The Sacred Roots of Capitalism : a Theological Analysis of Weber's Famous Thesis

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Sociologists have long speculated over the possible relation between the emergence of Protestantism and capitalism in the modern world. Speculation over the relationship first came to the forefront of academia when Max Weber published two articles on the «Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism» in 1904–1905. R.H. Tawney proceeded to popularize the theory in the English-speaking world with his publication of a series of lectures on *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926), and since then the thesis has become one of the most celebrated and controversial in all of social studies.[1] Often the thesis is juxtaposed to Karl Marx and his atheistic version of history, which centers upon economic forces as paramount in the development of political/religious ideals and reduces these forces to the cynical interests of the bourgeoisie and their attempt to wield power.[2] Weber and Tawney represent an alternative to this secular point of view, but ward off the temptation of proceeding in the opposite direction and substituting «a one-sided ‹materialistic› [interpretation with] an equally one-sided ‹spiritual› interpretation of civilization and history.» They merely contend that religion provided a special psychological matrix or *Geist* for the new economic system to flourish, not that all other factors are irrelevant.[3]

1 R.W. Green (ed.): Protestantism and Capitalism: The Weber Thesis and Its Critics, Boston 1959, vii; M. Bergler: Max Webers Thesen über die Entstehung des modernen westlichen Kapitalismus, ZRGG 39 (1987) 24–46 (27f.); H. Lehmann: The Rise of Capitalism. Weber versus Sombart, in: H. Lehmann, G. Roth (ed.): Weber's Protestant Ethic. Origins, Ethics, and Context, Cambridge 1993, 197f.; M.J. Kitch (ed.): Capitalism and the Reformation, New York 1968, xviif. Weber's work was a response to Werner Sombart: Der Moderne Kapitalismus, Leipzig 1902.
Special thanks belongs to Transaction Publishers for allowing me to use some of the research and material from my new book: The Egalitarian Spirit of Christianity. The Sacred Roots of American and British Government, especially chaps. 5 and 6, in developing this article.

2 K. Marx, F. Engels: Manifesto of the Communist Party, in: M.J. Alder (ed.): Great Books of the Western World, Chicago 178, 416.419.424.428; Kitch: Capitalism and the Reformation (fn. 1), 53; H. Sée: The Contribution of the Puritans to the Evolution of Modern Capitalism, in: Green: Protestantism and Capitalism (fn. 1), 62.

3 M. Weber: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, T. Parsons (trans.), New York 1958, 183; R.H. Tawney: Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, Gloucester MS 1962, xivf.; M. Lowy: Weber against Marx?. The Polemic with Historical Materialism in the Protestant Ethic, Science and Society 53 (1989) 71–83 (72);

Weber explains the relationship between religious concepts and capitalism in the following manner. He finds the impetus for the new economic philosophy within the Protestant Reformation and its emphasis upon the spirituality of each and every believer. He contrasts this emphasis with the Middle Ages, where spirituality was embodied in the hierarchy of the church or sheltered within the monastic order, far removed from the secular concerns of everyday life. At that time an ascetic life contemplated the realities of another world and exalted itself above the active life of secular business with its pursuit of the baser things of this world.[4] Weber points to a fundamental shift in paradigm that transpired during the Reformation. Luther is seen as spurning the monastic life of idle contemplation, providing a positive review of the laity's contribution through his doctrine of the priesthood of the believers, and consecrating their activity in the world as a genuine service to God.[5] Luther's usage of *Beruf* provides Weber with an illustration of how the spiritual calling of the believers included their worldly «profession.»[6] This teaching resonated among all Protestants in Europe, but no one emphasized Luther's priesthood of the believers and contempt for monastic living more than the Puritans. The special calling of the laity was fundamental to their concept of Christianity as a practical, world-affirming religion.[7] William Perkins, their most distinguished theologian, wrote *A Treatise of the Vocations or Callings of Men* (1605), based on Paul's admonition in 1 Cor. 7:20 that «each one should remain in the situation that God has called him.» Perkins interpreted the verse as an admonition to each and every member of the body of Christ to fulfill a special calling in the church, the family, and the community.[8] The treatise was

H.R. Trevor-Roper: The Reformation and Economic Change, in: Kitsch: Capitalism and the Reformation (fn. 1), 31; W.S. Hudson: Puritanism and the Spirit of Capitalism, ChH 18 (1949) 8–14 (5f.); Kitch: Capitalism and the Reformation (fn. 1), xviif.; Bergler: Max Webers Thesen (fn. 1), 35f. Weber also speaks of a reciprocal relation at times. Lowy: a.a.O. 74.

4 Ibid., 40; M. Brocker: Max Webers Erklärungsansatz für die Entstehung des Kapitalismus, ZfG 43 (1995) 495–514 (501); M. Weber: The Sociology of Religion (trans. by E. Fischoff), Boston 1964, 220.

5 WA 6.407, 408 (LW 44.127–29); Brocker: Erklärungsansatz (fn. 4), 504; K. Fullerton: Calvinism and Capitalism. An Explanation of the Weber Thesis, in: Green: Protestantism and Capitalism (fn. 1), 9f.; Weber: The Protestant Ethic (fn. 3), 81; Kitch: Capitalism and the Reformation (fn. 1), 3.

6 Ibid., 79–81; Brocker: Erklärungsansatz (fn. 4), 504f. He sees the Augsburg Confession using *Beruf* in the same way.

7 H.M. Robertson: A Criticism of Max Weber and his School, in: Green: Protestantism and Capitalism (fn. 1), 71.

8 I. Breward (ed.): The Work of William Perkins, Appleford/Berkshire 1970, 446–449.456. The list of those who did not possess a sufficient calling included beggars, vagabonds, monks, friars, servants, and gentlemen. M. Walzer: The Revolu-

followed by a number of works that contained the same basic message of a calling in the world. Richard Steele provided one of the more interesting of these works with a treatise entitled *The Trades-man's Calling* (1684). It provided a «case of the conscience» for fulfilling the will of God through «some peculiar Imployment in this world.»[9] The special calling was interpreted in the same casuistic manner that Perkins, Ames, and other Puritans had brought to the general call of God, established by means of the same rational calculation and attentive to every last detail of piety.

In Protestantism the people were empowered by their new sense of spirituality and freedom to develop a new economic order. In England the Protestants became the «freeholders» of property with an entitlement to use their possessions, invest their resources, and reject any measures by the government to interfere in their business or pilfer their possessions by whatever means available. The Puritan Revolution swept away the monopolies and economic regulations of Stuart England, allowing free enterprise and markets to prosper.[10] Protestant freedom meant changes in society, which could never develop under the medieval synthesis, and led in due time to the development of the free enterprise system. The freedom of the people meant less constraint upon economic development and more willingness to take risks and acquire a profit for their own advantage. Montesquieu says,

> The great enterprises of merchants are always mixed with public business of necessity. But in monarchies public affairs are often more suspect for the merchants than they are in Republican states. Therefore, great enterprises are not for monarchies, but for the government of the many.
>
> Briefly, a greater certitude of one's property, which one believes to have in these states, causes all sorts of commercial endeavors to transpire; and because one believes that one's possessions are secure, one is willing to risk it to acquire more. One only takes a risk as a means to gain from it. …
>
> In regard to a despotic state, it is futile to discuss the issue. Here is the general rule: In a nation that is steeped in servitude, one works to preserve more than to acquire; In a free nation one works to acquire more than to preserve.

tion of the Saints. A Study in the Origin of Radical Politics, Cambridge MS 1965, 216.

9 R. Steele: The Trades-man's Calling, London 1684, 1f.

10 S. Evans: The Theme is Freedom. Religion, Politics, and the American Tradition, Washington DC 1994, 295f.; Tawney: Religion (fn. 3), 187f.192.254.258.262; M. MacKinnon: The Longevity of the Thesis. A Critique of the Critics, in: Lehmann, Roth: Weber's Protestant Ethics (fn. 1), 242f.; E. Barker: The Achievement of Oliver Cromwell, in: I. Roots (ed.): Cromwell. A Profile, New York 1973, 6. Tawney provides on pp. 319f., fn. 66, a mountain of research that deals with monopolies, exchange, speculation, and industry under the control of the Star Chamber, Privy Council, and other powers of government both before and after the Puritan Revolution.

