

THREE TRADITIONS IN CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL TEACHING

Guntis Dišlers

Latvian Christian academy

Abstract

The current article sketches some peculiarities of the Christian worldview manifested as Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox traditions shaped by unique social activities of nations and their luminous representatives. These three traditions are described as Roman Catholic (society which pleases God), Protestant (Professional calling from God) and Russian Orthodox (merge of religious and national identity). Traditions are characterized by illustrations from the key documents representing local peculiarities of the Christian mindset. Being mutually interactive, these vectors open up unlimited ways to carry out practical Christian ministry both within the Church and outside its walls at the same time acting as preconditions for Christian social teaching and development of caritative social work.

KEY WORDS: tradition, Christian social teaching, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Russian Orthodox, subsidiarity, caritative social work, calling, national.

Anotacija

Straipsnyje atskleidžiami krikščioniškosios pasaulėžiūros, kurią atskleidžia Romos katalikų, protestantų ir Rytų stačiatikių tradicijos, ypatumai, nulemti unikalios tautų socialinės veiklos ir jų ryškiausių atstovų. Nagrinėjamos trys tradicijos: Romos katalikai (bendruomenė, siekianti Dievo malonės), protestantai (profesinis pašaukimas iš Dievo) ir rusų stačiatikiai (tautinio ir religinio identiteto samplaika). Kiekviena šių tradicijų analizuojama remiantis svarbiausiais dokumentais, kurie atskleidžia jos formuojamos krikščioniškosios mąstysenos ypatumus. Būdami tarpusavyje susiję visi trys vektoriai sudaro neribotas galimybes praktikuoti krikščionybę tiek Bažnyčios viduje, tiek už jos ribų ir tampa krikščioniško socialinio mokymo bei karitatyvinio socialinio darbo pagrindu.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: tradicija, krikščioniškas socialinis mokymas, Romos katalikai, protestantai, rusų stačiatikiai, subsidiarumas, karitatyvinis socialinis darbas, pašaukimas, tautinis.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15181/tbb.v67i2.851>

Introduction

As a matter of fact Social teaching of the Christian Church rests on common platform of redemptive history revealed in both Old and New Testament writings, Acts of apostles and subsequent tradition of the Church, incl. writings of the Church fathers, both Eastern and Western. Sure, the Christian Church worldwide shares common principles in dogmatics regardless of denomination. Consequently, Social teaching of the Christian Church deals with questions related to people living together – be it family, particular nation, or civilization taken glob-

ally, and describes attitude to the hotly debated issues of the day (e.g., global threat to natural environment and ecology, bioethics, war, crime and punishment etc.). Key principles described in the Gospel are applied up-to-date, and this is exactly what the Social teaching works for. On the other hand each particular Christian denomination develops its own approach to social issues. Particular documents of the Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox and Protestant Churches are available in all European languages and they testify to the on-going presence of the Christian worldview in the multicultural and multi-religious setting of the 21st century.

But that is only a surface. The current article sketches some peculiarities of the Christian worldview manifested as Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox *traditions*. Obviously, the Church lives and ministers to people through ages in diverse cultural settings. These traditions are shaped by unique social activities of nations and their luminous representatives. Each European nation has developed its own specific profile rooted in historical circumstances. And here comes the moment when these local traditions, perhaps unwillingly, start to influence and guide both the nation and individuals. The general Christian dogmatics is fertilized by its local applications. For example, the way in which Crusaders invaded Livonia in 13th century has provoked polemics about the meaning of the Gospel of God's love on the one hand and the ways of Christian mission on the other. Opinions are controversial, as readers both outside and inside the Church know that. The much-debated conflict between ancient Baltic tribes and cultures and Christian Crusaders is an example, perhaps drastic, which shows unavoidable challenges the Church of Christ meets in its particular cultural context. This is where the "tradition" (e.g., Latvian – different from that in Lithuania or Russia) comes into mind.

