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RELIGION AS A MAJOR INSTITUTION IN THE EMERGENCE
AND EXPANSION OF MODERN CAPITALISM.
FROM PROTESTANT POLITICAL DOCTRINES TO ENLIGHTENED REFORM

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Abstract: Starting with the Reformation, as a social and religious mass movement, the institution of the “state” became synonymous with authority (*Obrigkeit*), and until the Enlightenment, the mundane absolute order deployed varied patterns. Beginning with Calvinism, which legitimized the expansion of state institutions, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries marked a shift to modernization. Puritan authoritarianism, based on “saintly” discipline and on quasi-marginal freedom, developed a new, impersonal and voluntary political doctrine. While one generally associates Anglo-American Puritanism with political freedom, democracy or capitalism, we argue for a very different perspective, namely that the Puritans were both partisans of a medievalist paradigm as well as genuine enemies of democratic, liberal and secular values. Moreover, we emphasize that the Anglo-American radical Puritanism was only tempered by the Enlightenment. The enlightened philosophers were the defense advocates of liberal and pluralist ideas, and came out victorious of the competition of ideas with their Puritan rivals.

Key Words: institutions, authoritarianism, Calvinism, Puritanism, Enlightenment.

Introduction

Martin Luther (1483-1546) proclaimed that the Church must not be conducted by any artificial, technical or corrupt hierarchy, underlying the claim that the “radical doctrine of the ‘priesthood of all believers’ empowered individual believers.”¹ With bureaucracy annihilated, the princes, electors or social groups, considered good Christians in the German Calvinist space, became bishops of conjecture. They had to manage the Church, *ius circa sacrum*, namely to establish and defend the law that allowed everyone to tend and attend to the holy matters. In this context, the German states conceived of the organic concept of the state church as a duopoly in which the political foundation for the Church's institutional structure becomes a fact. The modern concept of state was not yet in existence; the government did not cohabit what is today called a “state”, but the *Obrigkeit*, i.e. authority.²

Luther argued that the civil government should apply Christian ethics (the Ten Commandments of Moses) to law enforcement, rather than swerve to theocracy, as championed by some Protestant sects such as the Anabaptists, Spiritualists or Zwinglians. As historian Emile Leonard notes, Luther wavered between, on the one hand, the authoritative organization of the Catholic Church and, on the other hand, the “anarchy” of the redistribution of wealth as enforced by the civil authorities.³

It is considered that the Reformation was a socio-religious mass movement, but with special amendments related to the specific political and economic circumstances. In a sermon delivered to the House of Commons in mid seventeenth century, the idea of reform was delivered and subsequently assumed unequivocally. Reformation should be profound and inclusive. Moreover, a change of direction had to take place from the original form to that of revolution.

“Reformation must be universal [argued Thomas Case in a Puritan pastoral manner] (...) reform all places, all persons and professions; Reform the court benches, inferior magistrates (...) reform universities, cities, regions, reform primary school, reform rituals, reform the worship of God (...) you have more to do than I can tell you (...) Each plant that was not planted by my heavenly father will be plucked.”⁴

Max Weber demonstrated that Puritanism sprang from Calvinism, defending the unjust distribution of wealth, as ruled and represented by the hierarchy of the divine order. The egalitarian perspective was from the start doomed to fail. The individual had to be religiously obedient and accept his role and place in society. Religious discipline came first, and

religious obligations were mandatory. The providential interpretation of the economic order, by way of medieval scholasticism, was for the Puritans an absolute fact. This class ideology of economic inequality, and ultimately, the anti-egalitarian concept in society originated under Catholicism in medieval Europe.⁵

It is considered that the first manifestations of Calvinism and Puritan proto-movements in England built a system of beliefs that laid the foundation for modern capitalism, defining a new and singular vision about the world of business, entrepreneurship and enterprise institution. "Basically, the whole modern world has been read in Calvinism: liberal politics and voluntary association, capitalism and social discipline that it supports; bureaucracy, with its systematic procedures and its diligent and devoted officials; and finally, all routine forms of repression, lack of joy and un-relaxed aspiration."⁶ It is considered that the lack of joy and un-relaxed perspectives are part of the controlled behavior as inspired by the Puritans. In this direction, Urdank (1991) emphasizes that early modern Calvinism "generally embraced a high-tone Puritanism that greatly prized the control of affect."⁷

The next step in the evolution of history is the Enlightenment which, although itself the internal outcome of the activity of the institutions of monarchical absolutism, it later even cooperated with, ultimately became their very foe and remorseless demolisher.

