

The Strategy of Spiritual and Moral Improvement of the Economic Man

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Abstract. The article deals with the strategy of spiritual and moral perfection of the economic person, what was formed in the framework of Protestantism. The Reformation, where Protestantism had appeared, brought to life the economic man and started the foundation of capitalist society. A description of the theological and economic works of Protestant thinkers is given here; they played a leading role in the destruction of medieval ideas about economics, in the development of the ethics of human economic activity, in the man's fulfillment of his own professional mission, which was destined to him by God. Progress in the achievement of the strategy of spiritual and moral improvement of the economic person are reflected through criteria such as the volume of gross domestic product (GDP), labor productivity, ease of doing business, and human development index in highly developed countries of the world. The results of the study show that if the economic person acts on the basis of Protestant ethics, then he achieves the highest results. A vivid example is the United States, Britain, Germany and other countries where Protestantism occupies a leading position or has a significant influence. In the secular society we have the task of the renewal of the strategy of spiritual and moral improvement of the economic person in the changing circumstances.

1. Introduction

An economic person is a rational egoist acting in his own interest, possessing competence and ingenuity in achieving it, and also varying in the degree of his activity according to his role in the production system and belonging to a certain class. The economic person is a person who clearly knows his preferences, considers alternatives and makes rational decisions in accordance with the principle of maximum benefit for himself. The purpose of the economic person's activity is the maximization of profits, of his personal welfare in the absence of unnecessary expenses ("worldly penance").

Where the economic person lives and works, the highest result is achieved. The same goes for any community and society as a whole. Economic man appeared in Western Europe in the era of the New Age and gradually "spread" to other continents. According to the level of economic, scientific, technical and technological development, it is now possible to determine where and in which country the economic person has not only achieved the highest indicators, but has also firmly "entrenched" in society and culture. And there aren't so many such countries. One names the seven leading countries (G-7), others single out ten countries for convenience (by analogy with the decile coefficient), and others - twenty (G-20). However, in the first, second, and third cases, a group of countries stands out among them, in which Protestantism plays an important role. [1, 2]

2. Relevance, scientific significance of the issue with a brief review of the literature

Despite the fact that in the Western world the significance of religion compared to the beginning of the New Age has significantly decreased, the study of the influence of Protestantism, Protestant culture on the man and the economy remains very relevant and important at the present time. This is due to the fact that, as N. Nazarbayev, speaking at the 16th congress of the ruling Nur Otan party of Kazakhstan on March 11, 2015, noted, “Protestantism puts successful and productive work, values of frugality and virtuous life at the center of the person’s life. They (Protestants) believe that honest work is pleasing to God. And it is just these people who preach this religion in six countries of the world create 36 percent of the wealth of the earth.” [3] The ex-chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Jiang Zemin, also stated: “I want my country to become the Christian one”, i.e. "Protestant", justifying this by the fact that the basis of the power of Western countries is Christianity in its Protestant version. [4]

Firstly, the founders of the Reformation, who had formed the strategy of spiritual and moral perfection of the man, had a huge influence on West European society and subsequently on many other countries. The famous “95 theses” (1517) of M. Luther, his translation of the Bible with his associates into German (1534), in which emphasis was placed on professional calling, “Admonition in the Christian faith” (1536) by J. Calvin underlain Protestants’ mortal life and activity. [5, 6, 7]

The main works what had a significant impact on the formation of Protestant work ethics include books by R. Baxter “A Christian Directory: A Sum of Practical Theology and Cases of Conscience” (1673) and B. Franklin's “The Way to Wealth” (1758). [8, 9] On the basis of Protestant ethics in the second half of the 40s of the XX century, a theory of social market economy was created and applied in Germany and several other countries of the world. Its founding fathers are Protestant thinkers and ordoliberal A. Müller-Armak (“Economic Management and Market Economy”, 1946), A. Rustov (“Between Capitalism and Communism”, 1949), V. Oyken (“Fundamentals of National Economy, 1950), L. Erhard (“Welfare for all”, 1956) and others. [10, 11, 12, 13]

The main research literature on Protestantism is composed of the works of A. Keeper “Christian Worldview: Lectures on Calvinism” (1898), where the belief is expressed that Calvinism is necessary for the positive influence of Christians on the life of the whole society, W. Cunningham “An Essay on Western Civilization in its Economic Aspects (Mediaeval and Modern) ”(1900), which analyzes the impact of Presbyterianism on the Scottish economy, M. Weber's“ Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism ”(1905), which argues that the cause of capitalism is the Reformation and the "new Christianity" – Protestantism. [14, 15, 16]

3. Problem formulation

For the transition of Western Europe from the Middle Ages to the New Age, revolutionary changes in religion, philosophy, science and culture were required. These changes were made by the fathers of the Reformation and other Protestant thinkers. They set the problem and made a decisive contribution in the destruction of medieval ideas about the economy and the formation of the capitalist economic system. However, today, in the postmodern era, in the Western world, people have largely moved away from religion, from the Church, and this posed a serious threat to the further implementation of the ethical and economic ideals of Protestantism. In this regard, there is a new task to update the strategy of spiritual and moral improvement of the economic person, to strengthen of the ethical foundations of economic activity in relation to modern conditions.