On the other hand various influences of German (Roman Catholic and Lutheran), Russian (Old Believers and Orthodox), Polish (Roman Catholic) and particularly Latvian (sometimes described as Pietistic, e.g., during 18th–19th century in Vidzeme) Christian denominations and movements have influenced Latvian mentality and Christian practice, national perception of history, culture, art – besides perception of general Christian virtues and tasks of social ministry and practical piety. The article sketches key concepts in relationships between the individual and society in diverse historical perspectives. It should be noted that the "tradition" sometimes may find its expression in the teaching, and it may stay as particular subtext in the public unconscious. Hereby we offer insight in three different vectors of development within the Christian Church historically represented by three major Christian denominations. Being mutually interactive, these vectors open up unlimited ways to carry out practical Christian ministry both within the Church and outside its walls.

Before we step into that territory, a short overview of the making of Social teaching of the Christian Church is needed. Uniformed Social teaching of the

Christian Church got its shape during the 2nd part of the 19th century when majority of European industrial countries and Russia experienced deep social crisis caused by fast development of industrial manufacturing in cities. The Church the process has been described as many-folded, having its expressions in:

1. Migration of workers from the country to large cities and growth of factories. Great concentration of workers caused exploitation by “capitalists”. Various ideologies (Communism being just one of them) were born as a response to burning social issues.
2. Development of technologies caused alienation of people from their job. Qualitatively different organization of the work administration appeared.
3. More effective economical and juridical mechanisms and institutions were created (e.g., credits and respective juridical means to administrate them) and they substituted the old way of personal involvement.
4. The traditional (peasant’s) way of life slowly disappeared from the stage of history. Proletariat “had no home” (as K. Marx put it) and traditional institutions had to adapt to new circumstances – or die.

All these processes coincide with the golden era of Capitalism when people felt themselves as masters of the world. Explosion of industry led to new forms of exploitation, both physical (economical) and spiritual. Money and gold ruled the world rather than God: “That form of consciousness becomes even stronger as a sort of neo-religion, it is a rebirth of the cult of the Golden calf; being universally encompassing it pulls into the sphere of its influence whole societies, gripping literary all aspects of human existence” (Неклас, 1995). Early Communists and the Church reacted by creating their “social teachings”.

1. Society which pleases God (Roman Catholic tradition)

According to the renowned Catholic theologian Cardinal Josef Hüffner (1906–1987) the task of the Christian social teaching is to “build social order which pleases God, to maintain and implement it by following prescriptions of Salvation revealed in the Gospel” (Хёффнер, 2001). Christian social teaching is “totality of socio-philosophical and socio-theological knowledge about the essence and management of human society, its consequent norms and tasks”, whereas its goal is “to create society in which men are able to fulfil God’s will and live dignified Christian life”.

The Catholic social teaching was born in 1891 when the encyclical of the Pope Leo XIII “*Rerum novarum*” (“New things”) was published (with a subtitle “On the

Conditions of Labor”). The task of the document was to formulate attitude towards radically acute social issues mentioned above and to formulate Catholic alternative to the Marxist ideology dealing with class struggle and purely economic view of history. The condition of workers was explained by several factors: unprecedented industrialization, achievements in technologies squeezing out manual work, social conflicts, and social insecurity. The Pope taught that the role of the State is to promote social justice through the protection of rights, while the Church must speak about social issues in order to teach correct social principles and ensure class harmony. People must be protected and society should be reminded about rights of the working people: “Let the working man and the employer make free agreements, and in particular let them agree freely as to the wages; nevertheless, there underlies a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accept harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford him no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice.” Additionally, Marxist ideology (described as “labor movement” and “compulsory union membership”) was opposed by healthy model of *social policy*. It is implemented by close co-operation of three institutions: the Church, the State and professional unions of workers.

Encyclical distinguished the larger, civil society (also called the “commonwealth”, or “public society”), and smaller, private societies which exist within it. The civil society exists to protect the common good and preserve the rights of all equally. Private societies are diverse and exist for various purposes within the civil society. Trade unions (called “workingmen’s unions”) are one type of private society. Other examples of private societies are families, business partnerships, and religious orders. The Pope strongly supported the right of private societies to exist and self-regulate: „Private societies are severally part of the commonwealth, [and they] cannot nevertheless be absolutely, and as such, prohibited by public authority. For, to enter into a “society” of this kind is the natural right of man; and the State has for its office to protect natural rights, not to destroy them (...) The State should watch over these societies of citizens banded together in accordance with their rights, but it should not thrust itself into their peculiar concerns and their organization, for things move and live by the spirit inspiring them, and may be killed by the rough grasp of a hand from without.”

