

## TAKING INDIVIDUALISM AS A CHRISTIAN VALUE IN BUSINESS AND CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES

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### **Abstract:**

In this paper, we examine whether individualism could be taken as a Christian value in cross-cultural studies. The historical link between Protestantism and individualism is discussed. The difference between Protestant and Catholic attitudes towards individualism is shown through qualitative analysis. The relationship between Orthodox Christianity and individualism is also examined particularly in Russian society in the light of historical and empirical evidences. The idea of taking Christianity as an individualistic religion in theoretical frameworks of cross-cultural researches is criticized in the case of a cross-cultural article written by A. Ralston, D.H. Halt, R.H. Tepstra and Y.K.Cheng in the Journal of International Business Studies, first quarter 1997.

### **Özet:**

#### **Kültürler Arası ve İşletmecilik Araştırmalarında Bireyciliğin Hıristiyan Bir Değer Olarak Ele Alınması**

Bu çalışmada, uluslararası kültürel karşılaştırmalar yapılırken bireyciliğin bir Hıristiyan değer olarak alınıp alınamayacağı tartışılmıştır. Protestanlık ve bireycilik arasındaki tarihi bağlar, çağdaş Protestanlığın verileriyle yeniden değerlendirilmiştir. Bireyciliğe yönelik Katolik ve

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**Keywords:** Individualism, Christianity, Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, Cross-cultural comparison Communitarianism.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Bireycilik, Cemaatçilik, Hıristiyanlık, Protestanlık, Katoliklik, Ortodoksluk, Uluslararası kültürel karşılaştırmalar.

Protestan tavırlardaki farklılıklar nitel analizler yardımıyla gösterilmiştir. Ayrıca Ortodoks Hıristiyanlık ile bireycilik arasındaki ilişki de tarihi ve ampirik bulguların ışığında özellikle Rusya örneğinde irdelenmiştir. Bireyciliği Hıristiyan bir değer olarak alan uluslararası karşılaştırmalar A. Ralston ve diğerleri tarafından 1997 yılında Journal of International Studies'de yayımlanan bir makale örneğinde eleştirilmiştir.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

In the beginning of this century, Max Weber developed his famous idea of the Protestant work ethic. He argued that only Calvinism was capable to create a rational and individualistic spirit, 'the spirit of capitalism', other Christian denominations including Lutheranism were not able to do so (Weber, 1985). Can individualism be taken as a Christian value? It depends on what kind of Christianity we are talking about. In this paper, we emphasise the communitarian aspect of Christianity. Although individualism has been fostered by the historical side-effects of certain Protestant movements, contemporary Protestantism does not seem an individualistic religion. Similarly, Catholicism, Orthodoxy and other Eastern Churches cannot be taken as examples for religious individualism, because the Church is the mediator of redemption in these denominations. Catholicism is usually seen as a communitarian belief in terms of organic unity. On the contrary, Calvinism as an individualistic movement (Lukes, 1973). However, nowadays European Christian parties, including Christian Democratic Party in the Netherlands (CDA) and German Christian Democratic Party (CDU) are symphatetic for communitarian ideas. (Expert seminar, 1998). Thus, it is not a proper approach to take individualism as a simple Christian value.

Individualism is an idea which advocates the right and freedom of each individual to make decisions and implement actions independently of others. On the other hand, collectivism, communitarianism and all sorts of socialism are the opposite ideas of individualism (Atkinson and Field, 1995).

Individualism is criticized by communitarian philosophers with five arguments.

- The individualist view of the self is empty;
- It violates our self-perceptions
- it ignores our embeddedness in communal practises;
- It ignores the necessity for social confirmation of our individual judgments; and



- It pretends to have an impossible universality or objectivity (Kymlicka, 1989).

In economic meaning, individualism takes the individual decisions as a basis of society's economic organization. It believes that two institutions are necessary: economic freedom, which is freedom of enterprise, and private property. Therefore, individualism is the system based on free trade, competition, and private property (Lukes, 1973).

