

# RETHINKING THE IMPACT OF RELIGION ON BUSINESS VALUES: UNDERSTANDING ITS REEMERGENCE AND MEASURING ITS MANIFESTATIONS

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**Abstract:** This paper argues that religious values have impacts on and in the workplace, as was suggested as early as Weber (1905), and that these impacts are still extant, worthy of continued research, and are possible to measure. Moreover, the recent emergence of intense scholarly interest in the study of the connections between religion/spirituality and the workplace is driven not only by a desire to understand the variables and interrelationships of the phenomenon, but increasingly also by other interdisciplinary questions of interest to scholars and practitioners alike, such as leadership studies, ethics, diversity and inclusion, cultural competence, human rights, globalism, and changes in immigration patterns, organizational and economic structures, and geo-politics. Finally, if religion/spirituality should be a going concern for business professionals, the paper suggests a comprehensive pattern of how religious/spiritual identity manifests itself at work, and understanding this would allow business professionals and management to potentially measure and adjust for the spiritual climate of their organization. The paper concludes by offering The Integration Box (TIB) theory as a means to understand and potentially evaluate how individuals integrate faith and work, as well as a means for organizations to understand, and respond constructively to the phenomena of religious values in the workplace.

**Keywords:** religious values, workplace, TIB theory, ethics, diversity, immigration pattern

Many in American business no longer ask “if” religious values<sup>1</sup> have an impact on employees and companies that comprise the modern economy. Rather, the question for many today is “in what ways” and “how does one measure the impact of religious values on organizations?” As a result, American business scholars and practitioners have developed a rich and growing strand of literature trying to understand the relationship between the variables of religious values and business performance. It is increasingly also a question of global interest, witness this conference in Beijing hosted by the Center for International Business Ethics and Caux Round Table, and many other academic and practitioner gatherings throughout other parts of the globe.

So the question before us is, “what types of impacts do subjective human values, specifically religious values, have on the marketplace?” and “is it possible to measure them?” This is not an American or a Chinese question; it is a crucial question for business leaders and scholars across all

cultures and countries. As for answers, we inquire from a variety of academic and practitioner fields some proximal and subject to change, while others are transcendent and eternal. Some are of secular origin, while others are sacred, drawing on religious texts, narratives, and traditions.

This paper argues that religious values continue to have impact on the economy and in the workplace, as was suggested early on by Weber (1905), and is experiencing resurgent practitioner interest and scholarly research in modern times. Moreover, the recent reemergence in the study of the connections and relationships between the marketplace and religion in the West and increasingly globally are due to changes in organizational and economic structures (as well as macro patterns and issues such as ethnic diversity and immigration, ethics, human rights, and globalism). And finally, if understanding the ethical and other practical impacts of religion on the marketplace should become a strategic concern for business professionals, the paper suggests The Integration Box theory and its ensuing scale as a measure of subjective human values, including but not limited to religious values, and their manifestations in their corresponding integration with work. This will, among other things to be later discussed, will allow business professionals and organizations to detect and understand various religious traditions and their manifestations at work in a meaningful way, and as appropriate adjust policies in light of the spiritual climate of their organization.

### **THE CHALLENGE OF MAX WEBER**

Max Weber (1905) in his work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was one the first in modern times to observe the interconnection of religion and the marketplace. Author of many cross-cultural studies and theories, this is likely Weber's best known work in the West; most often cited and studied, and most frequently qualified and critiqued. Weber seminal insight was that a relationship existed between certain religious teachings and economic behavior. A brief review of his thesis, however later challenged, remains instructive for scholars of religion and society. In particular, and most controversially Weber observed that regions and countries that adhere to Protestant theology had the highest rate of business and capitalistic economic growth. Moreover, he asserted that attitudes and motivations toward engagement in economic activity and structures were shaped and informed by religious ideas as well as theologically informed ethics (Goldman 1990). Weber believed that among other factors, components of Protestant theology, specifically, its Calvinist and Puritan strands which developed in light of Luther's dramatic theological impact, was catalytic and elemental in the emergence of entrepreneurial activity.