> This is the people in the world who have best known how to take advantage of each of these three things at the same time: religion, commerce, and liberty.[11]

All three seemed to go together.

The freedom and spirituality of the laity also meant the eventual collapse of usury laws. Before the Reformation the church and its councils condemned the practice of usury as engaging in dishonest profiteering at the expense of others.[12] Luther and his church continued to support the old policy, but Reformed countries showed signs of easing restrictions on the purse strings: Geneva allowing interest up to five percent in 1538, the Low Countries up to twelve percent in 1540, and England up to ten percent in 1545.[13] These coun-

[11] Montesquieu: De l'Esprit des lois, Paris 1961, IV.XX.4.7 (2.11.13); A.M. Cohler, B.C. Miller, H.S. Stone (trans. and ed.): The Spirit of the Laws, Cambridge 1997, 340f.343; Weber: The Protestant Ethic (fn. 3), 45. See M. Novak: The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism, New York 1982, 15–17. It is difficult to assess the data and establish the precise relation between capitalism and Calvinism throughout Europe. Calvinists in France and Holland were successful merchants, entrepreneurs, and financiers, but Scotland remained a poor country. A. Hyma: A Case Study: Calvinism and Capitalism in the Netherlands, 1555–1700, in: Kitch: Capitalism and the Reformation (fn. 1), 23; Trevor-Roper: Reformation (fn. 3), 29–31.33–34; W.C. Scoville: An Alternative Hypothesis: ‹Penalization› and the Huguenots, in: Kitch: Capitalism and the Reformation (fn. 1), 37–39.43. No simple relation is possible to establish, but there appears to be some truth to the stereotype that Protestant countries (especially Reformed countries) are rich and Catholic countries are poor. J. Viner: Religious Thought and Economic Society, Durham NC 1978, 160f.182. Weber's pupil, Martin Offenbacher, tried to establish the thesis through a statistical analysis of the Grand Duchy of Baden, pointing to the success of Protestants in education and business as opposed to Catholics. Other studies have challenged the fairness of his analysis of Baden, even the notion that there is a significant disparity in wealth and education between the groups—at least based on religious factors. K. Samuelson: Religion and Economic Action, Stockholm 1961, 137–147; J. Delacroix, F. Nelson: The Beloved Myth. Protestantism and the Rise of Industrial Capitalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe, Social Forces 80 (2001) 532–543; A. Hamilton: Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, in: S. Turner (ed.): The Cambridge Companion to Weber, New York 2002, 152.168.

[12] R.M. Mitchell: Calvin's and the Puritan's View of the Protestant Ethic, Washington DC 1979, 20. The Church Fathers were against the practice. T. Wilson: A Discourse upon Usury [1572], New York 1963, 217ff., 280–283; R. Bolton: A Short and Private Discourse, London 1637, 2–5; Wilson: a.a.O. 232.283; Corpus iuris canonici (Lipsiae: B. Tauchnitz, 1879–1881) lib. v, tit. v, cap. if.; tit. xix, cap. i–iii; Tawney: Religion (fn. 3), 46f.; Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae, New York 1964–76, II/2, q. 78, a. 1, 2; T.P. McLaughlin: The Teaching of the Canonists on Usury, Medieval Studies I (1939) 81–147 (105ff.); Viner: Religious Thought (fn. 11), 89f.96.

tries found sanction for the change in policy within certain sectors of the Reformed church. In England, Robert Filmer composed a list of theologians who were suspected of supporting or tolerating some form of usury: «Bishop Babington, Mr. Perkins, Dr. Willet, Dr. Mayer, Mr. Brinsley, and others here at home: and abroad, Calvin, Martyr, Bucer, Billinger, Danaeus, Hemingius, Zanchius, Ursinus, Bucanus, Junius, Polanus, Molineus, Scultetus, Alstedius, Amesius, Grotius, Salmasius.»[14] The authority from abroad seemed to find its center in Switzerland. Robert Fenton, an opponent of usury, depicted the Swiss theologians as the basic authority for those who sanctioned the practice in his native land. He specially singled out John Calvin as the «chief patron» of those who advocate the position and found it necessary to dispute any interpretation of him and other theologians that would sanction what the church had condemned «for the space of fifteene hundred yeeres after Christ.»[15] But Calvin clearly defended the laity's right to charge interest on loans. He found no wholesale condemnation for the practice in Scripture and believed that the trade of his day required the emancipation of capital to fund its complex and wide-scale operations.[16]

Weber finds the fundamental impetus for capitalism within the Protestant work ethic. The Puritans exemplified this spirit more than other Protestant groups and gained a reputation for enforcing standards of behavior and regulating discipline both inside and outside the church, following the example of Calvin's Consistory in Geneva and Cartwright's early adaptation of this model for his «disciplinarians.»[17] Practical piety, not scholastic disputes or theo-

13 Kitch: Capitalism and the Reformation (fn. 1), 123.

14 R. Filmer: Quaestio Quodlibetica. Or a Discourse, whether it may be lawfull to take Use for Money (1653), in: The Usury Debate in the Seventeenth Century. Three Arguments, New York 1972, 111. See Wilson: Discourse upon Usury (fn. 12), 170.351f. Filmer also supplies a list of those who condemn it. «Melanchthon and Chemnitz are the most noted abroad; and here at home, Dr. Downam, now bishop of Londonderry in Ireland, Dr. Fenton, and learned Dr. Andrews, late bishop of Winchester.» (ibid., 111). See ibid., 58f.; Kitch: Capitalism and the Reformation (fn. 1), 124f.144.

15 Ibid., 10f.58–66.

16 CO 10.245f.; 40.430–32 (CC 2.226); 24.682f. (CC 5.132). CC stands for Calvin's *Commentaries*, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society. Kitch: Capitalism and the Reformation (fn. 1), 70; Tawney: Religion (fn. 3), 106. While Calvin and the Calvinists followed the OT more than other theologians of the church, they did not hold to the prohibition against usury in the Mosaic economy. See C. Mather: Magnalia Christi Americana, New York 1967, 2.259f.

17 Walzer: Revolution (fn. 8), 30f.219–221.227. Stephen Foster points to the «orders» of Dedham in 1585 as providing an early glimpse into Puritan discipline. The orders of this town would have needed «every available institution, civil and ecclesiastical [to] have been pressed into service.» St. Foster: The Long Argument: Eng-

retical erudition, became the focus of Puritan divines in their writings and sermons.[18] Education steered away from philosophical speculation toward vocational training and apprenticeships and was limited in general to one's adolescence, especially in America.[19] Idleness was the root of all vices, and diligence the means to prosperity.[20] The general rule of Puritan England was «to whip and punish wandering beggars» and «provide houses and convient places to set the poore to work.»[21] Parliament passed an Act in 1649 that established a posse to round up vagrants and offer them a choice between whipping or work. The poor were treated not as victims of unfortunate circumstances in need of compassion and help. They were victims of their own idleness.[22]

The Puritans included all people within their admonition to work, especially those who possessed considerable means to do otherwise. The purpose of life was found in building the community through investment of one's time, energy, and resources, not accumulating riches to squander on a worth-

lish Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700, Chapel Hill NC 1991, 33.37. The Massachusetts Bay Colony used the General Court, grandjuries, ecclesiastical synods, and local churches to enforce their own rigorous form of discipline against «blasphemy, cursing, prophane-swearing, lying, unlawful-gaming, Sabbath-breaking, idleness, drunkedness, uncleanness, and all the enticements and nurseries of such impieties.» Mather: Magnalia Christi Americana (fn. 16), 2.317–331; Foster: The Long Argument, 276.

18 P. Miller: The New England Mind. From Colony to Provinces, Cambridge 1962, 408.418f.

19 A. de Tocqueville: Democracy in America, New York 1963, 1.52.297.315; 2.3.

20 M. Butzer: De Regno Christi, in: Buceri Opera Latina, Paris 1955, vol. 15, 2.48–52; Steele: The Trades-man's Calling (fn. 9), 19.22.77–95; Walzer: Revolution (fn. 8), 208f. Bucer's work was written in England and addressed to Edward VI, his royal pupil. In the year 1551 (the year of Bucer's death), Edward enacted many of the measures Bucer proposed in his work, whether under his direct influence or not. W. Pauck (ed.): Melanchthon and Bucer, in: The Library of Christian Classics, Philadelphia 1969, 171; Ch. Hill: Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, New York 1967, 272; The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas during the English Revolution, New York 1972, 264. The Dutch Calvinists also gained a reputation for their industry and all-business-like approach. Walzer: a.a.O. 210.