The principles of freedom and independence latent in the human soul could no longer be held captive. The result was an unprecedented attack against the mundane absolute order. "Up until now, the enlightenment process, namely that of criticizing both the Church and the state, providing a dualistic opponent in respect to which a bourgeois self-awareness emerges, openly and straight forwardly threatens the existing power."⁸ The institution of absolute monarchy, which had started in Western Europe in the fifteenth century, had an uneven and volatile deployment in time. If in the Netherlands absolutism was overturned a century later, the same happening in England in late seventeenth century due to the emergence of the Whig bourgeoisie, in France it was triggered by the 1789 Revolution.

The calvinist political radicalism, the new legal institutions and the communitarian spirit

Calvinism has legitimized the development and expansion of the state institution.

"Puritan ministers, extraordinarily sensitive to the dangers of disorder and immorality, developed the moral authoritarianism of their theology in a theory of secular repression. From the beginning,

Calvinists were the lawyers of regulation and supervision; the Genevan system was built so as to maximize both – a task that involved constant expansion of secular authority at the expense of the lax and ineffective ecclesiastical tribunals.”⁹

The Puritans embraced the same view. “The Saints requested that the state should replace the corporate church in the case of the poor, the judging of wills and contracts, the regulation of marriage and divorce, and even moral law enforcement.”¹⁰

The political radicalism of Calvinism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is linked to modernization. Regarding Calvinism, Michael Walzer asserts that “it was not so much because of one or other economic systems, political or modern ones, as an agent of modernization, an ideology of the transitional period.”¹¹

However, we have to emphasize a fact which “amends” the excessive generality attributed to the Weberian theory. Thus, Weber himself seems not to have founded his theory on detailed knowledge of the legal institutions that were operating in full in the areas under Calvinist influence. And seventeenth century England was one of them, where the communitarian spirit and ethics were fully manifested, at the expense of individualism. Here, new legal institutions (trust and limited companies) were not founded on a mundane Protestant asceticism, but rather on a communitarian spirit. That is exactly the opposite of what Max Weber had imagined it would be. For example, the resurgence of English joint stock companies denoted a high interest for the establishment of private entities in common, with the role of stimulating shareholders’ profits and limit risk exposures. A good example is the Bank of England, founded by Parliament in 1694 to finance the military campaign against their rival in the East, France. This worked as a political monolith, but also as a corporate one. Another example in favor of the role of English communitarian ethos is that of a new legal institution: the law of trust. According to dictionaries, a trust means a monopoly in which the ownership of enterprises is unified, their owners becoming shareholders. Therefore, they could build apparently heterogeneous associations of private interest. Weber was criticized for his lack of interest in understanding and analyzing the role of the communitarian spirit and the entrepreneurial one, in understanding the emergence of the capitalist spirit.¹²

Regarding Calvinism, and even Lutheranism, their political horizon “was not in a ‘liberal’ or democratic direction but rather in a more ‘totalistic’ [and militant] one [by] restricting autonomous activities in both the economic and the political field.”¹³ Calvinism and Lutheranism were considered by many scholars essentially anti-democratic doctrines and mundane manifestations.¹⁴

Puritan authoritarianism, the cause of the recrudescence of the etatist institutions

Puritanism is centered on the concept of discipline, with a quasi-marginal touch of freedom for “the life of the congregation was certainly a preparation for self-governance and democratic participation.”¹⁵ In the same vein, individualism is considered the real connection between reason and nature, any external political coercion representing sheer infringement on the relation of the human being with itself.¹⁶

This moral discipline of the Puritan “saints” was not *a priori* a capitalist one, although it helped enormously to the emergence and expansion of capitalism, by familiarizing the individuals with the meanings of self, impersonal human relations, effective cooperation without transfer of feelings or affection. Work became more than it had ever been, it was an instrument of vocation that offered eternal salvation.¹⁷ But the role of hard work was needed to stress the unintended consequences of psychological compulsion for emphasizing the fact that God was a real presence in everyone’s lives.¹⁸

Similarly, the ascetic discipline was transferred to the individual process of changing one’s workplace. It was considered that such an option was absolutely forbidden.¹⁹ Robert Crowley wrote in 1550: “First walk in thy vocation / And do not seek thy lot to change; / For through wicked ambition / Many men’s fortune hath been strange.”²⁰

As this kind of mundane asceticism preceded entrepreneurial freedom, the same can be said of the political zeal towards liberalism.