It should be stressed the Catholic social teaching is neither political nor – even less – economical doctrine. Whereas several aspects of religion and politics and economy do meet, the Church follows its own peculiar autonomy, since the Gospel has stated clearly: “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto

God the things that are God's" (Mt. 22: 21). The Church doesn't need to offer clearly stated "technical" solutions which are executed by respective structures. Similarly the State should respect specific mission of the Church – that of spreading the Gospel and shaping of people's moral and spiritual consciousness. In this regard the Church and the State, both ministering to the same people, has moral obligation to support mutual dialogue and cooperation.

Pope Pius XI in his encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno" ("In the 40th anniversary" after "Rerum novarum") (1931) discussed ethical implications of the social and economic order. He described major dangers for human freedom and dignity arising from unrestrained Capitalism and totalitarian Communism. By the word "capitalism" the Church understands something more complicated than just market economy – it's a system where the "ruling notion of freedom is not grasped by a solid juridical context but rather serves full-scale permissiveness" (Svētīgā pāvesta Jāņa Pāvila II uzruna, 1993).

Social teaching of the Church is not some the third way between Communism and Capitalism. It points to inviolable borders and suggests possible ways how various political and economic projects would work for human dignity according to moral imperatives. Consequently, the key lines of the Roman Catholic Church tradition are clearly visible along with its criticism of Capitalism. Industrialization, the Pope said, resulted in less freedom at the individual and communal level, because numerous free social entities got absorbed by larger ones. A society of individuals became a mass and class society. People are much less interdependent than in ancient times and become egoistic or class-conscious in order to save some freedom for themselves. The Pope draws a negative view of Capitalism, especially of the anonymous international finance markets. Inhuman Capitalism oppresses not only social freedom, but what is more important – the spiritual one: "Once the transcendent grasped by humans is not even mentioned, a person disappears like a drop in the ocean and its dignity loses its most stable guarantee. An individual person was oppressed or simply annihilated by the imaginative class benefit: rejection of God robs person its roots and consequently urges to change the society structure without caring for the dignity of a person and his social responsibility" (Encyclical of the Pope John Paul II "Centesimus Annus", 1991).

This thesis obviously demonstrates key notion of the Catholic social teaching where all other ideas start, namely: the center and criteria of the social structure is *a man to whom the ability to recognize and to practice his or her inalienable dignity as creation of man in "God's image", his self-transcendence is made possible*. The quality of society is valued by human dignity, and not vice versa. Humans are in essential need for mutual relationships; however, their personal relationships with God are to be put in the center. "Objectively existing mutual dependency ac-

quires dignity since it calls for solidarity and love”, said John Paul I in his address to academics in Riga (1993). The center of any society is a person possessing its rationality, therefore society must not be looked upon as formless mass absorbed by the State (Communism); rather it must be looked upon as an organism made of multitude of members who “beginning from the family and ending with economic, social, political and cultural units exist as various intermediary groups finding their harmony by sharing the same human nature and possessing their autonomy for common good” (Ibid).

The key organizing principle calling for reconstruction of the social order is that of *subsidiarity*. The principle was originally developed by German theologian Oswald von Nell-Breuning and taken over by Pope Pius XI in “Quadragesimo Anno”¹. It holds that government should undertake only those initiatives which exceed the capacity of individuals or private groups acting independently. Functions of government, business, and other secular activities should be as local as possible. If a complex function is carried out at a local level just as effectively as on the national level, the local level should be the one to carry out the specified function.

Subsidiarity assumes that humans are by their nature social beings, and emphasizes the importance of small and intermediate-sized communities or institutions, like the family, the church, labor unions and other voluntary associations, as mediating structures which empower individual action and link the individual to society as a whole. “Positive subsidiarity”, which is the ethical imperative for communal, institutional or governmental action in creating social conditions for full development of the individual, such as the right to work, decent housing, health care, etc., is another important aspect of the subsidiarity principle. It was subsequently taken over and developed by distributism².

