

The Philosophy behind 'One Christ, Multiple Churches'

Dr. Tahira Basharat *

Religion is the identity of every person as it not only indicates his views but also his belief and moral system. Thus, religions are the strongest force of the society for they make each person special in the entire setup of the society. The world due to its immense size has various religions and belief systems. However, the three main dominating religions are Islam, Christianity and Judaism, all having their own apostles, sacred texts, sanctified worship places and moral values.

Christianity, today, in the 21st Century is the largest followed religion and is believed to be prevalent in half of the world. Moreover, it is believed to have the world's largest cultural, political and religious development.

Huston Smith, in *The World's Religions* writes, "Who then was Jesus whom New Testament scholars are beginning to return to view? He was born in Palestine during the reign of Herod the Great, probably around 4 B.C.- our reckoning of the centuries that purports to date from his birth is almost certainly off by several years. He grew up in or near Nazareth, presumably after the fashion of other normal Jews of the time. He was baptized by John, a dedicated prophet who was electrifying the region with his proclamation of God's coming judgment. In his early thirties, he had a teaching healing career, which lasted between one and three years and was focused largely in Galilee. In time he incurred the hostility of some of his own compatriots and the suspicion of Rome, which led to his crucifixion on the outskirts of Jerusalem"⁽¹⁾. The Spirit of Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim good news to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"⁽²⁾.

Scholars believe that Jesus began his preaching around the age of thirty and it included recruiting his disciples who conceived him as wonderworker, Healer of Man and Son of God.

The Christian movement initially known as "The Way" was like a spiritual explosion. Ignited by the resurrection and fueled by the Holy Spirit, the church grew in all directions, geographically as well as socially. It was a unified church with spiritual vision, a conviction that all Christians should be one body, thought of as the Holy Catholic Church. The early Church fathers were Catholic not Protestant. Jesus sent his disciples into the entire world, and Paul had opened the churches to the Gentiles⁽³⁾.

* Associate Professor, Deptt. of Islamic Studies University of the Punjab, Lahore



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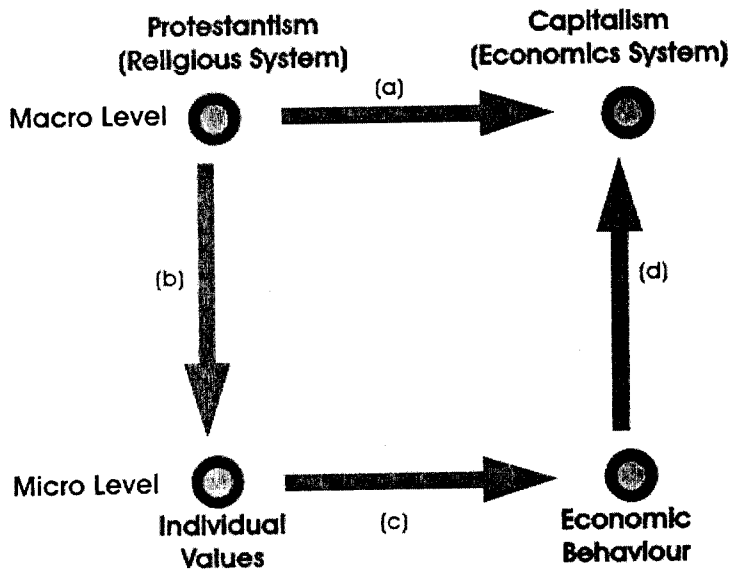


Figure 1 Weber's Protestant Ethic & The Spirit of Capitalism Thesis

<i>An Elective Affinity Between</i>	
The Protestant Ethic	The Spirit of Capitalism
Working hard as a sign of grace	Relentless profit & hard work
The 'Calling' and Earthly Duties	Rationality
Salvation & predestination via 'good works'	Time is money—invest for profit
Self-monitoring & self-control	Hard work profit motive
Sins of waste & idleness	Importance of hard work & saving

Figure 2 The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

object means to do justice to the object's qualitative moments. Scientific objectification, in line with the quantifying tendency of all science since Descartes, tends to eliminate qualities and to transform them into measurable definitions. Increasingly, rationality itself is equated *more mathematico* with the faculty of quantification. While perfectly corresponding to the primacy of a triumphant natural science, this faculty is by no means inherent in the concept of the *ratio* itself, which is blinded, mainly when it balks at the idea that qualitative moments on their part are susceptible of rational conception⁽¹⁶⁾.