Luther imputed religious meaning to daily work, traditionally considered profane and mundane, identifying work as a calling (*Beruf*), imbuing it with theological importance on the same par as priestly work (Holl, 1921; Miller, 2007). Calvin, building on Luther, had a broader view of work as a calling, allowing for social movement and self-betterment. Weber saw in Calvinism further theological motivations where hard work, sober and modest lifestyles, and reinvestment of profits into business led to material success. Commercial success was deemed a sign of God's pleasure and an indicator of eternal rewards, often known as the doctrine of predestination. Moreover, Weber observed the economic impact of Calvinist teachings that accentuated a "this worldly" asceticism, and that called for rational economic actions. Weber saw in Calvinist and Puritan forms of Protestant Christianity a historically distinctive "spirit," that when coupled with other variables led to a religiously motivated accent on rational economic engagement and production, and an ascetic protestant ethic (Goldman, 1990; Koch, 1993; Miller,

2007).

The spirit of enterprise was created where willingness to work placed the motivational burden on individuals, where each person's work was a gift of grace from God and therefore perceived as a calling to which one responded with industriousness (Fleißigkeit), prudence, and rational economic behavior to maximize one's calling and seek evidence of God's pleasure. The presupposition was that God desired profitability as a means to demonstrate stewardship, that is, the person who fulfills a calling, does not waste time and resources (Hansin, 1963; Barbalet, 1980; Goldman, 1990; Koch, 1993). This belief in the connection between the values, beliefs, motivations of faith and the direct effect on entrepreneurial commerce in organizations has carried forward to modern scholarship. This "spirit" has been observed in modern times, as well as in alternate religious expressions.

### **MODERN APPLICATIONS OF WEBER'S THEORY**

In modern times, Weber's methods, data, and conclusions have undergone a great deal of revisionism and critique. Yet his core observation - that there exists a relationship between religious beliefs and economic agents and their activities - remains widely accepted. Indeed, the phenomenon of "spirit" of capitalism is observed as wide-ranging; some scholars see evidence of its impact in religious traditions other than Protestant Christianity. For instance, Catholics have laid claim to similar influences (Novak, 1990; 1996). Woodrum (1985) observed the same phenomena in Japanese Americans who immigrated to America during Japan's Tokugawa period (1600-1868). Woodrum argues that the Buddhist sect of Shinshu, had similar ethics to that of protestant Christianity, namely: asceticism, calling to work and legitimated stewardship. During this period large numbers of Japanese Buddhist sect of Shinshu migrated to the United States. Using data from 1964-1966 Japanese American Research Project (JARP) surveyed 18,000 immigrants who arrived in the U.S. before 1924. Those surveyed had high incomes and were self-employed. The studied correlated the success of the Shinshu immigrants with those Weberian religious indicators that contribute to increased entrepreneurship. The findings demonstrated that religious beliefs do in fact contribute to their economic achievements. Specifically of the two religious forms: Buddhism and Shinshu.

Finally, Redding (1995) argues that the spirit of capitalism is alive in China as well, suggesting that cultural values, in this case the religious values of Confucianism, have significant impact on economic behavior. Based on interviews with some 72 Chinese entrepreneurs and executives in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South East Asia, Redding finds Confucian core religious values such as paternalism, collectivism, feminism and social hierarchy have created a significant context from which new ventures are fostered.

While some scholars ignore or dismiss the role religion plays in societies in general, we join those scholars who continue to study and debate the types of impact religious teachings and other subjective sources of human values have on motivations, attitudes, and behaviors, including on business ethics and values have on the marketplace. Some continue in the Weberian tradition with Western accents, while others accept the thesis that religious values impact organizational and economic life, yet write out of a more international perspective.<sup>2</sup>

So, if as observed by Weber in 1905, and despite decades of rigorous critique remains supported by the modern academic guild, there is an observed connection between religion and commerce, why hasn't this connection been given more attention by practitioners in previous

generations? To determine this we need to turn back to Weberian conceptions of bureaucracy, as well as the economic evolution of the American economy.