21 Staneley's Remedy, or the Way how to reform wandering Beggars, Theeves, Highway Robbers, and Pick-pockets, London 1646. See S. Hartlib: Londons Charity Inlarged, London 1650; J. Dod: A plaine and familiar exposition of the Ten Commandments, London 1662, 259.277.293; R. Sanderson: XXXV Sermons, London 1681, 87–97.197–99; Hill: Society and Puritanism (fn. 20), 284–287.

22 Tawney: Religion (fn. 3), 264–266; Viner: Religious Thought (fn. 11), 76. Calvin, Zwingli, Bullinger, and other Swiss theologians displayed a special contempt for mendacity and idleness. Tawney: a.a.O. 114.

less or frivolous life-style.[23] «[G]entility was no longer a status confidently assumed; there was the difficult matter of observing the proprieties and diligently, day after day, carrying out the correct tasks.»[24] «Every man, of every degree, as well rich as poor, … must know that he is born for some employment to the good of his brethren, if he will acknowledge himself to be a member, and not an ulcer, in the body of mankind.»[25] «A competent estate» does not excuse a gentleman from business, or supply «an unlimited freedom of pursuing their pleasures at random.»[26] Perkins chides the rich for spending «a greater part of their increase upon hawks, bulls, bears, dogs, or riotously misspend[ing] the same in sporting or gaming.»[27] He enumerates five proper ways to use one's resources to the glory of God. They exclude a life of luxury, pomp, and excess as possessing no utilitarian value in regard to oneself or others.[28] Richard Steele also concurs with these austerities. He chastens immoderate «Gaming,» «frequenting Taverns, Ale-houses, and Coffee-Houses,» and «all bewitching Pleasures and Recreations» as a waste of time that could be better spent or put to good use in the productive affairs of business.[29]

Weber continues the discussion by offering an explanation as to why Puritans would develop such a strong work ethic. He finds the answer to his question residing in the special emphasis the Calvinists placed on works in their doctrine of assurance. Unlike Catholicism, the Reformed did not possess a sacramental means of receiving absolution, nor a mystical word of assurance from God in the manner of Luther and Calvin. Assurance of divine election was obtained through outward results. It was obtained through an inspection of the works, wrought in the world by the believers as an outward sign of invisible grace.[30] An onus was placed on each and every believer to

23 Butzer: De Regno Christi (fn. 20), 15.2.50; Ch. Hill: The English Bible, London 1995, 159f.; R. Baxter: A Christian Directory. Or, A Summ of Practical Theologie, London 1673, 1.108ff.288.451–460; Fullerton: Calvinism and Capitalism (fn. 5), 16f.

24 Walzer: Revolution (fn. 8), 252.

25 J. Dod, R. Cleaver: A plaine and familiar exposition of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth chapters of the Proverbs of Solomon, London 1690, 11; Baxter: Christian Directory (fn. 23), 1.632.

26 St. Paul the Tent-Maker, London 1690, 10–12; Hill: Society and Puritanism (fn. 20), 136.140.

27 Perkins: The Workes, Cambridge 1608, 1.754. See Mather: Magnalia Christi Americana (fn. 16), 2.263.

28 Ibid., 2.128 (D).

29 Steele: The Trades-man's Calling (fn. 9), 70.84f.; Baxter: Christian Dictionary (fn. 23), 1.65.134.143.147.461–465.

30 Weber: The Protestant Ethic (fn. 3), 110f.114.117.230f.; Brocker: Erklärungsansatz (fn. 4), 505f. Methodism developed a systematic «method» to find assurance. Weber: a.a.O. 139.

make one's election as certain as possible through worldly activity—an imperative that sounded similar in nature to the Catholic doctrine of justification and works except this time the asceticism was directed toward participation of the believer in the world rather than limited to the sacred confines of the church. Idleness became the deadliest of all sins; extravagant living a like-evil.[31]

A good illustration of this process is Cotton Mather's great work of ethics, *Bonificacius*, or *Essays to Do Good* (1710). Mather's work is dedicated to promoting a sense of «public spirit» among its constituency in accordance with the exhortation of Gal 6:10: «… let us do good to all men.»[32] Much like other Puritan works it provides strong admonitions against idleness, extravagant living, and the hoarding of wealth.[33] It exhorts the readers to fulfill the calling of God within «their daily business as a real service to the interests of piety,» however mean the service might be.[34] Whole chapters are dedicated to providing specific suggestions for how to serve the Lord in certain professions. Mather encourages each individual to keep a record of his or her conduct, in order to mark the progress each one has made in living a life dedicated to moral virtue and community service.[35] He also encourages the development of societies throughout the land to supply a network of support and accountability.[36] These societies brought great social reform throughout England and other parts of the British empire.[37] They served an important role by promoting practical piety rather than deepening the divisions of the community any further through theological disputes.[38] The societies were designed to watch over the community in general and provide «methods and opportunities to do good» among the people at large—Mather's constant refrain,[39] but the impetus for his practical piety still remains within a specific theological tradition in spite of its inclusive nature. Mather develops the incentive for his work ethic out of the theological convictions of his religious community, which rejected all talk of «cheap grace» in the strongest terms and pointed to a life of piety as the mark of a true believer. The works of the law were the means of demonstrating the sincerity of faith to oneself and one's community. At the

31 Ibid., 157–160.166–169.
32 C. Mather: Bonafacius. An Essay upon the Good, D. Levin (ed. and intro.), Cambridge 1966, 3–6.
33 Ibid., 9.107–119.
34 Ibid., 32.140f.
35 Ibid., 32f.
36 Ibid., 64–68.170.
37 Ibid., 132.178f.
38 Ibid., 68.170.
39 Ibid., 80f.120f.136f. People should ask themselves the following question: «What Good Is There to Be Done?» ibid., 66.

very beginning of the book Mather clearly connects this theoretical justification with the practical admonitions in his work as the basic motivating factor behind them.[40]

> And then, secondly, though we are justified by a precious faith in the righteousness of God our Saviour, yet good works are demanded of us, to justify our faith; to demonstrate, that it is indeed that precious faith. A justifying faith is a jewel, which may be counterfeited. But now the marks of a faith, which is no counterfeit, are to be found in the good works whereto a servant of God is inclined and assisted by his faith.... Here the Plea must be: If our faith be not such a faith, 'tis a lifeless one, and it will not bring to life. A workless faith is a worthless faith. My friend, suppose thyself standing before the Judgment-seat of the glorious LORD ... «Lord, my faith was Thy work. It was a faith which disposed me to all the good works of Thy holy religion. My faith sanctified me. It carried me to Thee, O my Saviour, for grace to do the works of righteousness. It embraced that for my Lord as well as for my Saviour. It caused me with sincerity to love and keep Thy commandments; with assiduity to serve the interest of Thy Kingdom in the world.» Thus you have Paul and James reconciled. Thus you have good works provided for. The aphorism of the physician, is, *Per brachium fit judicium de corde.* The doings of men are truer and surer indications, than all their sayings, of what they are within.[41]

This concept of assurance and working faith provide a strong incentive for Mather and the Puritans to develop their work ethic.

The work of Mather helped inspire the likes of Benjamin Franklin, who serves as Weber's prime example of early American capitalism. In his Autobiography, Franklin says, «Essays to do Good ... gave me a Turn of Thinking that had an influence on the principal future Events of My Life.»[42] Franklin's first publication paid tribute to the influence of Mather by adopting the pseudonym Mrs. Dogood as a form of parody, and his life and ideas continued to display the same appreciation.[43] His life exhibited much of what Mather and his community taught him concerning hard work, austerity, frugality, and dedication to moral rigor as the best indication of true religion.[44] The connection between assurance and a working faith is readily seen in Mather's *Essay to do good* and provides a definitive means of connecting the dots between Franklin and Puritan ideas—a connection that scholars have failed to notice.