According to René Guénon:

“Modern civilization can justly be described as a quantitative civilization, which is only another way of saying that it is a material civilization”⁽¹⁷⁾.

Another place he says that:

“Western domination is itself no more than an expression of the ‘reign of quantity’.”⁽¹⁸⁾.

René further exemplifies the difference between quantity and quality saying that the foundation of a building must not be confused with its superstructure: while there is only a foundation there is still no building, although the foundation is indispensable to the building; in the same way, while there is only quantity there is still no sensible manifestation, although sensible manifestation has its very root in quantity. Quantity, considered by itself, is only a necessary “presupposition,” but it explains nothing; it is indeed a base, but nothing else, and it must not be forgotten that the base is by definition that which is situated at the lowest level; so the reduction of quality to quantity is intrinsically nothing but a “reduction of the higher to the lower,” and some people have very rightly attributed this very character to materialism: to claim to derive the “greater” from the “less” is indeed one of the most typical of modern aberrations⁽¹⁹⁾.

To return to the consideration of the more specifically “scientific” point of view as the modern world understand it: the chief characteristic of this point of view is that it seeks to bring everything down to quantity, anything that cannot be so treated is not taken into account, and is regarded as more or less non-existent. Nowadays people commonly think and say that anything that cannot be “put into figures,” or in other words, cannot be expressed in purely quantitative terms, for that reason lacks any “scientific” value; and this assumption holds sway not only in “physics” in the ordinary sense of the word, but in all the sciences “officially” recognized as such in these days, and, even the psychological domain is not beyond its reach.

So the conclusion is that, it is the most complete triumph of quantity over quality that can be imagined.

By individualism we mean the denial of any principle superior to the individuality and, as a consequence, the reduction of civilization in all its departments to purely human elements; fundamentally therefore it comes to much the same thing as what was known as "humanism" at the time of the Renaissance and it is also the characteristic feature of the "profane point of view."

Now we point out some further general consequences of individualism: individualism implies, in the first place, the denial of intellectual intuition, and to set reason above everything else, treating this purely human and relative faculty as the highest part of the intelligence, or even regarding it as coinciding with the whole of intelligence; Descartes was the real originator.

At that time the tradition of the West partook, externally, of a specifically religious form, represented by Catholicism; it is therefore in the sphere of religion that we shall have to enquire into the revolt against the traditional outlook, a revolt which, once it had assumed a definite form, came to be called Protestantism; and it is easy to see that this was indeed a manifestation of individualism. According to René Guénon:

"The acceptance of individualism necessarily implies a refusal to admit any authority higher than the individual, as well as any faculty of knowledge superior to individual reason. As a consequence the modern outlook was bound to reject all spiritual authority in the true sense of the word" (15).

Quantification:

The moderns cannot conceive of any other science except that which deals with things that can be measured, counted or weighed, material things that is to say, since it is these alone that the quantitative point of view is applicable; and the claim to reduce quality to quantity is most characteristic of modern age. In this direction the stage has been reached even of supposing that there can be no science at all, in the real sense of the word, except where it is possible to introduce measurement, and that there can be no scientific laws except those which express quantitative relations; Descartes' "mechanism" marked the birth of this tendency, which has grown more and more pronounced ever since, the rejection of Cartesian physics notwithstanding, for it is not a tendency connected with any particular theory but with an altogether general conception of scientific knowledge. Nowadays people try to apply measurement even in the field of religion and psychology, which lies beyond its reach from its very nature; they end by ceasing to understand that the possibility of measurement rests solely upon a property inherent in matter, namely its indefinite divisibility, unless indeed it be supposed that the same property is to be found in everything that exists, which amounts to materializing everything.

