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Biblical Aspects of Economic Literature

ABSTRACT

The biblical aspects in Ukrainian economic literature of the 20th and 21st century and its preconditions in European economic literature have been examined. The economic theory has been rethought in the context of Christian economic ethics. The 21st century is, in a way, a result of spirituality of the previous generations, and most of all Christian spirituality. A number of socio-economic researches (such as labor processes, the study of wealth and poverty features) have shown that within the existing paradigm of science it is almost impossible to explain their nature and patterns of operation. The development of Christian economic ethics may be just the impetus not only for fairly significant change in economic thinking, but also for the further development of public opinion in general.

KEY WORDS: economic literature, theory, Christianity, aspects, Bible

STRESZCZENIE

Biblijne aspekty literatury ekonomicznej

W artykule przedstawiono aspekty biblijne literatury ekonomicznej XX i XXI w. na Ukrainie i ich uwarunkowania w ekonomicznej literaturze europejskiej. Teoria ekonomiczna została poddana refleksji w kontekście chrześcijańskiej etyki ekonomicznej. Wiek XXI jest w pewnym sensie produktem duchowości poprzednich pokoleń,

a przede wszystkim duchowości chrześcijańskiej. Wiele badań społeczno-ekonomicznych (takich jak procesy pracy, badania bogactwa i biedy) wykazało, że w ramach istniejącego paradygmatu nauki jest prawie niemożliwe, aby wyjaśnić ich charakter i wzorce działania. Rozwój chrześcijańskiej etyki gospodarczej może się stać impulsem nie tylko dla dość istotnych zmian w myśleniu ekonomicznym, ale także dla dalszego rozwoju opinii publicznej w ogóle.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: literatura ekonomiczna, teoria, chrześcijaństwo, aspekty, Biblia

Spiritual life, in its deep internal essence has always interested thinkers with its relationships between the spiritual and the material and practical activities. In the modern circumstances, it is important to focus on issues insufficiently studied, that for a long time remained unnoticed by the unbiased theoretical analysis. We have to show the public not only the past, but the current reality, offer perspectives for development and ways to improve business in the socio-economic sphere, particularly economics. Humanity is summing up its gains and losses. Mass production has created an opportunity to think about the price of material things that we use and the problems that global economy creates, on top of its impact on the development of the human mind. Research on the motivation of economic practical activity forces scholars to turn towards the ethical aspect of economic theory.

The religious aspect of economic theory stems from the teachings of the Christian traditions which have long been neglected by the structural development of research in our country while the Western opinion, especially in the works of Max Weber, it is known, directly linked not only social human economic activity but the very origin of the “spirit of capitalism” with the economic factors of Christian ethics. A. Smith (1723-1790) saw the economic sphere of society from a position of ethical and economic synthesis and initiated the theoretical relationship of ethics with economic theory. In the twentieth century, in connection with the definition of economics as a sphere of social life, economic theory was greatly enriched in particular due to the paradoxical views, including material production processes that were expressed by the French philosopher Georges Bataille (1897-1962) – author of novels, poet, essayist, economist, and mystic. Unlike Samuelson, he considered the world of material things not as a limited production process, but rather as “the economy of loss,” “the economy of gift,” or “anti-economy.” His book, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on*

General Economy (1949), calls itself in the preface “a work in the political economy.” In this work, the author turns to economic issues from the perspective of consumption, waste, offering, gift, etc., not from the standpoint of production. At the same time, Western thought, particularly in the writings of Max Weber, directly linked not only the human social economic activity, but also the emergence of the very “spirit of capitalism” with the factor of economic Christian ethics, in particular in the confessional version of Protestantism. The works of prominent Ukrainian scholars, including Catholic theologians (both Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic), theorists from the Ukrainian diaspora, also developed questions related to the interaction of Christian economic ethics and economics, especially after 1891, when the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII was announced.

At the end of the twentieth century, there was a rise of research on the Christian theological ideas, which in any way interpret the relationship between ethics and economic theory and practice of economic phenomena (including the development of by Georges Bataille, Amartya Sen, Peter Kozlowski, I.I. Agapova, V.Y. Yokhin etc.). It should be emphasized that the socio-philosophical thought of all Christian history, and especially of the late 19th early 20th centuries until this day, has linked a person’s ability to exercise his or her religious beliefs with socio-economic activity. We should also note the importance of considering the general aspects of the connection between ethics with economic processes in *On Ethics and Economics*, the work of the prominent modern economist Amartya Sen (born in India in 1933), professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University, and professor of economics at Trinity College, Cambridge (England), winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics. This renowned scientist dealt primarily with the problems of poverty and wealth. It was Amartya Sen who proposed to evaluate and measure the quality of living and the level of economy not by quantitative indicators (GDP per capita) but by another system that provides for measuring such a concept as the Human Development Index, which takes into account not only quantitative indicators of per capita wealth, but also qualitative metrics, such as: infant mortality, health, education, social stability index and so on. The researcher advocates the involvement of ethical prerequisites in the development of modern economic theory.