¹ The Paragraph 79 states: “As history abundantly proves, it is true that on account of changed conditions many things which were done by small associations in former times cannot be done now save by large associations. Still, that most weighty principle, which cannot be set aside or changed, remains fixed and unshaken in social philosophy: Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.”

² According to distributists, property ownership is a fundamental right and the means of production should be spread as widely as possible rather than being centralized under the control of the state (state socialism), a few individuals (plutocracy), or corporations (corporatocracy). Distributism therefore advocates a society marked by widespread property ownership. Co-operative economists argue that such a system is a key to bringing about a just social order.

For the concept of caritative social work it is important to note that the Church's belief in subsidiarity is found in the programs of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, where grassroots community organizing projects are supported to promote economic justice and end the cycle of poverty. These projects directly involve the people they serve in their leadership and decision-making. Principle of subsidiarity should be followed in any project of the State, economy and society in general: goods must be used for the benefit of all because this is the way how commonality and solidarity of God's given gifts in relationships between people are unfolding. It means that the private property is legal and one should accept its proper social function for personal and family autonomy; importance of labor must be recognized because it is fundamental for the laborers' dignity; humans must not be reduced to mere commodities or parts of the production chain; human ecology must be promoted with respect towards all human beings from inception till their natural death, constituting basis for "cosmic ecology". There must be a vision of the State serving solidarity and protection. The State must be both judicial and social, which guarantees legal order in mutual relationships and provides the necessary support for the weak so that the influential ones do not oppress them with their might and ignorance: there must be complete democracy (Svētīgā pāvesta Jāņa Pāvila II uzruna, 1993).

Finally the principle was recognized by the Treaty of European union as "fundamental to the functioning of the European Union, and more specifically to European decision-making. In particular, the principle determines when the EU is competent to legislate, and contributes to decisions being taken as closely as possible to the citizen" (The principle of subsidiarity). It is an organizational principle which envisages strict distribution of the competence of institutions of both central and various levels of power so that each of them compliment other but not compete by involvement in other's competences. In practical politics it means that subsidiarity "secures more opportunities for higher levels and institutions, albeit lower levels are endowed with more responsibility and more duties which they are able to accomplish with means at their hand" (Ašmanis, 2001); the central authority performs only those tasks which are not possible on the local level. The principle states that no one has rights to strip the individual his tasks he is able to carry out with his own potential or delegate them over to a community.

Henceforth the principle puts small and mid-sized communities (family, parish, professional organization of workers etc.) in the focus – which stimulates individuals and puts them in closer contact with society at large. Subsidiarity is an ethical principle for communal, institutional and governmental cooperation; it has helped to initiate grass-root movements by means of social entrepreneurship (not discussed in this article) and personal involvement in decision-making process.

Caritative social work recognizes positive meaning of this potential. All activities promoting and developing self-contained decisions, initiatives of an individual rooted in contacts with environment should be treated as “caritative” on both individual and community levels.

2. Professional calling from God (Protestant tradition)

Although Protestantism was born in the 16th century, its seed may be found already in works of those theologians and philosophers, who stood against secularization of the then Roman Catholic Church (Waldo in France, 13th cent., J. Wycliffe in England, 14th cent, and others in Switzerland, Holland, Germany). They pointed to the power of Pope, disparity between class structure in society and oppression of the masses on the one hand and high value of human life, on the other.

The teaching of those “early prophets” of Protestantism may be summarized briefly in the few following theses which deal with relationships between the power of the law and dynamics of society:

1. Founding principle for human society is justice rather than power. People must not deprive others, but share their goods and to cooperate.
2. The rich are typically unwilling to carry out necessary changes for successful development of society; they are stunned by their wealth and delights accumulated in merciless and egoistic acquisition. Greed and deafness slows down purposeful and rational development and provokes disappointment in political power *per se*.
3. Consequently the vector of criticism was aimed at lordship of the ruling class. In essence it was a call to return to modest and solitaire life of early Christians who ignored worldly riches and temptations brought about by trade.
4. It is not human pride which is to be praised but rather humility and meekness; not wealth but voluntary contentment and “cleanness”.

