Rector of the American College in Rome, Cardinal O'Connell, negatively addressed the influences of liberal doctrines (individualism!) visible in Americanism and the dissent from the Catholic understanding of the essence of work. Pope Leo III expressed this in 1899 in the letter *Testem benevolentiae* addressed to Cardinal James Gibbons, with the refusal of his consent to spreading the standards of Americanism.

Time has come to ask the question why the syndrome of Protestant ethics lost its original religious grounds on American soil and passed into the realm of civil religion. The answer to this question is at the same time a voice in the discussion of whether – as Max Weber believed a hundred years ago – there was actually a split in the USA between the Protestant ethics and development of capitalism, deemed not only as economic activity of the new (compared to feudalism) type, but also as a rational system of thinking, equality, and political freedom.

It goes without saying – a view which I also subscribe to – that such a relationship actually came to pass in certain phases of American history, especially in the earliest ones – from the establishment of the 13 colonies to the Civil War. At the same time, everything supports the argument that the Protestant ethics of work was not the only reason in this process, least to say the decisive one. Presented below are the arguments supporting such a conclusion.

## Protestant Ethics and American Civilisation

Besides exceptional situations (in most cases connected to wars, violent economic crises, and natural disasters), no individual factor is by itself decisive in a longer time perspective (even though its significance may change depending on various circumstances) for the history of the human (individual and collective). The actual reasons that determine the historical processes (both continuity and its severance in the case of violent changes) are as a rule connected: through cause and result, or functionally or structurally. This is so in each of the overlapping dimensions of the human existence: at the level of the individual – somatic and psychological (or somatic–psychological) and collective – of social, political, and economic systems and culture.[18]

[18] A. L. Kroemer, *Istota kultury*, Warszawa 1989, p. 281 and ff.

The specific American nature cannot be explained just so, simply by reference to the European norms of ideology. As Daniel J. Boorstin wrote 40 years ago, the forming American society

> [...] flourished not in discovery but in search. It prospered not from the perfection of its ways but from their fluidity. It lived with the constant belief that something else or something better might turn up. A by-product of looking for ways of living together was a new civilisation, whose strength was less an idealism than a willingness to be satisfied with the less than ideal. Americans were glad enough to keep things growing and moving.[19]

The first settlers, especially the bearers of the Calvinist work ethics, came from the best-organised and prosperous European cities, and found themselves on a virgin land, between the ocean and unchartered forests. So as not only to survive and remain faithful to their own religious beliefs, but also to become rich (as it was also an important motivation for the journey into the unknown) one needed to start from the beginning. As it seems, everyone was ready to rule (among others through collective gatherings), but nobody wanted to be ruled. They were fleeing a law that they did not accept, yet in the new continent, they found themselves "without law, without order, and without restraint; in a state of nature, amid the confused, revolving, fragments of elementary society! Some were sad, while others were merry; and while the brave doubted, the timid trembled".[20]

One must agree with Max Lerner that the syndrome of American civilisation has its own style inscribed within it. It was to a great extent developed as a simultaneous result of both elemental processes, and the religious motivation of human goals in a specific geographical and social space, within the (material and spiritual, but also intellectual) culture produced and transferred (for over 300 years!). According to the values constituting the nation, patterns of behaviours, and beliefs, Americans are the nation selected by Providence, and therefore they have a special mission to fulfil *(Manifest Destiny,* which *nota bene* is in its essence – at the level of social communities – a negation of Calvin's concept of predestination). The specific nature of the style of their civilisation is expressed in 1) the historical experience cumulated while conquering the continent etched in the collective memory, 2) a pluralism (ethnic, religious, and linguistic) found nowhere else, 3) the democratic political system they developed, 4) the extremely liberal version of capitalism, and also in 5) the exceptional mobility – spatial and intergenerational.[21] According to Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, this civilisation – much like any other – creates a whole, and must be examined as a whole. It developed in a continuous manner as a result of the simultaneous impact of nine factors: the entrepreneurship of the original settlers and later (ever new) immigrants, the rational combination of federal and state powers with local self-government (safeguarding individual resourcefulness

[19] D. J. Boorstin, *The American. The National Experience*, New York 1965, p. 2.