Weber believes that Puritanism struggled to find assurance and inculcated hard work for three basic reasons: 1) they possessed no sacramental means of

40 Ibid., 29–31.35.

41 Ibid., 29f.

42 L.P. Masur (ed. and intro.): The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin with Related Documents, Boston/New York 2003, 37. See ibid., 32; M.R. Breitwieser: Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin, Cambridge 1984, 12.

43 Mather: Bonafacius (fn. 32), viiif.

44 Masur: Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (fn. 42), passim.

assuaging their anxieties; 2) they placed a special burden on themselves to obtain certainty; and 3) they created a mystery out of the divine will through an emphasis upon the doctrine of predestination. For these reasons assurance became a tenuous process in Reformed theology, producing only a measure of solace after a lifetime of perseverance and struggle. The only means of alleviating the anxiety was the dubious and tenuous process of searching one's deeds and seeing if they were indicative of a true Christian life and its calling. Assurance was sought through a life distinguished by good deeds, the outward sign of God's invisible grace and election.[45]

A closer historical analysis seems to confirm some of Weber's theological insights. Take for example the relationship between assurance and the sacrament of penance. When one examines the origin of the Protestant teaching on this subject, the contrast between the Reformed concept and the original vision of Luther is most apparent. In his early writings Luther is seen developing his concept of justification and assurance out of the sacrament of penance. Luther exhorts his followers to cease all trust in the works of penance and contrition, and simply listen to the words of assurance that the priest pronounces to each and every one in the sacrament.[46] When the priest says, «I absolve you,» these words are spoken as a promise of forgiveness to each and every one from the very throne of God.[47] The priest's words are God's words, his actions God's forgiveness.[48] All that is necessary is found in the simple exhortation to trust in the words of the priest or have faith and faith alone (*sola fides*).[49] The words of the priest represent the will of God to all those who listen and believe. The penitent should not experience undue anxiety over their contrition, wondering whether this or any other condition of true penance was fulfilled on their part, because God has revealed his will concerning the forgiveness of sin to each and every individual once and for all. In this way

45 Weber: The Protestant Ethic (fn. 3), 110–114.117.230f.; MacKinnon: Longevity (fn. 10), 250f.; Brocker: Erklärungsansatz (fn. 4), 505f.; Fullerton: Calvinism and Capitalism (fn. 5), 13f.; C.L. Cohen: The Saint Zealous in Love and Labor. The Puritan Psychology of Work, HThR 76 (1983) 455–480 (458).

46 WA 1.30f., 323; 4.665; 6.158.166 (LW 39.28f.,40f.); 7.374ff.; 30/2.497 (LW 40.364f.); 40/2.449ff.; WA, TR 5, nr. 6017; Dr. Martin Luthers kleiner und grosser Katechismus, Berlin 1872. WA 7.119: «Do not put confidence in your confession as a means of absolution, but in the word of Christ, ‹whatever you will absolve, etc.› Put your confidence in this: If you've received absolution from the priest, believe you've been absolved and you will be truly absolved.» See St. Strehle: The Catholic Roots of the Protestant Gospel, Leiden 1995, 8ff.

47 WA 2.13f. (LW 31.271); 30/2.411.414; 38.243f. (LW 38.203-205); O. Bayer: Promissio, Göttingen 1961, 194.197.

48 WA 30/2.497f. (LW 40.365f.); Katechismus (fn. 46), 17.

49 WA 2.15 (LW 31.273f.); 7.374ff.; 30/2.412; 44.413f. (LW 7.154f.).

Luther found solace for a trembling conscience and proceeded to dismiss the doubts that plagued him as a monk, blaming his former troubles on Thomistic orthodoxy and its fixation upon the human component of contrition in the sacrament.[50] He found assurance by following and extending the Scotistic tradition, which sought to minimize any human condition and promote the importance of faith in the words of the priest, rather than trust in the works of penance.[51] Unfortunately, the later Calvinists lost this simple and direct means of finding assurance when they rejected the sacrament of penance and the authority of the priests. They no longer possessed a specific word from God to obtain certainty and needed to look elsewhere for a modicum of comfort. Even the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist no longer contained a simple communication of grace, and so they struggled in finding a means of grace and assurance elsewhere, just as Weber suggests.

The search for assurance led them away from contemplating a divine word to gazing once again upon the human component in salvation. Theodore Beza and Jerome Zanchi began the process by speaking of a «practical syllogism» through which Christians could deduce their salvation from its «marks» or «signs» within them.[52] Knowing that God had promised salvation to those who exhibited certain signs Beza, Zanchi, and the Calvinists thought it pos-

50 Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 20, a. 2; in: Quattuor libros Sententiarum IV, d.17, q.2, a.1, 2, 5; in: Opera Omnia, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1980, 1.532aff., 533b, 535b; Canones et Decreta Dogmatica Concilii Tridentini, session decimaquarta, cap. 4, 6 [P. Schaff: The Creeds of Christendom, Michigan 1977, 2.144.152f.164f.]; Strehle: Catholic Roots (fn. 46), 5–7.

51 J. Duns Scotus: Opera Omnia, Hildesheim 1968, 8.124f.; 9.42.82.92.300 (IV, d.1, q.6, n.10; a.14, q.2, n.13; q.4, n.3.4.7; d.17, q.1, n.13f. Gabriel Biel provides a good summation of the basic Scotist position. «One is able to know who does not place an obstacle through an intention to sin mortally and accepts the sacrament of absolution, that it confers grace *ex opera operato*, and yet does not bring any other intention except not placing an obstacle, which is the cessation from the act and purpose of sinning, as Scotus would have it in IV. He is able to know that he is not in the act of sinning and has not the purpose to sin, because the soul recognizes intuitively and evidently its own act, both in reception of the sacrament of penance and its possession of grace.» Collectorium circa quattor libros sententiorum, ed. by W. Werbeck, V. Hofmann, Tübingen 1977, II, d.27, Q (525f.). For the position of the Scotists at the council of Trent, see *Concilium Tridentium*, Societas Goerresiana, Friburgi Brisgovia 1901–1930, 5.393.404.410.484.632f.652f.; 10.586f.; 12.655f.; A. Stakemeier: Das Konzil von Trent über die Heilsgewissheit, Heidelberg 1947, 100.166f.190; Strehle: Catholic Roots (fn. 46), 22–25.

52 T. Bèze: Tractiones Theologicae, Genevae 1582, 1.10.15.16.687–690; Quaestionum et Responsionum Christianaram libellus, Londini 1571; G. Zanchi: Opera Theologica, Genevae 1613, 2.506; 7.230; 8.716f.; R.T. Kendall: Calvinism and English Calvinism to 1648, Oxford 1981, 32ff.

sible to deduce their own rightful place in the kingdom if they could discern signs like faith, repentance, and good works in their lives. The calculation seemed all so simple, as long as it was possible to verify their own personal compliance within the minor premise of the syllogism, which demanded evidence of their own faith.

The works of Beza and Zanchi were translated into English,[53] and the Puritans above all other Reformed groups became obsessed with finding their place in the divine kingdom by means of the syllogism. The Puritans produced numerous and voluminous treatises on the subject, considering the matter of assurance the most pressing issue of the day.[54] William Perkins, their foremost theologian, considered it a sacred «dutie» to ascertain the genuine nature of a professed faith and produced a number of treatises to help the quest: «A Graine of Mustard Seede,» «A Case of Conscience,» «A Discourse of Conscience,» and «A Treatise tending unto a Declaration, whether a man be in the Estate of Damnation or, in the Estate of Grace.» Perkins exhorted his followers to descend within themselves and examine their conscience, so they might «know what they know» about the sincerity of their faith.[55] He proceeded to develop list upon list to aid in the process,[56] but all the detailed analysis only proved in the end that no simple answer was available. Even Perkins conceded that it takes a «long space» of time to find solace and there are «[m]any a man of humble and contrite heart» who are yet to receive consolation in the spirit.[57] This same struggle seemed to characterize his own Puritan community, as it produced tomes and tomes of analysis on the subject searching for an answer. Colleagues of Perkins like William Ames and William Fenner produced similar statements for the community,[58] and the practi-

53 Perkins translates a section of Zanchi's: De Natura Dei (Opera Theologica, 2.504ff.) on assurance. Workes (Anm. 27), 1.429ff. Two important treatises containing Beza's concept of assurance were translated into English and available to the Puritans: Confessio de la foi (A briefe and pithie Summe of Christian faith—1589), and: Quaestionum et Responsionum Christianarum libellus (A booke of Christian Questions and Answers—1572).