“Liberalism and capitalism emerged fully developed only in a secular form, i.e. only after Puritanism had consumed its creative force. It seems likely that a certain freedom from religious control and religious scruples is essential to their overall triumph in modern Western society. It may be that this freedom had its roots in the Reformation, in the attack on the official church and traditional priesthood, but this was not the responsibility of the reformers; but it was beyond their intentions.”²¹

Moreover, Puritans scrupulously led their war against everything related to tradition and to the pattern of human relationships. The new political discipline that they tried to implement in human communities was impersonal and not based on emotional affinities, much less on the authority or subordination relations between different social classes. The novelty was that the new ideology was *a priori* formal and voluntary, of a

contractual type.²²

In this respect, we need to note an excerpt that we considered relevant, with no claim to personal interpretations.

“Calvinist God jeopardized the balance and structure of power in a medieval model that mimicked the order of the cosmos. This God, this arbitrary and voluntary tyrant, omnipotent and universal, shaped and dominated puritanical conscience. But if he demanded obedience so exact and complete that it was unprecedented in the history of tyranny, he also released people from all kinds of alternative jurisdictions and authorities. The Medieval universe was pluralistic. The angels and the stars of the celestial spheres, popes and kings on the earth occupied places that were fixed in nature and connected in a harmonious manner with the rest of the universe. In general, they were not subject to divine intervention or eternally dependent on divine will (...) The God of Calvin, on the other hand, reigned over a single unified field; all the powers were held directly by him and owed nothing to nature. All men were his instruments, whether they allied with his sovereignty or revolted against it, he granted all something of his own will (...) And the only tyrant before whom they bowed overturned kingdoms in one go, made churches decline rapidly, waged war against rebellious angels and did not accept claims of any man - bishop, pope or king - stand above his peers and mediate between them and himself.”²³

Moreover, both Hobbes, as well as Calvinists writers and preachers, believed that arbitrary power (for example, the existence of the state at Hobbes) represents the solution to circumvent anomie and immorality. Anglican thinkers went on with the reasoning and indicated that any conflict between people of unequal social positions could be solved not by way of subordination to the fittest, but the solution was represented by the idea of the existence of authority and veneration.²⁴

In this sense, “the medieval Christian community was not just a society of men; through a mystery akin to transubstantiation in the Eucharist, it revealed as half a body which had God himself as its leader.”²⁵

The organic analogy was still operating in the eighteenth century. “Mystical Body” had not yet become an obsolete concept. Bodin observed that “all laws of nature indicate monarchy, whether we consider the microcosm of the body, whose limbs are all subjected to a single head (...)

or whether we consider the macrocosm of the world, subjected to one almighty God.”²⁶ The argument is highlighted by Rawlinson, who also acknowledged the organicity of human society, “as in the natural body, and in the political one; (...) If the body was headless, it would fall immediately to the ground.”²⁷

The theory of calling, founded on social discipline and self-assertion, replaced the old structure based on organic hierarchy, opening “the path of impersonal and responsible commitments between people. The obligation of an ordinary world formed the basis of a wide network of contractual arrangements.”²⁸

Although many interpretations and analyzes have suggested that Puritanism was associated with liberal and democratic values, and Catholicism with authoritarianism, Zafirovski and others think differently. The Puritans' dominion and full control over society was an attempt at societal and political authoritarianism.²⁹ Therefore, it is considered that Puritanism is the totalitarian form of Calvinism³⁰, a function of totalitarian “monism” (Dahrendorf), or the “orthodox” faction of Protestantism in contrast with the “liberal” one as represented by Lutheranism.³¹ Moreover, it is considered a militant³² and radical Protestantism.³³ Puritanism is actually a construction in which one half is religious and the other is secular monasticism.³⁴ John Winthroppe called it “the meanest and the worst of all forms of government.”³⁵ To sum up, Stivers (1994) considered that Puritanism was, by far, the most totalitarian version of Calvinism and, in a greater degree, of Protestantism.³⁶