[20] L. W. Hasting, quoted in D. J. Boorstin, *op. cit.*, p. I.

[21] M. Lerner, *America as a Civilization,* Vol. 1, New York 1967.

in the alien and at the same time changing environment), the process of building and implementing the principles of capitalist economy, free from feudal limitations and growing from the heritage of the enlightenment in the understanding of the political system and the rights of the human and citizen, open continent (plenty of land, possibility of becoming its owner), dynamic social structure, and realistic opportunities, mobility connected to advancement, religious freedom, and, finally, development of school education and trust in science. The essence of this type of civilisation is not learnable, be it by comparative studies, or even more so through a simple projection of experience of other countries. It can be understood only from the inside, by one's own experience stemming from participant observation.[22]

A complementary and at the same time exceptionally important element is introduced to the analysis presented above by Frederick Jackson Turner on the concept of the frontier. In a paper delivered in Chicago in 1893, at a session of the American Historical Association, Turner proved that it was the frontier and the belief in the inexhaustible resources of the land and the natural riches that accompanied it that provided for the safety valve viz. the tensions developing in the different phases of formation of the American society. If the social and political, and also economic, conditions did not give to those who settled first and the new immigrants the opportunity of meeting the American Dream, there were always prospects somewhere in the depth of the continent. "The path of freedom led to the frontier." It was also there, on the frontier, that the "gate to freedom" was situated. Anybody who did not accept poor pay and their own social position could go West. There, free land – the promised land – awaited. Thus it was not the religiously motivated ethical code, but the journey into the unknown that enforced activity. One had to trust and count on oneself. The continuous necessity to leave the enforced situations taught perseverance, reinforced the subjective sense of dignity, and led to the integration of small communities that were originating against and over the original divides of an ethnic and religious nature. Independent of ethnic origin and religious convictions, one needed to work to survive. There was no place for learned helplessness. One had to work not to die, in accordance with the generally recognised principle "sink or swim". Moreover, in most cases work brought about measurable rewards. Not in life after life, but here and now. The everyday effort, whose sense could be directly proved through its results, gave birth to another feature of Americans, namely pragmatism. Pragmatism resulting not from books read, but from the ethos of their everyday life. According to other interpreters, for example Alvin W. Gouldner, Richard A. Peterson, and David C. McClelland, in the latter period of its development (sometimes reaching also to European philosophical traditions and even Greek cultural archetypes), the American civilisation developed the educational models that had a major impact on successive generations of Americans. One of them Gouldner and Peterson, call "the Apollonian model". Even though it generalises the American experience, in the philosophical layers it

[22] C. Beard, *Rozwój cywilizacji amerykańskiej,* Vol. 1, Warszawa 1961.

also matches, the authors believe, with Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy and On the Genealogy of Morals* (the latter published in German in 1871). It consists of a total of nine imperatives: 1) "freedom from all extravagant urges, no excess, 'nothing too much', 2) rejection of all licence, 3) stress on the 'cognitive models of experience', reason, knowledge and science, 4) a hopeful, melioristic view of the World, 5) activism, 6) the 'principium individuations', 7) emphasis on visual arts, 8) maintaining a compensatory belief in gods that lived, 9) 'It was not unbecoming for even the greatest hero to yearn for an after-life'"[23] McClelland calls the model that he reconstructed (after a very carefully conducted quantitative analysis) "the Spirit of Hermes". A basic feature of the Hermes syndrome is self-reliance and activism. Protestant ethics is only one of the examples in this model. Its other fulfilments do not require religious motivation and may be activated by some other powerful stimuli. In educational practice, the Hermes model is used by parents towards their children, among other ways by the stimulation of early undertaking of work and earning for their own needs, and not relying solely on the resources of the family.[24]