We can find a general inclination in cross-cultural business studies in which researchers take Christianity as an individualistic belief versus collectivist Asian belief systems. For example, this total approach may be seen in the study of D.A. Ralston, D.H. Holt, R.H. Terpstra and Y. Kai-Cheng (1997). The authors define both the United States and Russia as individualistic societies and they put them in the same category in terms of individualism.

#### **Method:**

In this paper, we used literature review, various internet sources and interviews for qualitative analysis. As a part of a cross-cultural study, 64 practising Catholic managers from Ireland and 48 practising Protestant managers from Britain were interviewed in what extend they endorse individualistic statements. Findings showed that although British Protestant managers were against individualism as an ideology their individualism endorsement were higher than Catholic managers. The questions regarding individualism in the research are as follows:

- *How disappointed would you feel if you did not reach the targets you had set for yourself.*
- *How important to you is your own success in business?*
- *Do you believe that hard work and ambition are the main factors in gaining success?*
- *Do you believe that the events that occur in your life are the result of your own behaviour, personality and effort*
- *Do you believe that individual decisions are better than group decisions at work*
- *To what extent do you endorse that economic equality in the society is necessary for modern societies*

### **Individualism and Protestantism:**

It is vital to analyze individualism and communitarianism as an important category to examine the relationship between work-oriented behaviours and the religious background. Using this category will help us to understand the relationship between individualism and Christianity. Protestantism, in particular Calvinism, is one of the roots of individualism beside the Enlightenment and the liberal philosophy. In the absence of the intermediary role of the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant believer was alone before God with his or her religious responsibility. This loneliness possibly fostered individualistic attitudes in daily life.

Individualism is usually regarded as a Judeo-Christian value in most Cross-cultural business studies. This assumption has to be questioned seriously before setting up a theoretical framework because taking individualism as a Christian or Judeo-Christian value has not a proper theological background. It is believed that individualism, as a secular ideology, owes something to religious individualism, particularly to Calvinism. However, according to Turner (1994) the causal linkage between individualism and the emergence of capitalism is not clear.

Lukes (1973) defines religious individualism as a view that the believers do not need intermediaries, that they have the primary responsibility for their own spiritual destiny, that they have the right and the duty to come to their own relationship with their God in their own way and by their own effort.

In Weber's theory, the Protestant ethic contains individualistic factors and it is accepted as a result of the predestination belief in Calvinism (Weber, 1985). Although the Protestant ethic is related to the individualism, work-oriented behaviours can appear and survive without individualism. In Calvinism, the belief of the elect or the chosen people of God led people to an inner and social isolation, which was the origin of work-oriented attitudes in Calvinistic society. Therefore, Weber saw the origin of the individualism in the social isolation (Weber, 1985). Similarly the virtue of hard work can also be seen in the isolated Jewish communities throughout the history. However, Weber paid more attention to rationalisation of work rather than individualism.

Macfarlane (1978) has developed a challenging theory on individualism. He stated that although the origin of individualism has been started from the reformation, Renaissance and the Enlightenment, as a matter of fact, individualism is much older than this in England. An Englishman stood in the



centre of world by his ego centred kinship system. According to Macfarlane English individualism cannot be explained in terms of Protestantism and the Enlightenment. He argued that England was as capitalist in 1250 as it was in 1550 or 1750; because, there were already a developed market and mobility of labour and, land was accepted as a commodity and full private ownership was established. In addition, there was a complete distinction between farm and family, more importantly there was also a rational accounting system which is substantial factor for the economic rationality in Weber's theory. He put forward that there should be a link between English individualism and English family and property system (Macfarlane, 1978). In Macfarlane's theory, Calvinism had no role in the development of capitalism as Weber thought. However, it should be noted that even though England has a very special economic history, the accelerator role of Calvinism and Puritanism should not be ignored in this historical process.