In England, for example, the criticism didn't stay unnoticed: in 1601 Queen Elizabeth I³ yielded to influence of the so-called independent movement and signed “The Poor Law” (The Poor Law). The essence of the Law may be described as follows: the State must do everything to combat poverty. One of the key reasons of poverty was dissolution of the monasteries in England instigated by King Henry VIII between 1536 and 1540 which put vast sums of money into the royal coffers

³ Her personal religious convictions have been much debated. She was a Protestant, but kept Catholic symbols (such as the crucifix), and downplayed the role of sermons in defiance of a key Protestant belief.

and saw monks and nuns homeless and many poor people without a place of refuge. Now when the whole medieval Feudal system built on a hierarchial pyramid system broke down, the lords of the manor were made responsible for the peasants who lived on their land. The new Law stated that each community must take care for its elderly and incapable to work. If voluntary donations were not sufficient for relief, lawyers insisted on “contribution” from all wealthy citizens who refrained to donate voluntarily⁴. Distribution of goods was entrusted to Christian congregations. The mechanism turned out to be very effective in both economic and social terms and it worked for solidarity between citizens. Later the Law was put to good account in legislation not only in England, but also in many European countries. As it will be shown, activity turning away from religious affairs to the worldly resulted in unique concept of professional calling by God.

Approach to social issues was systematized during Reformation era, 16–18th cent. (M. Luther, J. Calvin) and 19th cent., especially in 20th century (K. Barth, D. Bonhoeffer, P. Tillich etc.). It should be noted, however, that Protestant teaching is not uniform; it develops in various directions with different emphasis. However, following German sociologist, economist and philosopher M. Weber (Вебер, 1990; Булгаков, 1996) and Russian Orthodox philosopher S. Bulgakov (Булгаков, 1996; Bulgakov, 1909) all Protestant developments have one thing in common, viz., Salvation of man and acquisition of the life eternal. It may be described briefly as follows.

On the one hand, the idea of predestination known only to God is dominant in the concept of salvation. On the other hand, personal salvation is also the major concern for all, it is to be dealt with during whole life. The answer to the challenge is found in active professional work. Why so?

Man is oriented on thriftily activity based on his strict religious assumptions, his duty and responsibility before the Creator as the utmost authority. Criteria which shows the value of the activity is success – a proof of ones responsible daily labour, simplicity and modesty in daily affairs, abstinence from material wealth and consumerism, permanent control over own virtues. M. Webber in his famous and much debated book “Capitalism and Protestant Ethics” (actually a collection of his earlier essays) analyzes the role of Protestant faith in positive understanding of work. (On debate between the Western and Orthodox way in Capitalism see: Stanchev, 2008.) Naturally, he analyzes the process why and how professional activity was gradually merged with the notion of God’s calling. For example, in the 18th–19th cent. Europe it was enough to prove one’s membership in some Protestant

⁴ It should be noted that St. John Chrysostomus recommended the same policy in the 4th cent. Constantinople.

group to acquire full trust at the bank, successful credit and to enjoy welcome by entrepreneurs belonging to the same denomination.

Interestingly, M. Weber points to the fact that majority of those entrepreneurs and heads of large businesses as well as majority of highly qualified workers came from Protestant circles. He explains the fact by several historical reasons rooted in basic notions of the denomination. For example, his observation is that working Catholics show tendency to keep their social status and they stay skilled craftsmen within their own limits whereas Protestants show ambitions to join ranks of leaders: “In those circumstances a single connection between causes and consequences may be observed, namely, *peculiar structure of psyche inherited from previous generations by means of upbringing*, more specifically with upbringing shaped by religious atmosphere at home – which denotes professional choice and further development of professional activity.” M. Weber argues that Catholics appear more “alienated from the world”, and it is because ascetic ideals promote certain ignorance in worldly affairs and material wealth. He describes antagonizing discussions between representatives of both denominations: “Protestants, using the schema, criticize ascetic ideals (real or imagined) of the Catholic setting, whereas Catholics reproach Protestants being materialistic – which comes as a result of secularization of the whole life contents.”