Theodor W. Adorno says about the Quantification that to yield to the

“Rationalism properly so-called goes back to the time of Descartes, and it is worthy of note that it can thus be seen to be directly associated right from its beginnings with the idea of a ‘mechanistic’ physics; Protestantism had prepared the way for this, by introducing into religion, together with ‘free enquiry,’ a sort of rationalism, although the word itself was not then in existence, but was only invented when the same tendency asserted itself more explicitly in the domain of philosophy. Rationalism in all its forms is essentially defined by a belief in the supremacy of reason, proclaimed as a real ‘dogma’, and implying the denial of everything that is of a supra-individual order, notably of pure intellectual intuition, and this carries with it logically the exclusion of all true metaphysical knowledge. This same denial has also as a consequence, in another field, the rejection of all spiritual authority, which is necessarily derived from a ‘super-human’ source” (14).

Individualism:

A movement of thought or that social policy which makes the desires, rights, initiative and well-being of individuals primary in religious, political, economic and social life. It holds that the measure of all institutions and social organization is their effects upon the interests, welfare and destiny of individuals. As a modern development it had its beginnings in the Renaissance and Reformation. It became a prominent, widespread attitude with appropriate doctrines in the 18th and 19th centuries. It owes much to the Christian teaching of the supreme worth of the individual and to the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. As a political philosophy it holds that the state exists for the individual, should trust individual initiative as the mainspring of conduct and should interfere as little as possible with its exercise. In political economy it stresses free enterprise, individual initiative, the *laissez faire* system of competition and is opposed to socialism. In ethics it is the doctrine that all values, rights and duties originate in individuals, that the interests of the individual should determine the supreme rule of conduct, and that the good of the community consists of the sum of the goods of the individuals who compose it.

The Renaissance and the Reformation, which are usually regarded as the first great manifestations of the modern spirit, completed rather than provoked the rupture with religion. We must dwell further upon this rupture with religion, since it led directly to the birth of the modern world, of which all the specific characteristics could be summed up under a single heading, namely opposition to the religion or religious outlook; and negation of religion religious tradition likewise is individualism in its own way.

revelation—is interpreted with adequate and the human ability to reason.

Rationalism:

It is derived from Latin word *ratio* which means reason, the doctrine of the supremacy of reason.

In philosophy, it means:

1. The deductive (Cartesian, mathematical) method of drawing logical inferences from elementary concepts (intuitions, axioms, innate or apriori truths), as opposed to the empirical method; or

2. The doctrine (opposed to sensationalism) that reason is a higher source of knowledge, independent of sense (when Locke said that “there is nothing in the intellect that was not first in sense,” Leibniz added “except the intellect itself); or

3. The appeal to coherent thought (as opposed to irrationalism) as criterion of truth. Rationalism in all three senses has often been friendly to a spiritual and religious view of life; for example, Descartes, Leibniz, Hegel.

In theology, it means the theory that reason is the judge of all supposed revelations. It subordinates “dogmatic theology to the dictates of reason and conscience.”

Rationalism assumes two forms, the first primarily anti-authoritarian, and often called liberalism or modernism; the second, primarily anti-supernaturalistic, and tending toward humanism, free-thinking, and agnosticism. Failure to specify the exact meaning intended has led to many misunderstandings (¹²).

There are two organs of knowledge, reason or thought and sense or experience. Consequently, there have been three theories of knowledge or principles of method on which philosophers have proceeded, rationalism, empiricism, and rational-empiricism; or in Kant’s language, dogmatism, scepticism and criticism.

Rationalism holds that reason is capable of discovering the nature of the world—all fully; and that reason alone is capable of doing that; it alone is the medium of knowledge.

René Guénon writes that it has just been said that the modern claim to exclude all “mystery” from the world as they see it, in the name of a science and a philosophy characterized as “rational,” and it might be said in addition that the more narrowly limited a conception becomes the more it is looked upon as strictly “rational”; moreover it is well enough known that, since the time of the encyclopædists of the 18th century, the most fanatical deniers of all super-sensible reality have been particularly fond of invoking “reason” on all occasions, and of proclaiming themselves to be “rationalists” (¹³).

Guénon further says that:

are not social immoralities”⁽⁹⁾.