A distinguishing feature of the American society, also today, is the interference of religious and social, as well as territorial divisions. According to the 2004 edition of *Who's Who in America*, a book that portrays mostly American high achievers, 33% of the people who disclosed their religious affiliation belonged to the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ churches, while the total number of followers of these types of Protestantism account for only 10% of the entire American society. Similarly overrepresented in *Who's Who* are Americans of Jewish origin: 12% in the year quoted above, compared to only 2% in the society as a whole. Congregationalists, Methodists and Catholics find themselves in the middle of the scale, while Baptists, Lutherans, and persons mentioned in *Who's Who* as members of minor denominations, including those counted among the sects – are at the very bottom.[25] According to the data of The Glenmary Research Center from 2002, the map of concentration of the most numerous churches and denominations within US territory looks – to simplify greatly – as follows: 1) the south-eastern states are dominated by Baptists (journalists frequently call this area the "red belt" as it is inhabited mostly by Christian conservatives who are the stable electorate of the Republicans), 2) states from Maryland to Maine, the entire south-west, and – to some extent – states bordering on the Great Lakes are overwhelmingly Catholic (although they used to vote primarily Democrat, today, under the influence of the social advancement of some traditionally Catholic ethnic groups, they partially vote Republican), 3) the states of the Northern Plains inhabited predominantly by Lutherans, 4) the belt from Pennsylvania to Kansas populated by Methodists, and 5) the region in and around Utah dominated by the members of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons). The same data prove that the level of religiousness measured by the

[23] A. W. Gouldner, R. A. Peterson, *Notes on Technology and the Moral Order,* New York 1962.

[24] D. C. McClelland, *The Achieving Society,* Toronto 1961, p. 36–62.

[25] J. J. Macionis, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

indicator of participation in basic religious practices (e.g. by the number of *dominicantes* and *communicantes* in the Catholic Church) is much higher in the central territory of the United States than on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Moreover, the central part of the country is far more conservative than the East and West Coasts.

I believe that the interpretation that emphasises the Protestant ethics as the reason for the higher or lower position of large segments of the American society in its layer structure is true only to a certain degree. There have been plenty of mutually determining factors that have been decisive for the current relations between the social position and belonging to denominational groups, including the time when given groups began their American odyssey, and their accumulated (frequently for hundreds of years) resources: material, social, and cultural, and not religious affiliation itself. The fact that, today, the denominations that grew from the tradition of reformed churches exist also in countries that could hardly be counted among the most developed seems to lead to a similar conclusion. Moreover, some of them have more followers than the American Presbyterians and United Church of Christ counted together. At the beginning of the 21st century, the number of American Presbyterians was estimated at 2.5 million, and that of the United Church of Christ at 1.3 million, therefore their total approximate number was 3.8 million, while the Church of Southern India (3.8 million) and the Church of Northern India (1.3 million) declared together 5.1 million followers, and the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar 2.5 million.

## Conclusions

Over a hundred years have passed since the time when Max Weber published his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which continues to be discussed to this day, as it seeks the ties between the ethics of work that grew from Calvinism and the spirit of capitalism, perceived primarily as rational entrepreneurship supported on the tenets of asceticism allowing the maintenance of equilibrium between the *homo religiosus* and *homo oeconomicus*. His later critics and interpreters, including R. H. Tawney and Reinhard Bendix, and in Poland Konstanty Grzybowski, Stanisław Kozyr-Kowalski, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, and Jadwiga Mizińska, frequently turned their attention to the fact that a Calvinist ethic of work not only generated the development of capitalism but also in itself was a derivative of the processes from which the rich bourgeoisie of the 16th-century Geneva, London, Antwerp, and Amsterdam stemmed.

Weber himself realised the fact that his concept did not explain everything but is, to use the Weberian language – a certain ideal type. To learn this, it suffices to look at the final paragraphs of *Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism*, being the third part of the book quoted here.