Puritans found themselves in a permanent double position: the one founded on tradition, orthodox and conservative, and the other, radical and revolutionary.³⁷ Such 'qualities' as were incongruous with the Puritan ethic: opulence, individuality or mobility, were easily accepted by other capitalists.³⁸ However, “Puritanism can not be described, therefore, simply as an ideological reflex of personal social disorder and anxiety; It is one of the possible answers to the experiences of disorder or anxiety, or rather, a possible way to perceive and react to a set of experiences that other people besides saints could see in different terms.”³⁹

Anglo-American puritanism and the radical and authoritarian institutions

Anglo-American Puritanism, as derived from Calvinism, is “anti- or quasidemocratic by directly countering and attacking liberal democracy, or indirectly threatening, subverting and undermining it through establishing and defending aristocracy, plutocracy, oligarchy, rigid hierarchy, privilege, inequality, exclusion, and especially some sort and degree of theocracy or religious-based political coercion.”⁴⁰

Tawney (1962) emphasizes that Anglo-American Puritanism

“remakes not only his own character and habits and way of life, but family and church, industry and city, political institutions and social order.”⁴¹ J. S. Mill, too, speaks of “the fanatical moral intolerance” of Anglo-American Puritans.⁴² Henry Mencken stressed that American Puritanism was based on the “haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy.”⁴³ Its intolerance for heresy meant a lower degree of religious tolerance in such societies. In this case, when confronted with such disobedient situations, under the religious teachings, the puritans persecuted and even executed these dissenters.⁴⁴

One commonly associates Anglo-American Puritanism with political freedom, democracy or capitalism. But, as Zafirovski pointed out, this is not the case, because “the terror, the effort to create a holy commonwealth and to force men to be godly”⁴⁵ is the true reason behind all these.

Puritan irrationalism and antihumanism, two main instruments used to attack human reason and, by extension, the whole Enlightenment paradigm, may be the first step to explaining Puritan religious authoritarianism.⁴⁶

Such theocracy, which resulted from mixing up authoritarianism (in terms of political systems) with Calvinist theology, had many in common with the “old Greek [Spartan] notion of a kind of metaphysical theocracy under the form, in Protestant minds, of a reign of Saints.”⁴⁷

Puritan dominance in post-revolutionary America influenced in 1798 the Congress to add to the Constitution the so-called Sedition Act, which, although a flagrant violation of the First Amendment, was the first step towards a new state entity for political censorship, the US citizens being virtually forbidden to criticize their own government.⁴⁸

In Great Britain, the Puritan authoritarianism was “tempered by the maintenance of the Anglican Church order”⁴⁹, but also by the Enlightenment with its sacred values: secularism, liberalism and individualism. In America, the lack of these inputs generated a particular situation.⁵⁰

The initiator of the liberal-democratic ideology in England was Locke, who considered Puritanism, where politics and religion were in the same sphere, a great mistake. The English-Scottish and, especially, the French Enlightenment, were considered to be the promoters of the classical liberal-democratic values and became a divergent paradigm in contrast with Calvinism in Europe and Puritanism in the Anglo-American world. That is why the Enlightenment liberal-democratic ideas and structure were less successful in America. While Western Europe was contaminated by these philosophical movements, in the second half of the eighteenth century, America experienced once again a Puritan-inspired counter-Enlightenment.⁵¹

Apparently, Roman theocracy was replaced by this revolutionary Puritan theocratic elite. Paradoxically, at least in England, this Puritan

revolution was mixed with conservatism in the political sphere, thus igniting a counter-revolution against any forms of liberal actions and ways of thinking. The English Puritan Revolution of 1640 was linked with the conflicts of the feudal elites, which emphasized their deep attachment to the medieval times and values rather than to liberal modernity or capitalism. The American Puritans, too, were the partisans of such perspective, advocating the medievalist paradigm and forcefully criticising the values associated with a democratic, liberal and secular society. Anglo-American Puritanism was seen as pure radicalism and it would have gained important adherents and socio-political influence were it not tempered by the Enlightenment championed by Locke and Hume. These enlightened *philosophes* were the partisans of liberal and pluralist ideas, becoming the strong rivals of the Puritans' radicalism and winning the prime position in this competition of ideas.⁵²