R.H Preston (1987) pointed out that the Protestant ethic was individualistic as compared with the corporate and hierarchical outlook of traditional Christian Social Ethics. By the eighteenth century this traditional social ethic had collapsed in Puritan and Anglican thought. He gives John Wesley's famous sermon forty-four 'on the use of money' as a good example. These three maxims are, gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can. This is the abandonment of corporate social ethics. He also mentioned Mrs.Thatcher's remark in her interview in 'Woman's Own' in October 1987, reflecting the individualistic Protestant outlook in which she was brought up: 'There is no such thing as society, there are only individual men and women and there are families.' On the other hand, he said that, some twentieth century Protestant theologians reject the Protestant individualist social theology, which has characterised government ideology of the UK and the USA.

M. Douglas Meeks (1989) suggests a communitarian Protestant work ethic based on social Trinity. The first thing to be said in his theory, is that each person of the Trinity engages in distinctive personal work. Second, the Trinity engages in cooperative work. Traditional views of the triune persons tend to emphasize the Father as being the exclusively active person and other two persons as being acted upon or simply doing the bidding of the Father. The work of the Holy Spirit is especially de-emphasized. Each person's distinctive work cooperates in the work of the other members of the community, that is, each person's work cannot be done without the cooperation of the others. God's work is thoroughly communal or social work.

In his theory, the trinity is a criticism of ideologically defined motivations and incentives of work. All ideologies of work stand under judgement by the integration of God's work through suffering love. God's work is personally distinctive, cooperative, equalitarian, integrated by love, and faithful to God's promises. According to Meeks, work is a way of belonging to, sharing in, and contributing to the life of the community.

Individualism is not the main ideology of modern Protestant and Calvinist theology. There are various ideas such as liberal-individualism and liberation theology. Although, especially Anglo-Saxon societies have some impacts of the Calvinistic religious individualism, the community consciousness became important in modern Protestantism (Meeks, 1989). One of the recommendations on work of World Council of Churches in 1984 is that the Churches will only become more committed through listening to the poor and becoming better informed about the plight of people and communities in areas of industrial decline (Davies and Gosling, 1985).

Andrew Stokes (1992), as an Anglican priest, states that the Church can stimulate and encourage good social behaviour and let itself be 'a beacon set on a hill'. It invites us to keep good company with one another, good company, which strengthens our personal resolve, so that there is a place in a group of people whose hearts are known by all to be set on goodness and love.

Brian Griffiths, a Protestant thinker, sees individualism as a competitive motive but condemned the possessive individualism (Preston, 1987). He said that the philosophy of possessive individualism is profoundly unchristian and the possessive individualism cannot be reconciled with a sense of human solidarity deep in the Christian tradition, still less with the further implications for society of using the phrase 'the body of Christ' for the Church. Nevertheless, he accepts competition as a genuine human phenomenon resulting from the relative scarcity of human resources and a necessary factor in economy.

Robinson (1992), an Anglican priest and academic, agrees with him saying that it is essential to replace the possessive individualism that underlies the thought of such as Hayek and Friedman with the Christian values that Griffiths has outlined.

A German socialist Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann (1984) focused on the significance of work for the community. He put forward that most jobs today, especially in service industries and social services, require



cooperation, work also aids in the socialization of the individual. Through work a person enters the social process, participates in it actively, and is recognized by other people and by society as a whole.

Prosperity theology perhaps is the only modern Protestant movement which sanctifies wealth and condemns poverty. According to the Prosperity theology prosperity should be desired as a divine heritage, poverty is a sin, success is divinely ordained, money and work are divine, the Bible is a prosperity textbook (Pender, 1985). However, Roels (1997) states that most evangelicals are not completely comfortable with prosperity theology and many are uneasy with such beliefs. They recognise that there is not a direct correlation between business success and the depth of one's faith.