M. Weber uses an argument from the M. Luther’s translation of the Bible (1522–1534) (chapter “The Luther’s concept of calling”). The professional “calling” and that of God merges in a German word *beruf*. For the first time it appears in Eccl. Sirach. 11: 20–21: “Stick to your job, work hard at it and grow old at your work. Do not admire the achievements of sinners, trust the Lord and mind *your own business [beruf]*.” In his penetrating analysis M. Weber argues that the use of the word *beruf* was motivated more by the interpreter’s wish rather than by the actual meaning of the original text in Hebrew. Nevertheless, the notion was caught up and accepted in many translations and played an important role in the shaping of the user’s minds. So M. Luther and Reformation have created new meaning of the word: “There is no doubt that the new ingredient in the word was evaluation by which carrying out duties of a secular profession were seen as the highest goal of a virtuous life. Henceforth the notion of religious dimension of one’s mundane calling was born. *Beruf* reflects the central dogma of all Protestant movements... The only way to please God is not rejection of worldly virtues from heights of the monastic asceticism but rather scrupulous and dutiful carrying out one’s worldly duties – they indeed prescribe the place in life, and consequently carrying out these duties acquire dimension of [religious] *calling*.” The monastic way is not only meaningless for justification of man, more than that – for M. Luther it gives birth to egoism and cold alienation, superficial attitude towards men’s worldly du-

ties. Subsequently, worldly activity in M. Luther's opinion is characterized as love towards one's neighbor by essence, because "partition of labor asks to work for the benefit of the other".

Summarizing, "professional calling is what men should accept as God's will for their lives professional activity is a task given by God, even his main task". The partial truth in those words is proved by further development of European mentality in Protestant countries. As history shows, the schema exposed by M. Weber has been viable. Indeed, there is no other way to grasp the meaning of life unless you work hard for it.

3. In the name of Fatherland (Russian Orthodox tradition)

Russian Orthodox traditional approach to social issues has been described in both purely theological treatises and shown by numerous practical examples. The focus of the mid-11th cent. treatise (i.e., soon after Baptism of Russia) "A word on Law and Blessings" by Metropolitan Hilarion was on relationships between the State and society. The author argues that „all nations were saved by the Gospel through Baptism" and Russian nation deserves equal praises among other nations of the world. In subsequent centuries stories about the one of the most important figures in the Russian Orthodox history Sergius of Radonezh (14th cent.) became popular because of his important role in unification of the Russian lands under one faith – Sergius was both monk, founder of monasteries, and hero of Orthodox faith against Mongols, and he selflessly devoted himself to his fatherland. The issue of relationships between the State and the Church marked polemics between mid-15th cent. Saints Nilus of Sora (leader of the Russian medieval movement opposing ecclesiastic landownership) and Ioseph Volotsky (prominent caesaropapist⁵ ideologist); their treatises are also important for analysis of the monastic life of the day, emphasizing traditions and models of working together and sharing of goods. Wide spectrum of social issues – salvation and morals of people of the world, meaning of culture, organization of family life, secular power and the Church etc. – is analyzed in writings of the Church writers and theologians of the 19th century (Metr. Philaret, Ignaty Bryanchaninov, Theophan the Recluse etc.).

According to dominant view the specifically Russian Orthodox approach to social issues in Russia was shaped in writings of the so-called Slavophiles in the mid-19th century (A. Homyakov, Y. Samarin, K. Aksakov etc.). Their context was political – they raised the question of the future development of Russia. A century

⁵ Caesaropapism is the idea of combining the power of secular government with the religious power, or making it superior to the spiritual authority of the Church; especially concerning the connection of the Church with government.

ago the great Russian czar Peter I in 18th century founded his capital Saint Petersburg, cut the “window” to the West, implemented several crucial reforms within the Orthodox Church, abolished Patriarch and instituted numerous “Western” changes in his State administration. Slavophiles took all those changes as a threat to traditional Russian (Slavonic) way of life and religion, so they turned against the so-called Westerners. Slavophilism as an ideology was based on a concept of collective rural life and work in a peasant’s community, which helps to avoid destructive tendencies of the Western thinking (subjectivism, egoism, individualism, relativism of morals, rationalism etc.). The Slavophiles were determined to protect what they believed were unique Russian traditions and culture. The role of the Orthodox Church was seen by them as more significant than the role of the State. Socialism was opposed by Slavophiles as an alien thought, and Russian mysticism was preferred over “Western rationalism”.