This is the logical conclusion of all ethical codes that are divorced from the truly spiritual basis of human life. Unless we accept some objective standard of right and wrong, it is impossible to arrive at any universally valid ideal of moral conduct. Virtue and happiness very seldom coincide. Kant’s argument for immorality was based on the fact that reason demands the harmony of pleasure and virtue, and since they do not always or ever perfectly unite here, they must, on the ground of rational congruity, be at one somewhere. Whether we agree with Kant in this respect or not, it is an undeniable fact that to raise pleasure or expediency to the level of virtue is to bring down moral ideal to mere material or sensuous utility. It is here that religious ethics, i.e., ethics based on spiritual presuppositions, help us in avoiding this dangerous path.

Empiricism:

The doctrine that knowledge comes by way of experience is known as empiricism.

Secularism provided the philosophical base for natural realism, a school that regards only the evidence of senses as relevant to proving or disproving the existence of an external reality. This explains the emphasis on empirical methodology for ascertaining the validity of propositions concerning socio-cultural and behavioral phenomena.

The superimposition of empirical methodology on the study of social and human phenomena has done more to create numerous fallacies than it has to develop viable and tenable propositions about human intellect, consciousness, behavior, and interpersonal influences. The materialistic approach of reducing the complex study of various human behaviors to tangible and measurable entities does not offer much help when it comes to understanding the spiritual, emotional, mental, and behavioral dimensions. While the scientific paradigm might be adequate for explaining scientific phenomena in physics and chemistry, it is too limiting for the social sciences⁽¹⁰⁾. Empirical methods treat behavior artificially, for they strip the variables of their real meaning for the operationalization⁽¹¹⁾. In this process, the variables are unduly distorted and restructured in order to fit the empirical model at hand. This attempt of approximating an otherwise innately human science with physical science is an incommensurate approach.

The Islamic study of any phenomena is not limited to physical observation under human-controlled situations. Human limits are acknowledged before proceeding with any inquiry rooted in the Islamic viewpoint. The inadequacy of human perception and instrumentation is offset by the absolute source of divine knowledge. This divine knowledge—

Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, and John Stuart Mill were leaders of the movement, also then known as Philosophical Radicalism, during the first part of 19th century. They believe psychological hedonism to be self evident, and endeavored to show that if individuals intelligently seek what will bring most pleasure to themselves (egoistic hedonism) they will be led through the operation of various sanctions to promote the general happiness. They actively supported the social and political reforms of the time. During the latter part of 19th century Henry Sidgwick was the ablest interpreter of theoretical Utilitarianism, while Herbert Spencer and Leslie Stephen gave Utilitarianism an evolutionary application. All the Utilitarians thus far mentioned defended individualism, believing that every man is best judge of what will bring most pleasure to himself, and so ought to be allowed freedom of initiative, except when his conduct will be detrimental to others.

According to John Stuart Mill Utilitarianism is that:

“The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in promotion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure”⁽⁸⁾.

But if pleasure and pain, the two subjective feelings of man, are to be considered, in the words of Bentham, as the sovereign masters and are to determine our conduct, there remains nothing for ethics to do. Morality means enunciation of certain objective principles which should help an individual order of his life, so that his turbulent and passing whims and passions may be harmonized and channeled into constructive avenues of expression. But utilitarianism allows man to put no restraint on himself and thus the very notion of “duty” or “ought” is dispensed with. According to Bentham, it was “very idle to talk about duties,” and “‘ought’ is a word that ought to be banished from our vocabulary.” But the consciousness of duty cannot be ignored, the consciousness of something higher than and conflicting with inclination, in the light of which inclination ought to be suppressed. Utilitarians generally try to explain its genesis by the empirical method, but nothing can explain it away.

Man’s nature, if explained in terms of feeling alone, as utilitarianism does, would be to reduce moral consciousness or “ought” to the psychological “must” or fear of pains and hope of pleasures. The culmination of such a view can best be expressed in the following words of Huxley:

“If it can be shown by observation of experiment that theft, murder, and adultery do not tend to diminish the happiness of society, then, in the absence of any but natural knowledge they