Charles Whitehead (1994) shows how evangelical Protestantism is against individualism:

*"Christianity is not based on individualism, but on life expressed through family and community. We meet God in each other just as much as we meet Him in prayerful solitude. Hospitality is the friendly and the generous reception into our homes God tells us it is not good for man to be alone. We all need close relationships in which we can share hopes and dreams. Most people find these relationships in marriage and family, or in some form of community life. These are places where people are committed to share their lives, and helping one another to grow as people of God."*

We can see another anti-individualist view in the web site of The Prayer Book Society of the Episcopal Church:

*"Individualism permeates much twentieth-century, western Christianity. At its best it means that an individual person really believes that Christ died for him, truly for him, and that he has to live wholly for Christ in this world. At its worst, it means that an individual person equates salvation with the search for self-esteem, self-worth, self-realisation, and self fulfillment, or sees little or no value in genuine corporate worship and service of the living God."*

The author separates the religious individualism and secular individualism very clearly while praising the former and condemning the latter.

An American evangelist, D. Wilson, criticise American individualism in the web site of Covenant Evangelism:

*"To put it mildly, American Christianity is regrettably permeated with an individualism that stands in stark contrast to the Biblical teaching of*

*covenantal Christianity. But, even Christians who believe in and emphasize covenantal thinking are still influenced by this individualism."*

Roels (1997) points out that the evangelists gradually put more emphasis on communitarian values such as family, church and mission. Yet, religious individualism is strong with the belief of Christ's redemptive work for the personal salvation of individuals. For an evangelist, an intimate knowledge of on relationship with the Trinitarian God is essential to strong faith and daily motivation. Evangelicals know Old Testament commands to set aside a tenth of all their income for God and many evangelical businessmen give a tithe of their profits to their churches.

In short, Individualism is not the main ideology of modern Protestant theology and communitarianism becomes more important for Protestant theologians. Although Calvinism historically prepared a convenient environment for the development of individualistic society and Protestant societies are more individualistic than Catholic societies, the community consciousness becomes more important in modern Protestantism. Therefore, we can state that taking Christianity or even Protestantism as an individualistic belief has no theological ground.

### **Individualism and Catholicism:**

Catholicism does not have an individualistic ethic in its theology and practise. There is nothing in the Catholic ethic and in the New Testament in favour of the good of the individual versus the good of the group. The Catholic Church is against political individualism and collectivism while she defends a communitarian solidarity among her believers. In 1986, Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the second of the Instructions states:

*"Linked to human dignity are the principle of solidarity and principle of subsidiarity. By virtue of the first, man with his brothers is obliged to contribute to the common good of society at all its levels. Hence the Church's doctrine is opposed to all forms of social or political individualism. By the virtue of the second, neither the State nor any society must ever substitute itself for the initiative and responsibility of individuals and intermediate communities at the level on which they can function, nor must they take away the room necessary for their freedom. Hence the Church's social doctrine is opposed all forms of collectivism (McOustra, 1990:21)*

A Catholic moral theologian, C. Henry Peschke (1979:71) similarly develops Christian personalism against individualism. He puts forward that Christian personalism keeps the Centre between individualism and collectivism



by integrating their justified concerns while at the same time avoiding their pitfalls.

*“Christian personalism does not culminate in the cult of one’s own personality, but rather in the relation between God all-holy and the soul called to salvation.”*

*“Religion as community with God places man not only in the right relation to God but also to his fellowmen and the human community. To be in Christ necessarily means to be bound up with all those who have fellowship in Christ, who are called by Christ. Hence, it belongs to the essence of religious living that it places man in the community with his neighbour. The expression ‘God and Soul’ therefore, must not be construed in an individualistic sense.”*

We can also find another example for the Catholic response to individualism from a modern Catholic movement, ‘Focolore’. The movement was set up by an Italian lay woman, Chiara Lubich during the Second World War. One of the projects of the movement is ‘the economy of communion based on sharing profits with the community. Individuals, shareholders and business people who are sympathetic to the movement have wanted to respond to Chiara’s invitation. They have got to know the economic needs of their brothers and sisters in the movement and have felt the importance of spreading the culture of giving. So they have wanted freely to share their belongings and their earnings. The Focolore movement has its own business companies based on the ‘economy of communion’ and creates jobs training facilities for the unemployed. Although its influence on national economies is restricted by the number of its members and sympathizers, it applies a communitarian ethic to economy and tries to be an alternative way of life against individualism.