Nowadays, the theory of synergy is relevant, that is, interpenetration and interdependence of various sciences, such as theology and economics. In particular, Sergei Cherniavsky in the article *Кризис предбачено в Біблії* [The Crisis was foreseen in the Bible] writes:

All the answers to crises and their nature can be found in the Bible; where they are called grief. The Scripture provides an insightful economic analysis. Crisis is the result of social and economic diseases in society. The main disease is the violation of ethical standards of energy use and distribution in society. This critical illness should be treated with repentance and correction of mistakes (sins) in public relations. It is impossible to cure society with a new falsity. We need radical reform. Radical reforms can only be carried out in a society consolidated in peace and harmony, through social justice. To consolidate the society, we should change the constitutional rules of government formation, the electoral system, the management model nomenclature, we should cancel all the privileges and double standards that divide society. The economic model should be socialized, directing it towards human needs.

Also, The Holy Bible indicates a way out of crisis. In particular Kisters'kyj, in his article *U poshukax vyxodu z kryzy: Bibliya ochyma ekonomista* [Looking for a way out of crisis: the Bible in the eyes of an economist]¹ analyzes the anti-crisis concepts of Nobel laureates Krugman and Keynes on top of leading Ukrainian economists, considering the feasibility of using their solutions in Ukraine to overcome the current crisis. It is shown that the conduct of state regulatory measures to overcome the crisis is in harmony with the economic postulates of the Bible, which are relevant for any time. In this regard, we note that the fundamental principles of economic relations in the society described in the Bible, although they still have not been analyzed or inscribed into a clear system of economic knowledge. The Bible offers a wide range of economic principles and recommendations for successful and harmonious development of society. Many of its chapters contain direct economic teachings, which are highly relevant to any time and level of technological development. The religious aspect of economic theory and social motivation, namely Christian economics and economic ethics, have long been neglected by the constructive developments of our country's thinkers. During the years of Soviet rule, the concept of religious consciousness was formed, which either led (according to Soviet scholars) to social passivity, or was outside the sphere of social, and in particular, economic activity. A significant number of outstanding theological studies related to this issue were either published during the pre-Soviet period and became a rarity or were not translated into Ukrainian (or Russian), which made it difficult to study them.

The renowned explorer of Ukrainian economic thought, S. Zlupko, examines the works of M. Rudenko, *Ekonomichni monolohy, Ne zahlyadayuchy*

1 S. Chernyavskyj, *Kryzu peredbacheno v Bibliyi*, "Ekonomichna Pravda" 2009, 15 January, <http://www.epravda.com.ua/columns/2009/01/15/177653/> (access: 06.06.2016).

u svyatsi [Economic monologues. Not looking in the calendar] and writes: “M. Rudenko defends the energy theory by S. A. Podolynskiy, consistent with the views of F. Quesnay, not Marx.”² M. Rudenko wrote: “The energy of progress is created by freedom. Freedom of trade, freedom of movement, freedom to invest where they are most needed.”³ Also S. Zlupko said, that the work of A. Sheptytskyj, *O Kvestiyi social'nij* [On the social question] can be interpreted meaningfully as a Ukrainian parallel to *Rerum novarum* of Pope Leo XIII, and the fact that the life and work of the Metropolitan were a reflection of his views, the works of A. Sheptytskyj can be regarded as an intellectual biography of the author. His theoretical legacy of social orientation are the works *Cerkva i suspil'ne pytannya* [The Church and social issues] as well as *Cerkva i cerkovna yednist* [The Church and church unity]. The scarcity of studies in business ethics and Christianity can be also illustrated by the example of the collection *Social'na doktryna Cerky* [Social Doctrine of the Church] published by the Institute of Religion and Society at the Lviv Theological Academy. Thus, among the 14 articles in this collection, only 4 discuss some aspects of the economic and business issues:

1. social aspects in the teaching of the Fathers of the Church;
2. attitudes towards material means in Christian social teaching;
3. ideological interpretations of the term “economy;”
4. analysis comparing the attitudes and approaches of Bishop Andrey Sheptytskyj and Ivan Franko to social issues in the Christian sense.⁴

One should consider the monograph by M.I. Lapytskyj, *Pracya ta biznes u dzerkali religij* [Work and business in the mirror of religions] (1998). The monograph addresses the general issues of attitudes to work, economic activity and business, in the world's religions, particularly in Christianity. M.I. Lapytskyj focuses on the concepts and ideas about labor and religious significance of work. Much attention is paid to the peculiarities of attitudes towards work and entrepreneurial activity in the world religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, and Islam. The monograph examines how Christianity is divided into three main currents: Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism. The analysis of Catholicism in this monograph is limited to the research of the *Rerum novarum* encyclical by Pope Leo XIII and the encyclicals on social issues by Pope John Paul II, leaving gaps in the study of economic problems on the interactions between

2 L.L. Kisters'kyj, *U poshukax vyzhodu z kryzy: Bibliya ochyma ekonomista*, “*Ekonomika Ukrainy: naukovyj zhurnal*” 2014, No. 1, pp. 21-32.

3 S.M. Zlupko, *Ekonomichna dumka Ukrainy*, Lviv 2000, p. 411.

4 M. Rudenko, *Ekonomichni monolohy (Narysy katastrofichnoyi pomylky)*, “*Suchasnist*” 1978, p. 179.

Christian ethics and economics. Considering some confessional versions of Christian social ethics, the authors of the encyclopedia of social philosophy believe that “in accordance with Protestantism, public, secular, ‘practical’ morality is an antithesis of higher moral precepts of Christ. The ethics of Catholicism (neo-Thomism), in turn, consider the secular morality as imperfect embodiment of ‘divine law.’” In our view, we can agree with M. Lapytskyj says that in Protestantism there is something contrary to the Catholic understanding of Christian morality: “In Protestantism, true faith is not so much regarded as the outward fulfillment of a man’s religious precepts, but as the honest fulfillment of his duties.” However, V.P. Andrushchenko and M.I. Horlach believe that “social motives are widely represented in Christian ethics ... Social ethics sanctions the unification of people for a common purpose, the realization of interests and needs.” Considering the economy as a sphere of human social existence, we are confronted with different ideas about society as a system of social coexistence and life activity of people, but the present state of society in general and the economy in particular have been formed, in our opinion, a long time ago in the so-called “space of European culture” under the influence Christianity as one of the factors of economic development. Some authors (e.g., I.F. Nadolnyj, V.P. Andrushchenko, I.V. Boychenko, etc.) believe that

one should highlight the following aspects of social life:

- A) material – covers the processes of material production, distribution, exchange, consumption, as well as productive forces and industrial relations, scientific and technological progress and technological revolution;
- B) social and political – including social and political relations in society – national, group, international, etc. It is this sector that covers such phenomena and processes as revolution, reform, evolution, or war. In this area there are social institutions such as political parties, the government, or social organizations;
- C) spiritual – a wide range of ideas, views, and representations, that is, the whole spectrum of the production of consciousness (both individual and public), its transformation from one instance to another (mass media), and transformation into the individual spiritual worlds;
- D) cultural and everyday life – covers the production of cultural values, their transfer from one generation to another, family life, domestic matters (organization of leisure, leisure), education, upbringing, etc.

Without denying the fruitfulness of this approach, I also propose a different methodological approach to synthesize the development of social

philosophy in the realm of economic ethics, which covers all these aspects of life.

The development of P. Kostiuk's *Social'na doktryna Cerkvy: khorotkyj narys* [The social doctrine of the Church: a short outline]⁵ in which encyclicals on social issues are analyzed as major sources, pays a lot of attention to other issues of Catholic social doctrine, namely: political, educational, etc., targeting social doctrine, leaving out the need for economic research. The same remarks apply to the work of Dr. Mykola Chyrovskij, *Vvedennya do suspil'no-hospodars'koyi nauky Cerkvy* [Introduction to the socio-economic doctrine of the Church] (1994). M. Chyrovskiy is an American scientist of Ukrainian origin, specialist in economics and history, who emigrated with his family in the early twentieth century. He conducts scientific and teaching activities as a Doctor of Economic and Historical Sciences, a scientific secretary of the Scientific Society of V. H. Shevchenko. In this development, addressed primarily to students of humanities, Dr. M. Chyrovskij aims to outline the general socio-economic doctrine of the Catholic Church. The importance of biblical provisions for the construction and development of a market economy in Ukraine was emphasized in Plotnikov's work, which states that "... the market foundations of the perception of the economy are laid in its spiritual sense, which goes back to the Bible in its entirety."