The Slavophile movement laid foundation for later development of luminous Russian religious (Orthodox) philosophy (V. Solovyev, V. Rozanov, S. Bulgakov, N. Berdyaev, I. Ilyin, P. Struve, L. Karsavin etc.). These authors described creative potential of the Greek – Russian Orthodox Christianity especially facing challenges of modern era (Capitalism, Socialism, atheism, breakdown of traditions etc.).

These ideas were closely connected with conviction that “Holy Russia” is the “Third Rome”. The idea was known to Russians already since collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 14th century. Holy Russia was seen as the successor to the legacy of ancient Rome (the “first Rome”) and, according to different perspectives, either via connection to the Byzantine Empire (also known as the “Eastern Roman Empire”) as being the “second Rome”; or via connection to the Western Roman Empire through its claimed successors such as the Papal States or the Holy Roman Empire as being the “second Rome”. The first and the second Rome collapsed due to pagan invasions, moral corruption inside the State and Western heresies. Both Slavophiles and many Russian religious thinkers were propagators of the choosiness of Russian Orthodox nation – united, internally homogeneous, possessing great potential of the true Christianity against the divided and liberal West. Several political analysts and journalists have noted that the present President of Russia Vladimir Putin aspires to make the Russian Federation into the Third Rome (Papkova, 2009).

The Russian Orthodox tradition grew from deep immersion of individual into collective – that collective being both rural community and national identity. And it shows strength from the age-old merge of religious belief and great national sentiment. There is no abstract Christianity but the national one accepted and practiced both national and individual levels.

Conclusion

These three traditions are described as Roman Catholic (society which pleases God), Protestant (Professional calling from God) and Russian Orthodox (merge of religious and national identity). Traditions are characterized by illustrations from the key documents representing local peculiarities of the Christian mindset. Being mutually interactive, these vectors open up unlimited ways to carry out practical Christian ministry both within the Church and outside its walls at the same time acting as preconditions for Christian social teaching and development of caritative social work.

Received 2014 06 02

Approved for publishing 2014 07 01

References

- Svētīgā pāvesta Jāņa Pāvila II uzruna, tiekoties ar Latvijas Universitātes mācību spēkiem, studentiem, inteliģences pārstāvjiem 1993.gada 9.septembrī.* (1993). [Address of the blessed Pope John Paul II to teaching staff, students of Latvian University and representatives of academic circles in September 9]. Website: <http://forums.delfi.lv/read.php?f=97&t=282855&a=1>
- Ašmanis, M. (1999). *Politikas terminu vārdnīca*. [Dictionary of political terms.] Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC.
- Bulgakov, S. (1909). *The National Economy and the Religious Personality*.
- Encyclical of the Pope John Paul II "Centesimus Annus"*. (1991).
- Papkova, I. (2009). *Saving the Third Rome: "Fall of the Empire", Byzantium and Putin's Russia*. Website: <http://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/vol-xxiv/saving-the-third-rome/>
- The Poor Law in modern English*. Website: <http://www.sochealth.co.uk/resources/national-health-service/health-law/poor-law-1601/>
- The principle of subsidiarity*. Website: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/lisbon_treaty/ai0017_en.htm
- Stanchev, K. (2008). Sergey Bulgakov and the Spirit of Capitalism. *Journal of Markets & Morality*, vol. 11: 149–156.
- Булгаков, С. (1996). *Философия хозяйства*. Москва.
- Вебер, М. (1990). *Протестантская этика и дух капитализма*. Москва.
- Неклас, А. (1995). Конец цивилизации, или конфликт истории. *Мировая экономика и международные отношения*, no. 5: 75.
- Хёффнер, И. (2001). *Христианское социальное учение*. Москва: Духовная Библиотека.