The founder of the movement in her speech in 10th November 1991 explains how she is against individualistic capitalist values;

*“unlike the economy of consumerism, based on a culture of having, the economy of communion is the economy of giving. This can seem difficult, arduous, heroic. But it is not; for humanity, made in the image of God, who is love, finds its own fulfilment in the very act of loving of giving. This need lies in the depths of one’s being, whether a believer or non believer. And it is in recognising this, born out by our experience, that the hope lies of spreading the economy of communion throughout the world.”*

The economy of communion can be seen as a response to the ‘spirit of capitalism’ from Catholic point of view in the 20th century.

Since different Christian denominations have different attitudes towards individual and society Christianity should not be taken into account as an individualistic religion. Some empirical results show that there is a significant difference between Catholics and Protestants with regard to individualism. For instance, Moran (1990) examined the notion in Irish literature and folklore suggesting that Irish people differ in their level of fatalism or external locus of control, allegiance to the work ethic and achievement motivation. The Irish who were workers had lower achievement than their American counterparts, but were not significantly different from them on the other measures. Irish who were students, however, scored significantly lower than American on allegiance to the work ethic and achievement motivation.

Shkodriany and Gibbens (1995) examined individualism and collectivism among university students in Mexico and in the United States. Their research revealed that Mexican students' responses were more collectivistic than of the US students. Although the research did not based on religious differences, Mexican students represent the Latin-Catholic culture of Mexico while US students represent a country with the dominant Protestant culture and history. Thus results can be interpreted, the existence of a significant difference between a Catholic and a Protestant society in terms of individualism.

Another research by Leung, K et al (1992) takes Spain as a collectivist European society because of its Catholicism, and compares it to Japan, an Asian collectivist society. The researches found a strong similarity between two societies in terms of procedural preferences.

In practise, the Catholic clergy always warn the believers against the evil of individualism, for example, an Irish Priest, Jim McGuiggan of Belfast complains about individualism in his internet site:

*"In America and Europe the spiritual community is being lost within Christianity because of the rise of individualism and the erosion of faith by agnosticism. Loss of community is central to the original sin that led to separation from God. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in seeking the knowledge of God. The Scriptures are very strong on community. And if you keep individualizing, you fragment. There is no community. And everybody wants his or her rights. My strong impression is that individualism, which is called freedom is not really freedom. When everybody gets their rights, before you are through, there is no community.*

We have found different attitudes towards individualism in the intensive interviews with practising Catholic Irish and practising Protestant British



businessmen and managers. We have chosen particular religious movements in both denominations so that we can have data on individualism from religious point of view. Both groups reported that they were not individualistic and they were against individualism as an ideology. When we started to interpret the conversations we realised that even they exposed similar opinion on the issue, each group had different conception regarding individualism.

A marketing manager and a shareholder of a chocolate factory in Dublin said that he has got responsibility for the workers, he saw them as his family and if he had more profitable opportunities outside of the factory he would have consider at first the situation of the workers at the factory and he would sacrifice of more profit for the sake of the needs of his employees.' And he added that his belief prevents him to be an individualistic one. On the other hand, a non-conformist Protestant businessman in Britain said that he was not individualist because he was a Christian and he always thought what he had done was for Christ. He believes that he has a personal responsibility to God through Jesus Christ and he has to do what Bible and Christ says. He spends his time and money for his community and the poor.

It is very clear in two different responses that the Catholic businessman has a collectivist or strong communitarian point of view since he defines his goals in terms of his employees' interests. His understanding of individual is determined by the concept of being a member of the Holy Catholic Church which is the supreme authority in the Earth on behalf of God. Again he understands individualism as an ideology against society and he does not pay more attention to his personal responsibility to God as a result of the strong role of the Church. On the contrary, the Protestant businessman reported that he was not an individualist, however, because of lack of Church authority he emphasises his own responsibility to God and his own personal relationship with Christ which gives him a privilege. He was true having said that he was not an individualist but it is clear that religious individualism, direct responsibility to God, can be seen in his conversation and this very direct responsibility may give him a strong emphasize on the concept of individual. Therefore, religious individualism is not against the good of society in this case and can be a catalyst for the economic individualism.