## **THE BIFURCATING OF RELIGION AND WORKERS IN THE AMERICAN WORKPLACE**

Different scholarly guilds come to the same conclusion, albeit drawing on different methodologies and frameworks. For instance, Miller (2007) draws on theological and sociological/ethnographic historiography to describe and explain the bifurcation and compartmentalization of faith and work in American business during the 20th century. Nash (2001) draws on sociological methodologies interviewing business people in management authority, Christian clergy and lay groups. Coming from the management guild, Pine and Gilmore (2010) believe that the present exclusion of spirituality in the workplace is due largely to an evolution in the historical organizational development. Historically, economic progress has passed through four stages: agrarian; industrial; service; and experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1989). They ascribe the past American separation between religion and the workplace as a byproduct of the industrial era.

The industrial era reflected Weberian conceptions of rational economic activity, atomization, and organizational bureaucracy which focused on specialization and the division of labor, worker's activities are governed by rules, a strict focus on technical competence and strict human impartiality in promotion and evaluation (Koch, 1993). The result was that the industrial era was dominated by rational repetitive labor, job fragmentation, increased worker output, and militaristic taking of orders. The production philosophy of Fordism was dominate, where mass consumption combined with mass production was intended to produce sustained economic growth.

The result was workers were "expected to check their brain at the door – managers were responsible for the thinking required" (Ashforth & Pratt, 2010, p. 61). This bifurcation created a division in the American worker's life. Thus, employees kept all aspects of their private life, including their faith, apart from their work life, learning to squelch or suppress their spiritual dimension while at work and in their public professional persona.

This condition was carried forward into the next iteration of the economy, the service economy. The perception carried by the employee was that they could not bring their whole selves to work. Mohamed, et al. (2001) illustrate the outcomes of the division in the American worker when the 80's and 90's bought massive layoffs and constant reorganization. One result, among others, was that workers began to turn to their faith as a source of stability and comfort during this era OF workplace dislocation and stress, often viewing the inclusion of spirituality at work as a panacea to their woes (p.102).

For Mitroff and Denton (1999) it created the Faustian Dilemma: "If you express your faith without a set of clear guidelines for its appropriate expression you may be punished, but if you do not express your faith, in the area where you devote the greatest amount of your waking hours, the development of the soul is seriously stifled if not halted" (p.7).

The reaction to this in the present economic era, the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), was that most executives and consultants from various motivations realized the present organizational structure, in terms of its often oppressive and stultifying effect on employee well-being, was not sustainable for both workers and organizations (Ashforth & Pratt, 2010, p. 102). This resulted in a new exploration of organizational models which allowed people to be full participants in the workplace. Porter and Kramer (2006), Senge (1990), Covey (1989), and Block (1996) all envisioned a new paradigm where people in the marketplace could bring their

whole self to work. While such consultants did not necessarily or always envision religion/spirituality as being included with the "whole self" concept, it logically opened the door to such questions and has become generally accepted, as religion is considered by many to be a constituent component of human anthropology. The change in orientation by executives and consultants fit well with the present experience economy paradigm, which demands distinctive personal experience for the customers based on endemic human qualities such as human values. Ideally, then, organizational models which allow the whole person to come to work are sought as a means to empower employees and possibly in turn for those employees to meet unique and personal demands of the customers. For example, Mitroff and Denton (1999) held that companies that have a spiritual dimension and allow the whole person to come to work have employees with higher loyalty, lower absenteeism, and greater creativity.