54 Perkins: Workes (fn. 27), 1.421; Kendall: Calvin and English Calvinism (fn. 52), 6; C. Cohen: God's Caress, New York/Oxford 1986, 114. Kendall surveyed 112 treaties of 53 divines (almost every Westminister divine) and finds unequivocal testimony to the practical syllogism.

55 Perkins: Workes (fn. 27), 1.511.529.542.

56 Ibid., 1.80.115.373ff.406.541.

57 Ibid., 1.126–129.367.558. The Westminister Confession (c.18, 3) also acknowledges the difficulty in obtaining assurance. Reformed theologians on the Continent expressed more doubts about the process of obtaining assurance than their Lutheran counterpart. P. Mastricht: Theoretico-practica theologica, Amstelodam 1715, 2.813b (27); F. Turrettini: Institutio Theologica Elencticae, Genevae 1688, 1.4, q.14, 6; 1.15, q.17, 9, 36.

cal syllogism or «cases of the conscience» became an indelible mark of Puritan theology, exhibiting and reinforcing the Puritan's struggle to obtain peace of mind.

Weber's analysis of the situation is correct and helpful up to this point, but he clearly goes astray when he proceeds to blame the problems of Puritanism upon their obsession with the dark mysteries of predestination. His analysis is wrong on this point for several reasons.

One, he fails to note the importance of the practical syllogism in causing the Calvinists to wrestle with their conscience and produce a scrupulous obedience. The Calvinists exchanged the original Christocentric vision of Luther and Calvin, where Christ is the object of faith, for a reflexive act of analysis upon the subject of faith, causing them to wrestle within.[59] They exchanged the benedictions of God for a narcissistic and arduous struggle, hoping to find that «mustard seed» of faith in the midst of their own total depravity.

Two, Weber misunderstands the doctrine of predestination as set forth by John Calvin and Martin Bucer and adopted by the later Calvinists. This doctrine centered upon Christ as the «mirror of predestination» (as the one who reveals the will of the Father). The doctrine found its purpose in bringing solace to the one who receives Christ, informing the believer that they were elected by the Father to persevere in the faith.[60] The will of Christ and the will of the Father, the faith of the regenerate and the decree of the Father are all one and the same. Far from containing some dark mystery, the elective purposes of God were revealed for the first time in the church through this special doctrine of eternal security or predestination. Unlike the older Augustinian concept, which distinguished believers from the elect, Calvinists equated the two groups in such a way that believers could rest assure in their perseve-

58 W. Ames: Conscience with the Power and Cases thereof, London 1639; W. Fenner: The Souls Looking-glasse … with a Treatise of Conscience, Cambridge 1640; Cohen: The Saint Zealous (fn. 45), 466.

59 The Calvinists speak of faith and certitude as involving a «serious exploration into oneself,» a «reflexive act,» in which «faith in one self is felt,» or an inward knowledge of what one «feels and believes.» Mastricht: Theoretica-practica theologica (fn. 57), 2.23 (830a); Collegium Theologicum, 1.11.39 (291); Turrettini: Institutio (fn. 57), 1.4, q.13, 9; 25, q.17, 12; J. Heidegger: Corpus Theologiae Christianae, Tiguri 1700, 1.24.93.109 (418b, 424a).

60 M. Butzer: Metaphrases et enarrationes perpetuae epistarum D. Pauli Apostoli, …, Argentorati 1536, 359bff., 402–405; Opera Latina [Enarratio in Evangelion Iohannis 1528, 1530, 1536, Leiden 1988, 2.240.347; J. Calvin: Inst., 3.3.1–8; 24.3, 5; CO 1.74 [Inst. (1536)]. See Confessio Helvetica Posterior, c.10, 9; W. Niesel: The Theology of Calvin, trans. by H. Knight, Grand Rapids 1980, 171; J. Moltmann: Prädestination und Perseveranz, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1961, 47f.

rance, knowing for certain their ultimate status. The doctrine of election was not the source of anxiety among them. If anything their belief in eternal security—a most severe expression of predestination, where God's power is efficacious from the beginning to the end of salvation—produced at the same time the most direct means of knowing the ultimate will of the Father, and so reduced anxiety over the ultimate outcome of a present faith.[61]

Three, Weber is wrong in saying that the Puritans were obsessed with the specific subject of predestination, despite Calvin's severe teaching on the issue. There was a tendency in England and America to exalt the work of Calvin above all others in Reformed circles, but even Calvin did not make the doctrine the centerpiece of his theology. There was also the controversy with William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury, during the Puritan Revolution, but any problem with his Arminian theology was small in comparison to the struggles with his infamous career as the chief inquisitor and supporter of the hierarchical system. In New England John Winthrop successfully withstood an antinomian challenge to the synergistic tendencies of covenant theology and rejected the more consistent doctrine of predestination espoused by that group. Puritans were not so interested in theological consistency or erudite scholastic discussions as their counterparts on the Continent. Their great works, *Pilgram's Progress*, *Christian Dictionary*, and *Magnalia Christi Americana*—were centered upon the exhortation to lead a godly life and emulate their forefathers, who persevered in the faith. The Puritans were far too practical in orientation to become obsessed with metaphysical speculation, let alone with one specific matter of theological concern, which dominates all else. Puritans were occupied with the practical, everyday concerns of Christian living.

This error is most acute in Weber's assessment of Richard Baxter, the quintessential example of his thesis. He is correct in understanding the relationship between the doctrine of assurance and the impetus to work in Baxter's ideas, but he is wrong when it comes to assessing the basic theological matrix from which the emphasis on works arose, assigning too much influence to the mystery of predestination. A brief inspection of Baxter's theology finds him conflicted over the doctrine of predestination and engaged in a polemical battle with those who so emphasized the doctrine as to discount all conditions for the reception of Christ's work and the need to produce and examine good works. Far from creating anxiety over divine mysteries, Baxter rejects this emphasis and points the pilgrim toward a practical and circumspect life of true Christian piety. In his very first publication, *Aphorismes of Justification* (1649), he stresses the conditions of the New Covenant, which are revealed through the preceptive will of God, as more important to our overall sanctification and edification than probing into the mysteries of the sovereign will.

[61] Strehle: Catholic Roots (fn. 46), 35–37.125.

He accents the performance of conditions necessary for all to fulfill if they wish to receive the righteousness offered in Christ and rejects all those who reduce the human element by transforming it into a testimony of divine grace.[62] In fact, his doctrine of grace never receives final clarification in all his works, and it is best to understand him as an «Anti-Antinomian» than trying to establish a positive label for his ideas like Calvinist, Arminian, or anything else.[63] He thinks that Antinomianism is most dangerous because it destroys his central concern for Christian living by eliminating any real incentive to serve God and so encourages spiritual laziness, if not godlessness among the people. He actually displays more sympathy toward Catholics and their view of salvation in his works, because the basic concern to protect and support discipleship is more important to him than the fundamental tenets of the Protestant gospel![64]

Weber makes his most serious error at this point because he fails to recognize the importance of covenant theology to Baxter and the Reformed community. It was not the doctrine of predestination that drove the Calvinists to work hard in the world. If anything it was an opposite, synergistic tendency

62 R. Baxter: Aphorismes of Justification, Hague 1655, 4.8.59f.70.82–84.147f.; The Right Method for a Settled Peace of Conscience and Spiritual Comfort, in: The Practical Works, London 1830, 9.57f. 151; The Saints' Everlasting Rest, J.T. Wilkinson (ed.), London 1962, 30.35.37.54.86; H. Boersma: A Hot Pepper Corn. Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy, Zoetermeer 1993, 196f.; R. Baxter: Universal Redemption of Mankind, London 1694, 31f. Baxter's understanding of Christ's death has a couple of eccentricities worth noting. One, he thinks of the death of Christ as satisfying only the violations committed under the covenant of works, but it does not atone for the non-performance of the New Covenant's conditions. Two, Christ did not satisfy the exact penalty threatened by the law. Baxter conceives of Christ's work in the manner of Anselm as an equivalent payment (*tantundem*) for our debt. Three, he mentions Grotius' *Defensio Fidei Satisfactione Christi* and follows his voluntaristic concept of God, who can «relax» the punishment exacted by the law. Baxter: Aphorismes of Justification, 25–28.103–105.

