

Research paper on religion and compassion

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



Introduction

With the religious conflicts that are experienced in today's world, it becomes challenging to argue that the religion is the foundation of compassion or the universal brotherliness. For instance, the participated war such as War in Iraq had developed a skeptical believe on how different religions view about compassion. Christians are pointing fingers to the Muslims saying that they are the source of the war and conflict that they believe is a holy war against infidel. However, there are religions that advocate the compassionate believe and support the type of moral discourse. This paper will discuss the compassionate face of religion according to Max Weber's dual face of religion.

With regard to world religion, Max Weber provides a clear insight of how the notion of dual faces of religion was established. He therefore gives both critique and support of society's political and economic inequalities. He believes that the human sufferings in the world civilization are caused by the political and economic inequalities that are as a result of individuals and groups of redemptory and prophetic religions based on the universal brotherhood. Among such groups, there is an ethic that illustrates the sense of humanity experiencing common sufferings due to such political and economic inequalities in the society. Max Weber therefore believes that " the religion of brotherliness has always clashed with the orders and values of this world, and the more consistently its demands have been carried through, the sharper the clash has been" (P. 330). As a result, the split has extremely widened in a sense that the values of the world have been reorganized and rerouted according to their laws.

According to Weber, Puritan ethic renounced the standpoint of brotherliness. They believed that instead of universalism of love, individuals should rationally be engaged in “ serving God’s will and testing one’s state of grace.” They argued that one should reject salvation as a goal that can be attained by everybody and only particularized grace. Therefore, Weber argues that, “ this standpoint of unbrotherliness was no longer a genuine ‘ religion’.”

This implies that exercising “ God’s will” is not helping the poor and disadvantaged individuals because their lack of material success indicates that God has rejected them into the kingdom of salvation. Thus poverty is categorized as a moral issue and one can make a distinction between “ deserving poor” and “ undeserving poor”. After studying the Protestant group in America, Weber pointed out that the moral worthiness and materialistic success is based on the individuals “ fit to take communion and participation in congregational life.” This implies that loveliness was not commonly available to all, but it was available according to the standards of particular congregation or domination. As a result Weber argued that some religions were not in a position to embrace the notion of compassionate as brotherliness.

Weber clearly believes that there is God and even goes ahead and convinces people not to do what God dislikes. Salvation aristocracies are charged by the command of God to tame the world of sin. Weber indicates that just or holy wars are different from other purely secular wars and profoundly devalue them. Just wars are for executing God’s command and are also known as a war of religion. People engage in these wars for the sake of their

faith. Weber believes in the presence of God and justifies political action as a good way of compelling non-believers to go by the explicit descriptions of morality as proclaimed by faith.

Compassion can only attain its full depth and breadth if it embraces all living creatures and does not limit itself to the human race. Moreover, compassion is the basis of morality and human beings must uphold morals as clearly specified in the holy books. Losing the sense of compassion makes one a miserably being who will be in a state of hopelessness (Gerth, 332).

Compassion and love are necessities for the survival of not only human beings but also other creatures. Humanity must free itself by widening the circle of compassion which goes hand in hand with patience and simplicity. He further does a good job of explaining the disciplinary aspect of universalistic faiths and provides data for the kindhearted face. From weber's explanation, one can deduce that the major social thinkers that helped form and perpetuate social Darwinism and its negative attitudes about the poor were clerics such as William summer and Thomas Malthus (Gerth, 331).

The harm that comes from religion more often creates a complicated moral paradox. The people who commit the things that religion prohibits are in most cases its victims and heavy punishment awaits them. If someone is an enormously authoritative, rightly horrible culprit of religion or commits terrible acts under its veil, God's fury shall be upon them. God's feeling of compassionate turns to a feeling of anger. By saying so, weber tries to convince people to believe in religion and alternatively God despite the fact that they have never seen him. Though we might be angry with some people

we have to have some degree of love towards them notwithstanding their religious perspective.

However, weber explains that our anger about religion should actually come from a place of sympathy. The sight of so many dreadful harms committed in the name of religion should make people angry (Gerth, 333). They should be desperate to see it end. Certainly, those people should motivate our compassion and we should not be too hateful to the extent that we shall not be able to compromise them.

For many protestant groups that weber studied, the original ethic of brotherhood remained in force. Quakers, Anabaptists and Methodists wanted to internalize the ethic of brotherhood with some fewer hesitations. Weber seems to be against such ideas and presupposes that brotherliness should be practiced without any contemplation.

Throughout his life, weber lived so close to his mother and wife. Through them, he got to know the influence of radical religious traditions. A good example is the religious tradition that people should live a compassion life. Both his wife and his mother were affiliates of a Feminist and Social Democratic religious team. He was therefore exposed to their ideas and they politically influenced him. His overall genuine and doubting perspective kept him from giving full support to the ideas held by his mother together with his wife.

The views of various groups of Protestants on the unbrotherly ethic were according to their own understanding of the sacred books such as Old Testament in the New Testament. The Bible, particularly in Proverbs supports that the economic success of an individual is based on the

characteristic of an individual. “ Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor” (Proverbs 10: 4, 12: 24). In this context, the teaching from the bible renounces the compassionate face and therefore urges the poor to work hard to gain economic success rather than waiting for the brotherliness to help them.

However, the same Bible advocates the compassionate face through some texts that illustrates the full ethical insinuation of the “ ethic of brotherly love.” According to the Ten Commandments, the greatest of all is “ love your neighbor as you love yourself” (Mark 12: 31). Therefore, Christians are urged to take care of their neighbor and show them brotherly love. In the New Testament, Jesus told the wealthy man to sell all his properties and share what he have with the poor (Mk. 10: 21). Similarly to the view of Max Weber, the Bible provides a view that religion is comprised of two different faces, that is, Punitive and compassionate face.

Weber seems to have wrestled for a dignified existence despite the many challenges that he went thorough due to what he believed in as far as compassion and brother hood are concerned. He found it unnecessary and unethical to join a group that does not believe in compassion as such a group will only have a tragic ending. Weber also condemns hypocrisy by political leaders as it leads to suffering of innocent individuals. Those who do not practice compassion should not be made miserable but rather encouraged to admit their past and change to the better. Anger should be moderated by compassion. Hiding behaviors so as to evade receiving the same punishment

that we prescribe to others is unrealistic. God punishes those who go against His will and abundantly blesses those who confer to His will.

Work cited

Max Weber, “ Religious rejections of the World: the Meaning of Their Rational Construction,” in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972 P. 330-333