### **Individualism and Orthodoxy: The Russian case**

Orthodox Christianity has historical ties with the Byzantine Empire. In the Byzantine Empire the Church and ecumenical Patriarchs were under the control of the state, namely the emperor. Patriarches of Constantinopolis

remained under the control of sultans in the Ottoman era. They were not only religious leaders but also an administrative body of the Ottoman State. Other national Churches, such as Russian and Bulgar Churches, kept a close link with the state until communist era. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the new elected Patriarches of Istanbul by the Holy Synod still need an official approval of the Turkish government which is the historical successor of Byzantine emperors after Ottoman sultans.

This brief history shows that the administrative aspect of the Orthodox Church can produce authoritarianism and communitarianism but not individualism. Orthodox Christianity is not a West European institution and historically does not have any religious individualism in its theology because there is no indirect relationship between God and men. However, especially in the case of Russia, some researches attempt to turn a blind eye to the historical and cultural difference between the eastern Orthodox and the western Protestant ethic. For example, in the study of David A. Ralston, David H. Holt, Robert H. Terpstra and Yu Kai-Cheng, (1997) the authors examine the impact of economic ideology and national culture on the individual work values of managers in the United States, Russia, Japan and China. They use the convergence-divergence-cross-vergence framework as a theoretical framework. It is well known that Eastern and Western cultures have different attitudes towards individual and society. Historically individualism has spread out in Western societies as a particular ideology. There is no doubt that Western societies are more individualistic than Eastern societies. However, the authors put United States and Russia in the same category in terms of individualism, as if they have similar economic, cultural, social and political background. To justify their classification they argue that Russia shares same religion, Christianity, and same European values with the USA. However, this supposition undermines their theoretical framework seriously.

Max Weber (1985) argued that economic individualism had its roots in religious individualism in the West. Nevertheless, the authors see Judeo-Christian religion as the root of Individualism and assert that the Protestant work ethic epitomizes the Judeo-Christian emphasis on personal achievement and individual self-worth. Having said that economic individualism had its roots in religion should not necessarily lead to claim that Judeo-Christian religion is entirely individualistic unlike Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. In fact, Judeo-Christian religion, as well as Eastern religions, has collectivist and communitarian aspects. More importantly, the Protestant work ethic cannot epitomize the Judeo-Christian tradition since it is a kind of deviation from the



original communitarian Christian ethic. Thus, all Christian and Jewish societies cannot be described as individualistic societies due to their religious belief.

The relationship between the Church and the state in Orthodox countries is different from Catholic and Protestant societies. Furthermore, neither Judaism, nor Christianity can be seen as an individualistic religion. In Judaism, there is strong emphasis on community (kehillah, tzibbur) rather than individualism. The most fundamental Jewish concept of community is that of a 'people' or 'nation'. They lived in Christian societies as excluded minorities and this situation reinforced their communitarian attitudes. The precise nature of the Jewish community continues to be a major issue in Jewish studies which range from traditional conception originating in rabbinic and mystical theology of the community of Israel (Keneset Yisrael) as a mystical body whose transcendent character is merely reflected in earthly, historical people, to scientific sociological definitions of the community in terms of its identifying traits, whether racial, cultural or social ( Werblowsky and Wigoder, 1965 ).

It seems the authors put a theological determinism and naive Weberianism which explains capitalistic values as direct results of religion. They also confuse the Protestant work ethic with the worldwide Christian belief and values. A true Weberian approach would seek the Protestant work ethic values, including individualism, in particular societies who have Calvinistic or non-conformist heritage.