Let us try to summarize our considerations. L. Bevzenko examines the category of success in life. The religiousness of the Ukrainian society was investigated by N. Dudar, while T. Koval considers some aspects of the Christian attitudes towards work, wealth, etc. Some aspects of the concept of "treasure" are considered in historical studies of the outstanding Ukrainian scientist M.Y. Brajchevskij. A highly complex problem of Ukrainian spiritual self-identification between the East and West was discussed in the dissertation by O.V. Nedavnya; the social functions of religious ritual, including the Eastern rite, which is common for Ukrainian Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches, was studied by V.A. Bodak. Mentality in general was an object of social and philosophical studies by A.H. Kravchenko; while the issues of overlap and differences between Western and Ukrainian mentality were investigated in the thesis of I.S. Starovojt. The peculiarities of the Ukrainian economic mentality were covered by V.Y. Popov, and socio-philosophical analysis of enterprise was included in the work of A.I. Kosykh. The religious orientation of the post-Soviet people in

5 N. Veselaho, *Filosofiya ekonomiky: hreko-katolycka tradyciya*, Odesa 2006, <http://www.xic.com.ua/z-istoriji-dumky/3-bogoslovja/204-natalija-veselago-filosofija-ekonomiky-u-konteksti-hrystyjanskoji-socialnoji-filosofiji-na-materialah-istoriji-greko-katolyckoji-tradyciji> (access: 06.06.2016).

the context of the general world views was developed by A.I. Bojko. In addition, classical and non-classical approaches to the study of the nature of the categories of the economic aspect of society are analyzed by O.V. Romanenko. The role of consciousness in social activities was considered in the study on the social mechanism of individual spirituality by V.F. Baranivskyj.

Let us attempt to summarize, structure and lay out some biblical tenets and economic orders concerning modern economy. The postulate of “In the beginning there was the Word” has been confirmed by devices measuring electromagnetic radiation from thoughts and words. Thus, thoughts and words of a society affect the economic theory of crises. All the answers to crises and their nature can be found in the Bible; where they are called grief. The Holy Scripture is not just God’s revelation, but also an insightful economic or energy and social analysis. The reasons for destruction and grief are many, but always the source has been sin and violation of the laws of the objective world (Is. 3. 3, 9; Is. 5. 8-9; Is. 48; 20-22; Ez. 24; 6-14; Ob. 17-19). In the social sphere, crisis or grief is manifested through the incorrect or distorted exchange and distribution of energy and material goods. The energetic aspect may include bread, property or capital flows, which is identified with the energy of all transformations or situations in society and represents them. The history of mankind has seen many civilizations. A scenario of rise and fall is the same: inception, growth, or development, peak, or prosperity, decline, and lastly, fall that ends with a revolution, the ultimate disappearance of a civilization, or its conquest by a stronger neighbor.

According to a study by the Moody Institute of Science (MIS), crises of all known civilizations developed under the curve, which confirmed the wave theory of crises. And this is no accident, because the life of any civilization is the transformation of energy.

The Bible repeatedly stresses the importance of professionalism in any situation: as people have different capabilities, it follows that they should do whatever their vocation is (Rom. 4, 12: 6, 7, 8). In the Bible, much space is given to the teachings on financial management. The parable of the talents buried in the ground is fairly well known and often cited by people in everyday life. This process is not only against civilization, but it also changes in the socio-economic structure, which The Bible calls kings of the earth (Rev. 17, 7-14). The principles of hegemonic economic power and maximizing of profits pushed the powerful to building a new Tower of Babel, which could be the key to violation of peace and the fundamental laws of God, and above all – the law of conservation of energy and balance, or proportion.

“What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecc. 1, 9). For there is no conscience. Thus, crisis is the result of social and economic diseases in society. The main disease is the violation of ethical standards of energy and goods’ use and distribution in society. This critical illness should be treated with repentance and correction of mistakes (sins) in public relations, for a society cannot be cured with a new falsity. We need radical reform. Radical reforms can only be carried out in a society consolidated in peace and harmony, through social justice. To consolidate society we must socialize the economic model, directing it towards human needs, because according to The Bible, we come to this world for love and happiness, confirming the quote, “Let us ... put on the armor of light” (Rom 13, 12).

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