63 T. Cooper: Fear and Polemic in the Seventeenth-Century. Richard Baxter and Antinomianism, Aldershot 2001, 195; N.H. Keeble: Richard Baxter. Puritan Man of Letters, Oxford 1982, 69ff. He repeats the rumor from New England that Anne Hutchinson, the infamous Antinomian, gave birth to monsters. J. Hall: The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–38. A documentary history, Durham 1990, 280ff.; Cooper: Fear and Polemic, 203.

64 Baxter: Aphorismes of Justification (fn. 62), 208; The Saints' Everlasting Rest (fn. 62), 2; Cooper: Fear and Polemic (fn. 63), 2.66f.71. Cotton Mather in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* writes the same kind of hagiography about the leaders and divines of his community that Catholics write about their saints. Mather's work represents much the opposite of Luther's famous exhortation to «sin boldly.»

that drove them in this direction. This synergism was latent within their emphasis upon the practical syllogism, but it came to the forefront through the influence of Heinrich Bullinger's doctrine of a bilateral covenant.[65] Bullinger wrote the first systematic treatise upon the covenant, *De Testamento seu Foedere*

[65] I did not develop this thesis from another scholar, but I have noted in the course of my study certain scholars who think that the work ethic might be a product of the covenant or preparationist theology, even if their work is sketchy on this issue and the possible connection—e.g., Sacran Bercovitch and Janice Knight. See J. Knight: Orthodoxies in Massacutsetts. Rereading American Puritanism, Cambridge/London 1994, 104.106.
Malcolm MacKinnon is one sociologist of note who recognizes Weber's mistake, even if his knowledge of covenant theology and its history is limited. He recognizes that the Puritans were not so enamored with the doctrine of predestination as to exclude all else. Richard Baxter, Weber's favorite example, did not follow the doctrine so strictly—a fact that Weber himself implies in the footnotes but not the text. The lives of Baxter and the Puritans found more practical inspiration in the covenant than whiling away the hours upon idle speculation over the mysteries of predestination. Mackinnon is right on this point, and he is also right to stress the human component of the covenant as conflicting with Calvin's emphasis upon grace and election. This problem was noticed by the Antinomians and recognized by the Puritans, who attempted to resolve the tension. Even if MacKinnon possesses little understanding of its origin, he is astute enough to discern the tension the doctrine of covenant brought to Reformed theology and its emphasis upon grace.
However, he overstates an otherwise valid point by accusing the Calvinists of rejecting predestination or abandoning *sola fides* for a salvation based on works. His contention might hold true for Baxter and a few others, but generally speaking the Calvinists did not make a wholesale substitution of one for the other. It is better to understand them as living with a tension between the covenant and *sola gratia*—a tension that was difficult to resolve. Sometimes the Calvinists would emphasize divine grace as the efficacious means of producing the federal conditions, other times they would invoke a Franciscan concept of God, who accepts our works above their true value (Strehle: Catholic Roots [fn. 46], 60f.). But neither solution returned them to the original vision of Luther and Calvin (i.e., a salvation that depended completely upon God and found no basis in us). They never abandoned hope in finding a solution or settled on one side or the other.
MacKinnon is also wrong when he proceeds to discard the entire thesis of Weber based on a few historical and theological problems. Weber is clearly on to something. He is pointing us in the right direction. He might not understand the doctrine of covenant, but he is right to search for a connection between Puritan ethics, theology, and the economic climate of the day. Cf. M.H. MacKinnon: Part I: Calvinism and the infallible assurance of grace. The Weber thesis reconsidered, The British Journal of Sociology 39 (1888) 143–177 (144.156–159.164.171); Part II: Weber's exploration of Capitalism, The British Journal of Sociology 39 (1988) 178–210 (178.184–186.191f.); Longevity (fn. 10), 250; Brocker: Erklärungsansatz (fn. 4), 509f.

Deo unico et aeterno (1534), which diseminated the doctrine among the Reformed community.[66] In it Bullinger displays one of the tendencies of his theology, which is not so devoted to divine grace as Zwingli and tends to gravitate toward the synergism of Erasmus and the humanists.[67] This tendency causes him to recast the covenant into a relationship of mutual responsibility between God and the people, contingent upon the faithfulness of both parties to fulfill their respective roles. In this respect the covenant is not a simple act of divine grace, working its efficacious power upon an unwitting subject, but involves certain «conditions» from the human side to reach its fulfillment.[68] In adopting this teaching, the Calvinists brought in a clear synergistic tendency, which rivaled their basic belief in grace and election. The covenant minimized unconditional election and irresistible grace. It emphasized the fulfillment of certain conditions to receive God's blessings, just as Bullinger taught in his *De Testamento*, causing tension with their basic belief in grace.[69] Antino-

66 Friedrich Lampe begins his brief discussion of the covenant in history with Bullinger and his *De Testamento. Geheimnis des Gnade-Bunds*, Bremen 1715, 1.18–20. The influence of Bullinger is seen throughout its history in a number of areas, but the bilateral nature of the covenant provides the most telltale sign. With a few notable exceptions (e.g., Gaspar Olevian), the Reformed follow Bullinger and speak of the covenant as a *mutua pactio mutuis obligationibus*. Strehle: Catholic Roots (fn. 46), 59f. Besides the bilateral nature one can see his influence on the subsequent Reformed tradition in its emphasis upon the unity of the biblical message, the beginnings of the covenant in the Garden, the importance of the Abrahamic covenant, the relationship between baptism and circumcision, and the affinity between the OT State and NT Church. St. Strehle: Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism, Bern 1988, 134ff. According to Baker, an appendix of Bullinger's NT commentary contains *De Testamento* up until the fifth edition in 1558, making the work and its ideas widely available. W.J. Baker: Faces of Federalism. From Bullinger to Jefferson, Publius 30 (2000) 25–41 (28 [fn. 5].32 [fn. 24]).

67 Strehle: Catholic Roots (fn. 46), 53–58; CR 8.23ff.; 14.208–210.483–489.

68 H. Bullinger: De Testamento, Tiguri 1534, 5^{v}, 11^{v}, 16^{r}, 44^{r}; Sermonum decades quinque, Tiguri 1567, 121^{v}; J.W. Baker: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant. The Other Reformed Tradition, Athens OH 1980, 13.16.18.87.226. Leonard J. Trinterud suggested the bilateral nature of Bullinger's covenant in a 1951 article and found scholarly support for his belief in the work of Jens Møller, Kenneth Hagen, J. Wayne Baker, and myself. Baker served as the main apostle of the thesis, and I demonstrated the wide-dissemination of Bullinger's concept among the scholastic Calvinists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. L.J. Trinterud: The Origin of Puritanism, ChH 20 (1951) 37–57; K. Hagen: From Testament to Covenant, Sixteenth Century Journal 3 (1972); J.G. Møller: The Beginnings of the Puritan Covenant, Journal of Ecclesiastical History 14 (1963); Strehle: Calvinism (fn. 66); D. Elazar: Covenant and Commonwealth. From Christian Separation through the Protestant Reformation, New Brunswick NJ 1996, 178f.

69 For synergistic tendencies in Bullinger's thought, see Strehle: The Catholic Roots

mians arose in England, where the covenant began to dominate the doctrine of grace in some quarters, and accused other Puritans of forsaking all trust in Christ and returning to the Catholic doctrine of justification through works. Of course, the majority of Puritans denied the accusation and reiterated their faith in *sola gratia*, but there was an irreconcilable tension in their theology that no amount of scholastic distinctions could resolve. Their doctrine of justification and assurance possessed clear synergistic tendencies via the covenant and left them working as hard as any Catholic to reach the heavenly rest, even if it directed them toward participation in the world.