4. Theoretical part

The ethical aspect of the activity of the economic person was most clearly manifested among English Puritans, who were brought up and taught on the basis J. Calvin’s teachings, on the idea of professional calling formulated by M. Luther and justified by R. Baxter. According to M. Weber, the Puritans rejected the wealth as a material opportunity to live on rent, as a thirst for profit and enrichment, and began to consider wealth as remuneration for labor. They considered, if the wealth is the result of labor activity and conscientious fulfillment of the professional duty, it isn’t only morally justified, but also prescribed from on high by God. They believed that idleness, laziness, indolence,

usury, the enjoyment of wealth, carnal pleasures, aimless time, spending time on luxury, entertainment, chatter and even sleep, if it lasts more than 6-8 hours a day, are a serious sin. They denied such kind of life, because it is irrational, destructive for man and, ultimately, for the whole society. The Puritans were aimed at creative activity - professional activity for the glory of God, for accumulation, for achieving success in any business, for them it is a testament to the grace of God.

5. Practical relevance, suggestions and implementation results, experimental research results

The most reliable criteria for assessing labor merits and the practical significance of the economic person's activity are the volume of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, labor productivity, easy of doing business, and the human development index. So, in terms of GDP per capita (data for 2018), the list of twenty leading countries of the world (this is about 10% of the total number of countries in the world) is as follows: 1. Luxembourg. 2. Switzerland. 3. Norway. 4. Macau. 5. Iceland. 6. Ireland. 7. Qatar. 8. the USA. 9. Singapore. 10. Denmark. 11. Australia. 12. Sweden. 13. The Netherlands. 14. Austria. 15. San Marino. 16. Finland. 17. Germany. 18. Hong Kong. 19. Belgium. 20. Canada. [17]

The next indicator of the economic person's self-giving is labor productivity. In terms of labor productivity (data for 2017), the list of twenty leading countries is as follows: 1. Ireland. 2. Luxembourg. 3. Norway. 4. Belgium. 5. Denmark. 6. Austria. 7. Germany. 8. The USA. 9. The Netherlands. 10. Switzerland. 11. Sweden. 12. France. 13. Finland. 14. Iceland. 15. The Great Britain. 16. Australia. 17. Italy. 18. Spain. 19. Canada. 20. Japan. [18]

The theory of social market economy is also aimed for this. The economic success of the social market economy, achieved in Germany, is essentially based on the fact that for its functioning, in their opinion, there are enough people with "average morality", people who have inhabited the Earth since the Fall. As long as ethical standards are far from always fully operational in modern society, it is necessary to use such methods of psychological influence as: persuasion, a call to return to the path of moral values, a warning about social, economic and environmental dangers, appeal to common sense and conscience of people, etc.

On this basis, the essence of the strategy of spiritual and moral perfection of the modern economic person is this one: he must believe in God, go to the Church, live according to God's commandments, follow ethical standards in economic activity, create and develop his own business, to be a co-worker with God, responsibly fulfill his professional calling before God and people, cultivate and preserve the nature entrusted to him.

Favorable conditions for conducting small and medium-sized businesses based on the initiative of individuals and entrepreneurship contribute significantly to the economic person's development. The index of the twenty leading countries of the world on the easy of doing business, according to the World Bank, is as follows (data for 2019): 1. New Zealand. 2. Singapore. 3. Denmark. 4. Hong Kong. 5. The Republic of Korea. 6. Georgia. 7. Norway. 8. The USA. 9. The Great Britain. 10. Northern Macedonia. 11. UAE. 12. Sweden. 13. China. 14. Lithuania. 15. Malaysia. 16. Estonia. 17. Finland. 18. Australia. 19. Latvia. 20. Mauritius. [19] In these countries where favorable conditions have been created or the emphasis is on the development of small and medium-sized businesses, the share of small and medium-sized enterprises is more than 50%.

At last, the final indicator is the human development index. According to this indicator, the twenty leading countries of the world include (data for 2017): 1. Norway. 2. Switzerland. 3. Australia. 4. Ireland. 5. Germany. 6. Iceland. 7. Hong Kong. 8. Sweden. 9. Singapore. 10. The Netherlands. 11. Denmark. 12. Canada. 13. The USA. 14. The Great Britain. 15. Finland. 16. New Zealand. 17. Belgium. 18. Liechtenstein. 19. Japan. 20. Austria. [20]

Analytical and experimental studies and statistical data show that Protestantism creates the highest motivation for working, rational work organization, doing business, acquisition of income, and achieving success in professional vocation. [21, 22, 23, 24] Therefore, it isn't casual that among the above mentioned countries a group of highly developed states stands out where Protestantism is dominant (Norway, Iceland, the USA, Denmark, Sweden, the Great Britain, Finland, New Zealand) or

has significant influence (Switzerland, Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada). These countries in 2018 accounted total for more than 40% of the world's GDP (at par). [25]

6. Findings (conclusion)

The Reformation, as a result of which Protestantism appeared, gave a tremendous impetus to the economic man's development, the rationalization of all aspects of people's lives, and the formation of the capitalist society. Protestantism has made and continues to have a tremendous impact on the economies of many countries of the world, on the formation of the capitalist mentality. The more rational and more active the economic person acts, the greater success he and his country achieve, the more social the market economy becomes. The strategy of the economic person's spiritual and moral improvement, aimed at strengthening the ethical foundations of economic activity, improving the efficiency of economic development and demanding renewal in connection with the changes that occur in the world serves this purpose.

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