The role of 'confessionalization' in the formation of early modern state institutions

According to Heinz Schilling, confessionalization, as the result of the Reform and Counter-reform, had close ties with and a direct impact on the early modern state formation. This process and macrohistorical paradigm represented an essential component of what would have been called "social disciplining" (Gerhard Oestreich), the ethic reform of society or "the process of civilization" (Norbert Elias). Such a process was not generalized, since one can point to a few exceptions such as Bavaria and Württemberg, where the phenomenon started in the fifteenth century, and through which mundane institutions acquired a particular force and a high degree of coverage in society.

"Social Discipline refers to the incorporation of individual and social groups in uniform majority of subjects as well as levelling interests and regional peculiarities in favor of a "common good" as defined by the territorial State; the contents of this "common good" was determined by the prince and his officials. Early modern confessions were involved in this process in a variety of ways."⁵³

Confessionalization refers to a fundamental social process that has profoundly changed public and private life in the European society. Typically, such a process was done in tandem, interconnected with the advent of early modern states (although sometimes inconsistent therewith) and with the crystallization of well articulated early modern institutions. Unlike the medieval society, the early modern society was not fragmented and organized in a personal manner, but it was rather more

institutional and territorial. In addition, there were a number of interactions along with the emergence of modern economic systems.⁵⁴

The last idea highlighted by Greyerz, as related to the matter of the continuum of composite elements of the Middle Ages in the modern era, is similar to French historian Jean Delumeau's claim that, in the advent of the Protestant Reformation, the average European individual was christened only in a very superficial manner. Under the circumstances of two reforms in progress, both Luther's and the Catholic one, one could speak, eventually, of two seemingly competing, and yet convergent, processes of Christianization of the masses and of spiritualization of the religious sensibilities.⁵⁵

Heinz Schilling believes that the process of early modern state creation and emerging national identities were shaped in decisive ways by religious or confessional circumstances.⁵⁶

The formation of state and of national identity are the effects of the principle according to which religion is the glue that holds together the entire human community in the Early Modern Age. The less visible aspect of this process turned religion and its specific confessions into instruments for the state, to create peace and order and, above all, obtain the voluntary submission of subjects and harmony between different classes and social groups; from an integrative perspective, self-association and voluntary consensus occurred - without which neither individual nor collective identity is conceivable, at least not from a long-term perspective.⁵⁷

The political institutions and the Enlightenment

However, what are the links between the religious and political sphere in the exercise of power? Following Lord Acton's assertion that absolute power corrupts absolutely, there was the fear that the monarch may lose his "innocence of power." The fear was justified by the fact that in the seventeenth century there was an ontological fracture between politicians and theologians. The latter believed that the former "are obliged to comply with the piety of private individuals. The exclusion of "morality" from politics was not against a secular morality, but against a religious one with political demands."⁵⁸ Therefore, "[a]ny power that wanted to give general binding and authority needed this exclusion of private consciousness, where there were anchored religious attachments or feudal loyalty links."⁵⁹

In this new context, reason becomes the main ingredient, and Thomas Hobbes demonstrates that the existence of so many civil wars in his time is equivalent to the fact that the mission of history does not overlap with the mission of reason. Therefore, the very existence of the state is not claimed by this new context, but rather by an efficient and

logical attempt to end these conflicts.⁶⁰

The Enlightenment, as an anti-feudal ideological movement in the late seventeenth century, aims to create a society where the religious dogma is isolated or removed, following the English deism model of the eighteenth century which is inspired by John Locke, and which also inspired the French Enlightenment and Voltaire.⁶¹

At the same time, Locke taught that God must be met in terms of natural theology and morality. This cultural phenomenon should not be regarded as compact, as a system of ideas and actions that swept across Europe. It would be wrong to consider in extremely general terms the Enlightenment as a factor that spread individualism and secularization across society, for the simple reason that the phenomenon included different social strata to different degrees and at different time scales.

Reinhard Koselleck highlighted even a competition of elements on time-differentiated levels. In France, the movement was virulently headed against the Church and religion, while in many Anglo-Saxon areas it was a phenomenon of weaker intensity, called the Christian Enlightenment.⁶² For example, as Sheridan Gilley mentioned, in England, Scotland, Holland, Germany and North America, the English Enlightenment propagated and was manifested even within the Christian Church.