The goal of their work ethic was directed toward the future betterment of the community. The Reformation brought the hope among many of its followers that the church and the world could change for the better, that the destruction of the Antichrist was imminent, that a godly kingdom would dawn in the near future and take the place of the forces of evil here on earth.[70] Puritans were among the people most intrigued by the prospects. They were not content with remaining in isolation and restoring a NT church or Anabaptist-type fellowship, where they could enjoy personal piety separate from the world at large. They wanted to erect a kingdom of God on earth. They wanted to ameliorate all social ills. They looked for the redemption of all things and developed millenarian expectations, which dreamed of a «Great Instauration» or renewal of the entire world.[71] They thought of God as working with them, bringing about a new day, and advancing the cause of the divine kingdom through the «progress of providence.»[72] Their view of the future was bright

(fn. 46), 53–58.

70 E.L. Tuveson: Redeemer Nation. The Idea of America's Millennial Role, Chicago 1968, x.19.

71 C. Webster: The Great Instauration. Science, Medicine and Reform, New York 1976, 2.29f.; R.A. Nisbet: History of the Idea of Progress, New York 1980, 129; Tuveson: Redeemer Nation (fn. 70), 97f.

72 T. Burnet: Treatise Concerning the State of Departed Souls, London 1730, 367; N. Culpeper: Catastrophe Magnatum, London 1652, 72; J. Spittlehouse: First Addresses, 1653, 5. Joseph Mede, the famous NT scholar from Cambridge, helped revive millenarian expectations with the publication of *Clavis Apocalyptica* in 1627 (Eng. *The Key of the Revelation*—1643). He interprets history in an evolutionary manner and speaks of the progressive binding of Satan and the advance of the Protestant cause. This type of millenarian expectation reached a fervent pitch during the turbulent days of the Puritan Revolution. In September of 1645 Robert Baillie wrote home to his native Scotland and described the majority of the «divines» in the city of London as «Chiliasts,» and Hugo Grotius reported a few years later that some eighty tracts and treatises existed in England on the subject.
These same expectations were brought to America and proceeded to permeate the soul of the country with the belief that its people were the New Israel, chosen among the nations to lead the march of history into the millennium. Like many of

and filled with the hope and expectation that God would fulfill what was promised of old and bring about the redemption of all things.

The focus of life was directed toward «the service of God and the publick good.»[73] Baxter constantly reminds his readers that what they possess is only for «use»[74]—a use that is directed toward building what is lasting in the community—a point that Weber fails to appreciate. The goal of a Puritan does not reside in the accumulation of riches as if the mark of salvation is found in the mere act of earning money for its own sake. The purpose of life is found in the desire to invest whatever is given by God—the time, the talent, and the capital—for the betterment of all. The callings, which Baxter stresses as much as any Puritan, are driven by a single-minded concern for doing the most good for the community, rather than serving oneself in hoarding riches or becoming consumed by worldly possessions.[75] Of course, Baxter does not begrudge a businessman for «driving a [hard] bargain,» as long as it is lawful and represents an «honest increase and provision.»[76] He also allows for the charging of usury in trade, as long as it is grounded in the laws of justice and does not oppress the borrower or the poor, who deserve our charity.[77] But the goal of all these and other arrangements remains rooted in the obligation to serve others and build up the community in which one labors for the sake of future

its divines, Jonathan Edwards understood the light of the gospel and the advancement of the arts and sciences as following the motion of the Sun in its course from east to west. The truth of the gospel started in the east, proceeded to Continental Europe and England, and then crossed the Atlantic Ocean to America. It will continue its procession west until it completes its course, but for now its manifest destiny is found in conquering the New World. All along the way he observes progress in theology and general learning, and rejects in the strongest terms the notion that the world is decaying. J. Mede: The Key of the Revelation, R. More (trans.), London 1650; E.L. Tuveson: Millennium and Utopia. A study in the background of the idea of progress, New York 1964, ix.76–78; R. Baillie: Letters and Journals, D. Lang (ed.), Edinburg 1841f., 2.156; H. Grotius: Epistolae quotquot reperiri potuerunt, Amstelodami 1687, 895; P. Miller: The New England Mind. The Seventeeth Century, Cambridge 1963, 475ff.; J. Edwards: Polypoikilos Sophia. A Compleat History Or Survey Of All the Dispenations and Methods of Religion, London 1699, 610.612.642.689–91. Christopher Hill finds this westward movement in many divines of the seventeenth century. The English Bible (fn. 23), 139f.

73 Baxter: Christian Directory (fn. 23), 1.448–50.

74 Ibid., 1.131; 4.147.

75 Ibid., 1.132f.447–49; W. Hudson: Puritanism and the Spirit of Capitalism, in: Green: Protestantism and Capitalism (fn. 1), 59f.

76 Ibid., 120f.146f. In a later work, the businessman is allowed to strike a hard bargain. R. Allestree: The New Whole Duty of Man, [London] 1744, 266f. (Sermon XI).

77 Ibid., 1.125ff.; Tawney: Religion (fn. 3), 221–23.

generations. Puritanism ever remains rooted in its utilitarian, altruistic, and teleological values. Weber's analysis of Baxter's ethical exhortations is helpful, but it fails to appreciate the fundamental orientation of the work ethic. The vision of Baxter and his people is fixated on the future and building the community in light of the dawning of God's kingdom, not making a profit for its own sake without rhyme or reason.

Weber's thesis appears to languish at this point when he contends that Puritans made the pursuit of wealth a divine calling. Maybe after the loss of spiritual moorings the earning of money became an end in itself, but the Puritan divines never sanctioned this process of secularization. Weber must hold his contention against the tide of clear and numerous exhortations to the contrary. He can only find one exhortation in Baxter and elevate it against the vast multitude of exhortations on the other side.

> If God shew you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way, (without wrong to your soul, or to any other), if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your Calling, and you refuse to be Gods Steward, and to accept his gifts, and use them for him when he requireth it: You may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin.[78]

Weber is wrong when he limits their design to the simple motive of making a profit for its own sake[79]—at least during the early stages of Puritanism and capitalism before secularism sets in.[80] The Puritans were driven by other motives, including a social and utilitarian impulse to invest in the community and build a better tomorrow.[81] They had a futuristic vision that encompassed their society and the world as a whole.[82] They did not pick a profession for the sole sake of accumulating wealth, but were admonished by their religion to find a calling in serving others through business and becoming useful to the community.[83] If they earned money, it was not squandered on a useless life of wine, women, and song. It was invested as a faithful steward of God's talents

78 Ibid., 1.450 (chap. X, part 1, par. 24).

79 Hudson: Puritanism (fn. 3), 8–10; Mitchell: Calvin's and the Puritan's View (fn. 12), 52f.; Walzer: Revolution (fn. 8), 109. Cf. Weber: The Protestant Ethic (fn. 3), 2; Anticritical Last Word, W.M. Davis (intro. and trans.), American Journal of Sociology 83 (1978) 1124; Brocker: Erklärungsansatz (fn. 4), 500.

80 Fullerton, Calvinism and Capitalism (fn. 5), 20; Hudson: Puritanism (fn. 3), 5; Tawney: Religion (fn. 3), 248f.; W.S. Hudson: The Weber Thesis Reexamined, ChH 57, supplement (1988) 63.67.

81 Hill: Society and Puritanism (fn. 20), 129f.

82 G. Poggi: Calvinism and the Capitalistic Spirit. Max Weber's Protestant Ethic, Amherst 1983, 41; C. H. George, K. George: English Protestantism and the Capitalist Spirit, in: Kitch: Capitalism and the Reformation (fn. 1), 12f.; G.A. Abraham: Misunderstanding the Merton Thesis, ISIS 74 (1983) 370.

83 Steele: The Trades-man's Calling (fn. 9), 33.38–40.

for the sake of improving society, just like any good capitalist would do. Adam Smith employs the same basic argument in his *Wealth of Nations* when he commends investment and condemns those who use their wealth on non-productive activities and extravagant living. Money or capital is productive only if it is invested in the community.