In the theoretical framework of the study, Russia has been taken part in the same category with the USA as an individual-oriented culture. For example;

*"In Russia, the economic ideology is more collectivistic-oriented while the national culture is more individualistic-oriented. Russia is quite similar to the U.S in being heterogeneous and largely European in its history and cultural characteristics (Ralston et al, 1997).*

As the results of the study show that individualism score of Russia is higher than Japan and China and lower than the USA, this does not necessarily place Russia as an individualistic culture besides the USA. Similarly, making generalizations from those results will have a slippery ground. On the contrary, the authors generalize that if national culture is the primary force that influences values, then theoretically, Russia and other Christian countries of Eastern Europe would appear to have a better chance for accommodation of Western capitalism than China and the Pacific Rim countries.

The authors show two leading motives to take Russia into the individual-oriented culture group; first, Russia is a heterogeneous and largely European country with its historical and characteristics. Secondly, Russia has Judeo-Christian tradition while Japan and China has not. These suppositions will be examined in the light of theological and historical empirical realities to check that whether Russia can fit it.

First of all, it is not reliable enough to use individualism-collectivism continuum as a measurement tool for making generalizations on the development of a capitalist economy because the linkage between capitalism and individualism is not clear, furthermore, the Japanese case approves that individualism is not a necessity for a capitalist society.

Assuming that Russia is quite similar to the USA in being heterogeneous and largely European in its history and cultural characteristics is totally against historical reality. It can be seen in any history book that until the middle of the nineteenth century, Russia was fundamentally different from Western Europe. The great movements that had formed Modern Europe such as Renaissance, Reformation, Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment, and Industrial Revolution had barely penetrated Russia. Autocracy, buttressed by the Orthodox Church, reigned supreme (Perry, 1993).

Although Russia historically and culturally is a part of Europe, her culture and history differs from Western Europe with her Orthodox Christianity, and without Reformation, Enlightenment, Renaissance and liberal philosophies which are the leading motives and historical background of the United States. As Reinhard Wittram (1973) rightly puts it, Russia is physically near to Europe but distant in spirit while the United states though far away physically is so near in spirit.

Sakwa (1993) argues that after the collapse of communism Orthodox priests played an important role in a lawlessness environment as trustable managers or entrepreneurs. Although Sakwa interprets this situation as an application of the Protestant ethic it is rather a communitarian aspect of the Orthodox Church.

Russian education system was heavily coloured by anti-individualistic ideas during the Soviet period and the effects of such an education ideology cannot disappear in the short term. Halsted (1994) noted that self-discipline was one of the values to be taught in the Soviet education system. However, it was not for its own sake as it is in the Protestants work ethic, rather as a way of



furthering the goal of communism, collectivism and opposition to all incompatible ideologies, including religion, bourgeois capitalism, imperialism and individualism. As Halsted (1994: 22) points out

*"Collectivism was one of the main principles of socialist and communist morality, and involved the believe that the interests and desires of the collective should take priority over those of individual. The child's world was made up of a series of collectives, from the micro level of the home, the classroom and Young Pioneer group to the macro level of the home town and the nation itself. It was held that in subordinating oneself to the greater good of the majority one would find purpose and fulfillment."*

As it is shown above the Soviet education system and its effects cannot be separated from economic and national attitudes

Geert Hofstede and his colleagues carried out a cross-cultural study, examining work-related behaviours in 40 nations through power-distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and masculinity. 116 000 questionnaires have been produced (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede's research shows that USA, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, Netherlands and New Zealand are the highest six countries in the individualism score while Japan is 22nd country after India. It should be noted that the highest six countries, interestingly, share Protestant-Puritan ethics in their history and culture. Greece, the only Orthodox-Christian country, is the 27th country after Turkey. Although Russia has not been taken in the research, Greece is a good example to understand the relationship between Orthodox Christianity and individualism. The big gap between the USA and Greece in individualism score shows the difference between a Protestant and an Orthodox country.

A Russian-sponsored conference on business ethics was held in Moscow in 1994. One of the participants argued that Russians inherited morals that are not useful for a market economy. He explained that most people do not think that failing to pay a loan has negative consequences. Some speakers said that Russian business needed Protestant values. It is also argued that the idea that a cooperative notion of business is better than a competitive one (Ciulla, 1994).