The relationship between the scientific knowledge of nature and that of God remains quite pure until the early eighteenth century. Thus, Isaac Newton states that all creation that comes in front of our eyes so orderly and tidy does not demonstrate, in the event of natural phenomena, that there is an incorporeal, living Being, intelligent and ubiquitous in infinite space, who through its sensory organ would see to the deepest levels of the nature of all things, would include them, and would understand them entirely in their immediate presence. At the same time, there is nothing that would contradict himself or his reason.⁶³

The relationship between morality and politics under monarchical absolutism is worth emphasizing and interpreted in depth. It is considered that the absolute monarch can commit a morally wrong deed, but because political morality exonerates him of any obligation, it is not considered unlawful. If your conscience would stop committing an injustice, then peace would be jeopardized causing an even bigger injustice. On the other hand, the individual acts in the same manner, unidentifying himself with the laws of politics in order to maintain the *status quo*. In Hobbes's view, the individual is divided into two parts: the public one, his conduct subject to the state law, and the private one, where personal moral conscience and opinions, derived from religious teachings, remain purely personal.⁶⁴ Moreover, the same individual:

“will no longer have to seek the first cause of moral laws from God, but from secular authority, namely the power that ends the civil war. These laws are moral, not because they correspond to an

eternal moral legitimacy - even if they do - but because they arose out of an imperative derived directly from the political situation. They are political moral laws on which - out of reasons for this moral in itself - the sovereign is the one who decides. Not conviction or a right measure, but a political motive makes virtue to be virtue.”⁶⁵

The inception of the Enlightenment lies in the specific manner of interpreting the duality of the individual in society. Thus, to the extent to which the citizen remains committed and obeys the monarch, the latter is not interested in the private space interstices of man understood only as “man”. Therefore, “[t]he need to produce a lasting peace requires the state to make a concession to the individual of an inner space which interferes so little with the sovereign decision that it even becomes vital for this.”⁶⁶

Although intentionally excluded from the state, the individual regarded as “man” begins to develop in society and, thus, the difference is no longer perceived. And now, due to the split between morality and politics, the end of state absolutism begins. Healing the wounds after civil wars leads to the emergence of modern unitary states, called by Hobbes “people on a grand scale” (*magni homines*).⁶⁷

The emergence of bourgeois intellectuals represented an act of enlightenment because it was synonymous with the coming out of the private shell where the state kept his subjects. A leading representative of the bourgeois Enlightenment was the English philosopher and politician John Locke (1632-1704). Unlike Hobbes, he made a clear distinction between natural law and the state law. In addition, the separation of divine and civil law, gave religion an important role. “Morality is not moral formal submission anymore, it is not subject to absolutist policy, but opposes state laws.”⁶⁸

Locke makes a distinction between morality and politics, on another scale than his contemporaries. If state laws are coercive, the moral ones have indirectly the same goal. Morality becomes a public authority of spiritual nature, but takes on connotations and political value since it compels the individual to respect a specific code of ethics.

The interior moral space of the private sphere of people had been driven to extinction by the absolutist system of government, and the only escape from its vise was the fight against it. “Freedom from within secret, from the soul of every citizen of the state, which Hobbes had to remove from the absolutist state in order to be able to deduce the concept of sovereignty, freedom which, for Locke, “by a secret and tacit consent” of individuals, crystallized in an independent philosophical state legislation, this civil liberty could not be achieved in the absolutist state only, as long as they confined to the secret inner space. Modern bourgeoisie appears, of course, from the secret inner space of a moral of private beliefs and reinforces in private companies.”⁶⁹

The French physiocrat Turgot (1727-1781) fought for religious tolerance and hence for religious disobedience by political power. Understood as an act of conscience belonging exclusively to the secret inmost space of private man, religion remained an intimate and personal act. Turgot offers the example of a Catholic prince who was subject to the Catholic Church, “but he is subjected as a man, in things pertaining to his religion, his personal salvation. As a prince, he is independent of the ecclesiastic power.”⁷⁰ Unlike Hobbes, Turgot considered that the subordination of consciousness to the political power of the state can cause violent civil conflict.⁷¹