There is a demonstrable and growing body of evidence presented in scholarly research (Fogel, 2000; Nash & McLennan, 2001; Williams, 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Miller, 2007; Lambert, 2009), media stories (Conlin, 1999; Gunther, 2001; Grossman, 2008), and voices from the marketplace itself (Pollard, 2000; Julian, 2002; Maxwell, Graves & Addington, 2005; Beckett, 2006) which clearly demonstrate this change in the marketplace. Many employees of all levels, in all industries, and in all parts of the country (and increasingly the world) wish to live a holistic life and bring their whole self to work, including their faith. This is often called the Faith at Work movement or Spirituality and Work movement (Miller, 2007). The global economic crisis triggered in 2008 has, if anything, furthered strengthened this movement.

However, if the inclusion of religion in the workplace is to be a going concern for business professionals, then a means to detect universal religious manifestations must be developed which could allow business professionals to understand, measure, and as appropriate adjust the policies pertaining to the spiritual climate of and impacts on their organization. Is there a theory to understand this phenomenon particularly one that works in a multi-faith environment?<sup>3</sup>

### **THE INTEGRATION BOX (TIB): TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING AND MEASUREMENT OF RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE**

In light of this question, Miller (2007) developed a theoretical model, called The Integration Box. The organizing principle of The Integration Box (TIB) is that men and women increasingly desire to live an integrated life, where faith (however one understands it) and work (of whatever kind) are integrated not compartmentalized. Increasingly, as suggested, people are no longer willing to lead a bifurcated life, where their spiritual identity is divorced from their workplace life. For many, living a healthy and holistic life includes integrating mind, body, and spirit in all spheres of life, including work. Indeed, few would advocate a return to the dark days of industrialization where workers lived fractured, atomized, and dis-integrated work lives.

Miller's research that led to TIB theory included literature reviews, field interviews, and an analysis of over 1,000 individuals and "faith at work" groups. Though largely a study on the United States marketplace, it did include evidence of similar such patterns developing in other countries and cultures around the globe. This research contributed to the theory that people of all levels and profiles increasingly desire to live a holistic life, which includes among other things their faith, and a desire to integrate faith and work. And the way in which people sought to integrate their faith and work - irrespective of religious identity, race, gender, or ethnicity consistently conformed to one of four manifestations or modalities.

As a result of Miller’s research into the faith at work movement, it was posited that there are four manifestations or ways that people integrate faith and work (Miller, 2007). These different manifestations are referred to as “the Four E’s.” The Four E’s are driven by the organizing principle of people’s desire to integrate faith and work, whether consciously or subconsciously. Furthermore Miller’s initial research suggested that each person has a natural orientation toward one of the Four E’s as their primary manifestation of understanding and living out the concept of integrating faith and work. Central to TIB theory is that all of the Four E’s are theologically legitimate and valid, and that no one manifestation is better or worse than another. Each has their distinguishing features, strengths, and weaknesses. The Four E’s or manifestations are: Ethics, Expression, Experience and Enrichment. See Table 1 for full definitions of the manifestations and their corresponding motivations. Within each of these four manifestations, there are also two orientations, which further help measure and define the primary manifestation. For example, some manifestations of how people integrate their beliefs are done in an outward, more visible, and overt manner, while others are done in an inward oriented, less visible, and more subtle manner.

*Table 1. Definitions of the manifestations and their corresponding motivations (Source: Miller, 2007)*

<b>Manifestation</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Motivation</b>
Ethics Type	Places high value on attention to ethical concerns.	One’s faith/spirituality: guides one; compels one; and/or inspires one to take ethical actions.
Expression Type	Places high value on the ability to express their faith tradition and worldview to others.	Persuading others to join their faith tradition or worldview, as a response to religious obligation or freedom of expression.
Experience Type	Places high value on how they experience their work, often understanding it as a spiritual calling and having special meaning	A search for meaning in their work; purpose for their work; and value in the work itself.
Enrichment Type	Places high value on drawing strength and comfort from spiritual and/or consciousness practices,.	Draws strength and comfort for work; coping with pressures and problems at work; and finding wisdom and personal growth through work.