With regard to individualism-collectivism continuum Russia cannot be seen as an individual-oriented culture because of her religion. The origin of individualism, conventionally is explained in accordance with Calvinistic-Protestantism which transformed notions of conscience and rationales of conduct by replacing sacramental methods of expiation, in particular, the confessional, with the individual 'court of conscience' (Turner,1994). As a

matter of fact that economic individualism owes to the Enlightenment and liberal philosophies that directly brought about individualism on the other hand religious individualism had an indirect influence as a catalyst in the development of the individualistic society in the West. Religious individualism refers that one stands next to God and requires no intermediaries, is characteristic of Protestantism but not Orthodox and Catholic Christianity (Jary-Jary, 1991).

Historically, religious individualism had prepared a convenient place for the nascent political and economic individualism. In fact, Weber never saw a direct relationship between capitalism, individualism and Protestantism. Neither Luther nor Calvin was advocates of economic individualism. According to Eisenstadt (1981) the effects of Protestantism to capitalism in Weber's theory can be explained as the transforming capacities of Protestantism; which includes three components; first, 'this worldly asceticism and transcendentalism', secondly 'individual activism and responsibility' and thirdly, 'unmediated, direct relationship to the sacred. Since Russia is an Orthodox Christian country, the Orthodox Church plays a crucial role between the believer and God. Therefore, individualism can only be developed by the Western cultural effects and economic conditions.

Topolova (1997) found that the characteristic of the individualist profile in Bulgaria is that they tend to identify themselves as not being religious. In contrast, the collectivists profiled themselves as being religious. Topolova's research shows that practicing Orthodox Christians in Bulgaria associate themselves with collectivism rather than individualism.

Gelfand et al, (1996) examined the dimensions of individualism and collectivism and the relationship of these constructs to authoritarianism. Results showed that authoritarianism was construed as the opposite of individualism. Findings of the study support the idea that authoritarian churches such as Catholic and Orthodox Christianity does not encourage individualism.

According to Shlapentokh (1991) the Soviet social system and its transformation during the post-Stalin period have exerted a tremendous impact on the Soviet family and related institutions. Trends in the Soviet Union across the last three decades have affected the Soviet family in different ways. He argues that some, such as the decay of socialism and the rise in privatisation have led to greater cohesion of the family, while others, such as the demoralization of Soviet society and rampant individualism unrestrained by



social values, have encouraged life styles that are incompatible with family bonds. He also states that given the current polarization of Soviet society, it is likely that for many Soviet citizens the family will occupy a more central role than has been the case in the past.

McFarland et al (1992) found that the positive correlation between authoritarianism and support for Marxist-Leninist ideology was significant. Conventionalism was a central attribute of authoritarianism. Russian authoritarianism predicted support for equalitarianism and opposition to laissez-faire individualism. Whereas in a comparison American sample these relationships were reversed. Results of the research prove that Russian society, which is an authoritarian society from Tsarist and Soviet era, cannot show the same attitude towards individualism as the American society.

### **Conclusion:**

In sum, religious individualism, which indirectly contributed to the economic individualism, is not the general characteristic of Christianity but it has a place in Calvinism, therefore Russia should not be taken as an individualistic society because of her Christianity. Similarly, the effects of Western liberal ideas had limitations on Russian social life due to strong autocratic administrations.

In the light of qualitative findings and historical evidences, we can state that it is not an accurate assumption to take Christianity as an individualistic religion in cross-cultural studies. Different Christian denominations have different attitudes towards individualism. Although Protestantism, in particular Calvinism, historically encouraged individualistic attitudes, it appears that modern Protestantism is moving into a more communitarian ground. Similarly, Catholic and Orthodox Christianity advocates communitarian values. It is obvious that taking individualism as a Christian value is not a realistic approach in cross-cultural studies. The possible relationship between Christianity and individualism needs more scholarly attention. Researchers should not generalise Weberian concept of the Protestant work ethic and religious individualism into whole Christian ethic.

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