> The Proportion between capital and revenue, therefore, seems everywhere to regulate the proportion between industry and idleness. Wherever capital predominates, industry prevails: wherever revenue, idleness. Every increase or diminution of capital, therefore, naturally tends to increase or diminish the real quantity of industry, the number of productive hands, and consequently the exchangeable value of the annual produce of the land and labour of the country, the real wealth and revenue of all its inhabitants.[84]

This part of Weber's thesis might find a better counterpart in the Jansenists and their early emphasis upon the societal benefits of self-interest (*l'amour-propre*) and (*cupidité*) avarice. Jansenists like Pierre Nicole and Jean Domat helped inspire an early form of capitalism in the seventeenth century through their belief that baser motives often replace heart-felt charity in society and produce the same results. Self-interest makes us act in a moral and civil manner, causing us to seek society's approval through overt displays of conformance. The poor receive the same sustenance from the benefactor regardless of the inward motivation, as long as society lauds the behavior. Self-interest also works to fuel commerce since the intention to meet our personal needs has the unintended consequence of helping others through the exchange of goods and services, benefiting everyone who participates in the process. Each party receives its end of the bargain. Stores receive their remuneration by stocking what the consumer wants at a price the consumer is willing to pay. Even if it seems that avarice destroys the social fabric, this prima facie judgment is simplistic and false. Avarice actually benefits all of us through the miraculous work of divine providence, which brings the good out of the bad, above and beyond our intentions.[85]

It was this insight that led Nicole, Domat, and the early capitalists to favor a laissez-faire policy, rejecting the need for society to control the economy through moral restraint. Adam Smith saw people acting in society from a motivation of self-interest or self-love in much the same way as the Jansenists.[86]

[84] A. Smith: An Inquiry into the Nature and the Cause of the Wealth of Nations, New York 1937, 320f.

[85] P. Nicole: Essais de Morale, L. Thirouin (ed.), Paris 1999, 213.381.384.390f.395. 401–404.408f.; Oeuvres Complètes de J. Domat, Paris 1835, 1.25f.; 4.96; Viner: Religious Thought (fn. 11), 135–139.

[86] Smith: Wealth of Nations (fn. 84), 14; The Theory of Moral Sentiment, E.G. West (intro.), Indianapolis 1976, 234.

He said that people seek the approval of others as a fundamental motivation in formulating their rules of conduct.[87] They seek wealth, not because it brings a happier life or provides much more of «all the necessities and conveniences of the body,» but because it gains the admiration of others.[88] Like the Jansenists, the selfish intentions of the rich end up promoting the good of the poor through the «invisible hand» of God.

> [The rich] consume little more than the poor; and in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity, though they mean only their conveniency, though the sole end that they propose from the labors of all the thousands whom they employ be the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires, they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand to make the same distribution of the necessities of life which would have been made had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants; and thus, without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species.[89]

Modern capitalists like Ayn Rand go beyond their predecessors and extol self-interest as a moral good all by itself, apart from the role of other virtues and the effectual hand of God. Smith felt that self-love needed to find a balance with proper altruistic propensities in order to become virtuous, even if God uses all things to the glory of the divine kingdom and betterment of humankind.[90] Rand rejects altruism altogether and finds «man's highest moral purpose [solely in achieving] his own happiness.»[91] No one needs to sacrifice for others. A just exchange works for the mutual advantage of all and requires no sacrifice on anyone's part.[92] True love involves the self-gratification and delight of an individual in the presence of another, not an abstract duty to grant favors in spite of one's feelings or respect for another. Love is not a sacrifice or conditional gift, bestowed upon an object apart from its worth to oneself. Love centers its exclusive focus upon the self—what the self receives from another and what the other *means* to that self.[93]

87 Smith: Moral Sentiment (fn. 86), 243.264f.348f.

88 Ibid., 112f.301–305.

89 Ibid., 304. See Ibid., 21.195; Smith: Wealth of Nations (fn. 84), 423.

90 Ibid., 71f.175f.183. Smith points out that sympathy «cannot, in any sense, be regarded as a selfish principle.» Ibid., 501f.

91 A. Rand: The Virtue of Selfishness, New York 1964, 30; Atlas Shrugged, New York 2005, 378. See Ibid., ixf.; A. Rand: Capitalism. The Unknown Ideal, New York 1967, 29f.

92 Ibid., 38; Rand: Atlas Shrugged (fn. 91), 37.129.147.480.565.731f.740. Of course, making a profit for oneself, not the public, is what drives the capitalist. Atlas Shrugged, 234.

93 Rand: The Virtue of Selfishness (fn. 91), 51.53; Atlas Shrugged (fn. 91), 370f.425.531.883.1011f.

Rand and other secularists try to put a moral face on their theory of capitalism, but one wonders whether an atheistic interpretation of the theory precludes any possibility of speaking in moral terms.[94] Life no longer possesses any design, purpose, or metaphysical standard to provide commentary on its activity. In fact, life works best when it is left alone. It works quite well apart from any miraculous intervention or direction from a Creator, using its own will to power as the efficacious means of producing results, regardless of inward intent or foresight. This view finds its counterpart in Darwin's mechanism of evolutionary theory, which looked to the economic theory of Smith for important influence and precedent.[95] Like capitalism, it looked to the happenstance of individual struggle as a sufficient means to explain the way life works and prospers. It is no surprise that a concept like Social Darwinism would arise out of the two theories, combining them together and showing their mutual dependence, both before and after Darwin.[96] Neither theory seems to require any miraculous intervention to explain how life and society evolves into form, even if a remnant of theism still remained in the early exponents of both doctrines.[97] There is no longer any need for morality to intervene and correct the way life evolves, meddling into the affairs of what works best on its own terms. There is no longer any need for God to interfere with what operates through the self-contained proclivities of chaos. Life no longer needs the helpful hand of God or Puritan altruism to sustain itself in this world.

Abstract

Max Weber, der berühmteste Soziologe des letzten Jahrhunderts, glaubte, dass die Reformation die geistige Matrix lieferte, aus der heraus der bourgeoise Kapitalismus in der modernen Welt entstand. Er fand das fundamentale Beispiel dieses Geistes in den puritanischen Gemeinschaften von Grossbritannien und Amerika verkörpert. Er machte darauf aufmerksam, dass diese Puritaner eine geistige Grundlage der neuen ökonomischen Ordnung durch ihre Ausübung der «innerweltlichen Askese» oder des Kampfes um Sicherheit vor Gott durch harte Arbeit, Strenge und Kommunalverantwortlichkeit

94 Cf. Ibid., x.36.109.112.115.

95 S.J. Gould, The Panda's Thumb, New York 1982, 66–68; Ever Since Darwin, New York 1977, 100.

96 P.J. Bowler: Darwinism, New York 1993, 57ff. Thomas Malthus (1766–1834), Herbert Spenser (1820–1903), and Francis Galton (1822–1911) are the patriarchs of Social Darwinism.

97 Gould: Ever Since Darwin (fn. 95), 103; R. Dawkins: The God Delusion, Boston/New York 2006, 68f. Darwin thought that his Origin of the Species could be reconciled with a purposeful Creator, but appeared to grow more agnostic toward the end of his life. Bowler: Darwinism (fn. 96), 41f.

legten. Diese These erweckte viel Interesse, als sie zum ersten Mal in zwei Artikeln unter dem Titel «Die protestantische Ethik und der ‹Geist› des Kapitalismus» (1904–1905) veröffentlicht wurde, und zeigte sich vielen Wissenschaftlern als fruchtbar zum Verständnis des Ursprungs des Kapitalismus, obwohl sie eindeutig einige Probleme in der theologischen Gesamtanalyse aufwies. Weber zeigte grosses Verständnis, indem er den Kampf um Sicherheit mit der protestantischen Arbeitsethik verband, übertrieb aber das Interesse der Puritaner an den dunklen Geheimnissen der Prädestination und schätzte den Wert, den sie auf die Föderaltheologie, den praktischen Syllogismus und die Lehre von den letzen Dingen legten, als zu niedrig ein. Auch unterschätzte er die Lehren anderer geistlicher Gemeinschaften wie die der Jansenisten, die glaubten, das Eigeninteresse (*l'amour-propre*) diente dem Nutzen der Gesellschaft, und die eine Laissez-Faire Wirtschaftspolitik nach Art und Weise des heutigen Kapitalisten förderten, dabei den Weg zu einem weltlicheren Verständnis des Wirtschaftssystems anbahnend.

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