This is what Weber writes there: only after tracing the process of development of the aesthetic rationalism could one

> [...] determine the size of the cultural significance of ascetic Protestantism as compared to other elements shaping the modern culture. Here [in this book – HK] we only tried to explain the fact of its influence, and the type of influence, considering a single even though significant moment: the motive of ascetic Protestantism. Further, one should, nevertheless, discover in what manner the total of social, cultural, and especially economic conditions will influence the development of the particular features of Protestant asceticism. Emphasising that the modern man cannot in most cases imagine, despite his best will, such a significance that the religious content of consciousness actually had for the way of life, culture, and character of peoples, we are obviously not intending to replace a one-sided 'materialist' interpretation of case culture and history with an equally one-sided 'spiritualist' interpretation. Both are equally allowable, yet also both – should they pretend to be not the preparation but the crowning of research – bring equally little benefit for the historical truth.[26]

In his later research of the economic ethics of the religions of the world – Taoism and Confucianism, ancient Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism – Weber goes further, as he comes to the conclusion that "the actions of people are directly governed by interests (material and ideal), and not ideas. Yet the 'images of the world' produced with the help of the 'ideas' very often define the tracks – like the switchman – along which the dynamism of interests moves the actions."[27]

Weber knew that, just as there is no single universal religion in the real world but only adjectival religions, "capitalism as such" is in the same way only an abstract that can be used – as an ideal type – in the research of the various fulfilments of this abstraction registered in history. Among these fulfilments he listed "economic, trade, colonial, merchant, predatory (including bourgeois, monopolist, modern, political, and industrial) and two types of rational – Western and politically-oriented – capitalisms". He knew what he was doing, as he was originally an economist who only later turned sociologist. Considering that Weber died in 1920, the question how he would define today's forms of capitalism, and how we would describe the work ethics connected to them – as they are generated by these forms or only motivate them – becomes intriguing.

Since Weber's times, American society has gone through a number of important developmental phases. From a "developed industrial society" it moved to "new industrial society", and further, to "post-industrial", contemporarily defined also as "information society" supported by a "knowledge-based economy".[28] This became to a great degree "otherwise religious". The traditional folk religion, based on inherited beliefs and ritualised practices, is yielding its place to the religion of choice, individual, where the personal experience of good or evil is more impor-

[26] M. Weber, *Szkice z socjologii religii,* Warszawa 1984, p. 110.

[27] *Ibidem*, p. 126.

[28] See e.g.: J. K. Galbraith, *The New Industrial State*; Z. Brzeziński, *Between Two Ages. America's Role in the Technetronic Era*; D. Bell, *Kulturowe sprzeczności kapitalizmu;* P. C. Whybrow, *American Mania;* A. Toffler, *Zmiana władzy;* U. Beck, *Władza i przeciwwładza w epoce globalnej;* S. P. Huntington, *Who are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity.*

tant than the distinct definitions of supernatural entities and visualisations of the life after life. There is ever less space for institutions, clergy, and denominational congregations consolidated on the power of a formal connection. Religion now moves from the public realm to the realm of emotions and individual needs. Work becomes decentralised. The bygone space of religion is being replaced by iuridised human rights turned into law, and in the European Union additionally by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Knowledge and the skill of its continuous renewal become a value – both per se and instrumental towards other values, therefore also towards work ethics. It is knowledge, as a component of the human capital, that now decides on the sense of our dignity, position in the labour market, and social capital. It is also knowledge – or at least this is what we believe – that keeps us from being degraded into the "unemployable" and "underclass" categories, or, to use the language of EU documents, "the excluded". In his inaugural speech, President Barack Obama told Americans: "we have no shared religion. We are not of the same race or culture. What connects us? The love for freedom." And further: "that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness". In racially, ethnically, culturally, and religiously pluralised societies, this is the basic form of the *depositum fidei*, and this is what builds both the foundations of the new civic religion, and also – even more broadly – civic culture based on the inalienable rights and duties of the citizen.