The new society designed by the radical Enlightenment could be born only through a non-violent revolution, by a total tearing from old superstitions, through a war of reason, the only one able to circumvent flaws of the past, which were considered primitive.⁷²

The Dutch, American and French Revolutions of the late eighteenth century were caused by structural changes that originate in the so-called “revolution of the mind”, a fundamental change with enormous ramifications. This allowed the radical Enlightenment to crystallize around an ideological system that resonated with the expectations and desires of large parts of the society. But the means through which they tried to change the world were contrary to the evidence on which it was based from ancient times. However, in the case of the American Revolution, moderate Enlightenment was the guideline by which this massive shift of paradigm was possible.⁷³

Conclusions

In this article we have argued that, in seventeenth century England, a communitarian spirit and ethics existed and prevailed with all their might over the individualistic pattern. The new legal institutions were not founded on a mundane Protestant asceticism, but rather on this specific communitarian spirit. Such a perspective is quite contrary to Max Weber’s famous theory.

The well-known moral discipline of the Puritan “saints” was not an *a priori* capitalist ingredient or specific virtue, but it represented a key-factor for the emergence and expansion of modern capitalism.

Puritanism was considered the totalitarian form of Calvinism. The Calvinist and Puritan political doctrines were apparently influenced by ideas other than the liberal and democratic ones. The societal and political authoritarianism and radicalism were the source for applying a way of living, evolving and governing the society.

The role of religion in tempering this zealous Puritan authoritarianism seems obvious. For example, in Great Britain, the maintenance of the Anglican Church order represented a successful

attempt in this direction. But the unpredictable and strange tandem between religion and the Enlightenment (with its core values: secularism, liberalism and individualism) played a decisive role.

It is considered that the English-Scottish Enlightenment, and especially the French one, both based on the classical liberal-democratic ideas, became a paradigm contrary to Calvinism in Europe and Puritanism in the Anglo-American world. Since the Puritan dogma was extremely influential in America, the Enlightenment liberal-democratic ideas were less successful. While Western Europe found all these philosophical ideas very appealing, in the second half of the eighteenth century, America followed a Puritan-inspired counter-Enlightenment.

The caesura between morality and politics represented the end of state absolutism and the beginning of a new paradigm. In late eighteenth century, the Dutch, American and French Revolutions, influenced by the so-called “revolution of the mind”, a real “critical juncture”, made it possible for the radical Enlightenment to become homogeneous, following a clear ideological system that was compatible with the societies and times.

While it is considered that Calvinism and the Puritan proto-movements in England built the foundation for modern capitalism, we have tried to establish that Calvinism and Lutheranism were anti-democratic doctrines. This finding doesn't elude their enormous role in the emergence and expansion of capitalism, but we found that not to be possible without the effective and decisive role attributed to religious freedom. Only after its recrudescence, did the modern Western society become fully aware of the liberal and capitalist values.

Notes:

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² Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: from its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism* (New York: Touchstone, 1972), 254-255.

³ Robert Jr. Ekelund, Robert Hebert, Robert Jollison, *The Marketplace of Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2006), 172.

⁴ Thomas Case, „Two Sermons Lately Preached, Londra, 1642”, II, 13, 16 in *The Revolution of the Saints. A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, ed. Michael Walzer (Cluj-Napoca: TACT, 2013), 22-23.

⁵ Milan Zafirovski, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Authoritarianism. Puritanism, Democracy, and Society* (New York: Springer, 2007), 58.

⁶ Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints. A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cluj-Napoca: TACT, 2013), 353.

⁷ Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution, II: The impact of the Protestant Reformations on the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 342.

⁸ Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik Und Krise. Ein Beitrag Zur Pathogenese Der Bürgerlichen Welt* (Cluj-Napoca: TACT, 2013), 214.

⁹ Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints. A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, 267.

¹⁰ Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints. A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, 267.

¹¹ Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints. A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, 353-354.

¹² Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution, II: The impact of the Protestant Reformations on the Western Legal Tradition*, 342.

¹³ Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Transformation of Social Political, and Cultural Orders in Modernization," *American Sociological Review* Vol. 30 (1965): 671.

¹⁴ Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the "Twin Toleration," *Journal of Democracy* 11 (4) (2000): 44.

¹⁵ Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints. A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, 354.

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