

THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION ACCORDING TO MAX WEBER

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[This is the "Religion in Western Literature" section of the "Concept of Religion" article.]

Published In

Havâss Dergi, sy.l, May-July 2017, Trabzon 2017, s.34-55.

1.4. ACORDING TO MAX WEBER

According to Weber, the first purpose of religion is to give meaning to human existence. He thinks that religion not only holds society together but also functions to change society. He attributes the design of a society to whether the members of that society think about what the ultimate truth is. In this context, he says that the influence of the worldview brought by religion affects society and designs it. With this idea, Weber links the development of capitalism to Protestantism. According to him, there is a connection between religious events and economic events. One does not affect the other unilaterally, but both can affect each other. In this regard, Weber states that “no system of economic morality has been determined solely by religion”. In his studies, Weber tried to understand the influence of religion on economic events; he saw the economic morality of religion not as theological dogmas, but as the whole of the practical behaviors that religion demands from its members and forces them to accept.¹ Weber stated that the worldview of Protestantism transformed capitalism into advanced capitalism, and the belief that in the Calvinist form of Protestantism, man was born not for his own purposes, but to realize the natural order given by God, led people within this system to develop the rational aspects of society and thus to accept the rationality elements of the market mechanism as an image of God and to use them.² The principle in Calvinism that the riches acquired are not to be used for personal gain has led to accumulation, that is, capital. In addition, in this sect, where being successful is seen as a blessing from God and being a beloved servant, being hardworking is encouraged and seen as worship. According to Weber, this is how capitalism developed. Weber's view on religion revealed the difference between rationality of purpose and rationality of value. Rationality according to the end is the freedom to choose one's goal, but also the freedom to choose the shortest path to that goal. The Calvinist's preferred way of becoming God's beloved servant is rationality of purpose. Because it is more important to have been than to be. Rationality according to value is the ability of a person to choose only the means due to the influence of his values, while the end is fixed. Weber had the following to say about the religions he dealt with in his own studies on religion changing society: Confucianism was expressed as the status morality of educated people who acted with worldly rationality, and those who did not belong to this stratum were not considered men. This status ethic had a serious impact on the Chinese way of life. Hinduism, on the other hand, was created and passed down from father to son by a caste of cultured intellectuals who functioned as a kind of spiritual and ceremonial counselors for individuals and communities without official positions. Buddhism, he argues, was propagated by monks who rejected the world and were constantly migrating because they had no home, living on alms and engrossed in contemplation. He considers Islam to be the religion of world conquering warriors, but he has not completed his studies on this subject. He considered Judaism as the religion of pariah peoples since the great exile, and that Christianity began its journey as a religion of itinerant artisans.³ Finally on the impact of

¹ Bozkurt, *a.g.e.*, s.248.

² Şerif Mardin, *a.g.e.*, s.35.

³ Bozkurt, *a.g.e.*, s.249-250.

religion on the economy, traditionally people worked only for their basic needs, but the Protestant ethic changed this understanding. Now people worked to make a profit, and instead of giving, which was a religious obligation, they saved and invested more and more. Because the ethics he believed in instilled in him that this was the way to be God's beloved servant. Weber called this approach the spirit of capitalism.