Another critical aspect of The Integration Box theory is that it is ecumenical in nature, designed to be reflective of all worldviews, be they theistic or secular. The Integration Box theory is conceived to apply to and be of use in a multi-faith organizational environment, whether a publicly traded company, a privately owned small business, an educational institution, or even a nonprofit. Further, understanding and using this theory is posited to be of benefit at the individual for people to become more self-aware and respectful of others at work and the plurality of religious traditions. And at an organizational level, an employer might profile their organization as a whole to notice patterns, policy congruency, support a diverse workplace, and to help shape and inform certain managerial decisions.

The prospective goal of TIB theory is to help individuals understand how people integrate faith and work, and for organizations who wish to understand, and respond constructively to the phenomena of religious values in the workplace. However, without a validated assessment,

managers and employees are unable to understand or identify the constructive business benefits of faith and work which provide foundations for ethics, excellence, enrichment, and experience (meaning and purpose) in work. Nor would management be able to provide protections for legitimate religious practices, behaviors, and accommodations, as protected by law, even if they are unfamiliar or alien to the majority population. As seen with racism, sexism, and other forms of workplace discrimination and/or harassment, the law alone seldom provides management with analytical tools that lead to better understanding or business solutions. As such, it is further posited that TIB provides management a theory intended to educate and prevent maltreatment of religious peoples and vice versa in the increasingly pluralistic workplace.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper argues that Weber's (1905) initial observation of the affect of religious values on marketplace activity, while for a time being suppressed due to organizational and economic structures and normative practices has, due to those same and other forces, resurfaced. Recognizing the integration of faith and work becomes timely and important because it encompasses issues such as ethics, leadership, diversity, human rights, and globalism. Furthermore, if this phenomenon can be assessed through an empirical instrument, managers and employees can benefit both corporately as well as personally.

Specifically, the paper posits the TIB theory as a potential theoretical framework, established in theological, historical and ethnographic research, as having the ability to diagnoses four universal manifestations of faith or religious identity (Four E's) at work. These four manifestations as posited in the TIB theory would help individuals understand how they integrate faith and work, as well as those organizations who wish to understand and respond constructively to the faith at work movement. The intent is for organizations and individuals to have a validated instrument that quantifies and classifies the relationship between people's individuals' orthodoxy (set of right beliefs) and their workplace orthopraxy (how their beliefs are manifested and lived out at work).

At the organizational level, if a company has composite information about manifestation patterns for faith and work integration, it may bring many potential business benefits, including increased diversity and inclusion; avoidance of religious harassment or discrimination claims, respect for people of different faith traditions or worldviews, and possibly a positive impact on ethics programs, employee engagement, recruiting and retention. These and other possible correlations, drawing on the TIB theory, will merit further study and working papers.

### **NOTES**

1. The use of the words religion and religious throughout this paper will also be used to connote similar conceptions articulated by the words spirituality, spiritual, and faith.
2. Peter Berger's, *The Capitalist Revolution* (1998) and *(The Desecularization of the World* (1999); David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (1989); Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington's *Culture Matters: How Values shape Human Progress* (2000); *Spiritual Goods: Faith Traditions and the Practice of Business* (2001); *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance* (2003); Benjamine Friedman's *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth* (2005); Robert Fogel, *The Escape from Hunger and Premature Death* (2004); and Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (2007); Max Stackhouse's *On Moral Business* (1995); Robert Nelson's *Max Weber Revisited* (2010); and Paul

Oslington's Weber: Theology and Economics (forthcoming, 2011).

3. Note: while many scales of religiosity exist (Measures of Religiosity, Hill & Hood, 1999), few pertain to the marketplace, and the few that do have different aims than this paper sets out. This will be discussed later in the paper.

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