

Updated: 7 September 2012

Economics 303Y: The Economic History of Modern Europe, to 1914

**Topic No. 2 [6]: The Protestant Dissenters and the British Industrial Revolution:
The role of religious factors in entrepreneurship and modern industrialization**

A. Puritanism, Dissenters, and the ‘Protestant Ethic’ in the Industrial Revolution Era and Beyond: in chronological order of publication

- ** 1. Thomas S. Ashton, The Industrial Revolution, 1760 - 1830 (London, 1948), pp. 1-22.
- * 2. Thomas S. Ashton, An Economic History of England: the 18th Century (London: Methuen, 1955), chapter 1: ‘The People of England’, pp. 1-29.
3. Peter Mathias, The First Industrial Nation: an Economic History of Britain, 1700 - 1914, 2nd edn. (London and New York, 1983), ‘The Entrepreneurs’, pp. 136-48.
- ** 4. David S. Landes, The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998).
- ** 5. David Landes, The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present, 2nd edn. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Introduction, pp. 1-40; and chapter 1, ‘The Industrial Revolution in Britain’, pp. 41-123.
- ** 6. Ralph Davis, The Rise of the Atlantic Economies (London, 1973). The subject of this topic is not treated as such, but the role of dissenting Protestant sects (‘Dissenters’), chiefly Calvinist, in the British Industrial Revolution, is given some prominence on pp. 309-10, in the concluding chapter 18: ‘France and England: Industrial Growth and Industrial Revolutions’, which (along with Landes) will put this topic in its proper perspective.
- * 7. Allan Thompson, The Dynamics of the Industrial Revolution (London, 1973), Chapter 8: ‘Religion and the Social Environment’, pp. 122-40.
8. Norman Jones, God and the Moneylenders: Usury and Law in Early Modern England (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1989).
- * 9. François Crouzet, ‘The Huguenots and the English Financial Revolution’, in Patrice Higonnet, David Landes, and Henry Rosovsky, eds., Favorites of Fortune: Technology, Growth, and Economic Development Since the Industrial Revolution (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 221-66.
- * 10. Jack A. Goldstone, ‘Europe’s Peculiar Path: Would the World Be “Modern” if William III’s Invasion of England in 1688 Had Failed?’, in Philip E. Tetlock, Ned Lebow, and Geoffrey Parker, eds., Unmaking the West: What-If Scenarios That Rewrite World History (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2006), pp. 168-96.
- * 11. Mark Valeri, Heavenly Merchandise: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- ** 12. John Munro, ‘Tawney’s Century, 1540 - 1640: The Roots of Modern Capitalist Entrepreneurship’, in David S. Landes, Joel Mokyr, and William J. Baumol, eds., The Invention of Enterprise: Entrepreneurship from Ancient Mesopotamia to Modern Times,

Kauffman Foundation Series on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 107-55.

Note: the thesis is that the true origins of modern capitalist entrepreneurship came, not in Tawney's century, but in the following century (1640-1740), and thus led directly into the Industrial Revolution era.

- * 13. John Munro, 'Usury, Calvinism and Credit in Protestant England: from the Sixteenth Century to the Industrial Revolution', in Francesco Ammannati, ed., Religione e istituzioni religiose nell'economia europea, 1000 - 1800/ Religion and Religious Institutions in the European Economy, 1000 - 1800, Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica 'F. Datini', Prato, Serie II: Atti delle 'Settimane de Studi' e altri Convegni no. 43 (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2012), pp. 155-84.
- * 14. Thijs Lambrecht, '“Nine Protestants Are to Esteemed Worth Ten Catholics”: Representing Religion, Labour, and Economic Performance in Pre-Industrial Europe, c. 1650 - c. 1800', in Francesco Ammannati, ed., Religione e istituzioni religiose nell'economia Europea, 1000 - 1800/ Religion and Religious Institutions in the European Economy, 1000 - 1800, Serie II: Atti delle 'Settimane di Studi' e altri convegni no. 43 (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2012), pp. 431-50.

B. Puritanism, Science, and the 'Scientific Revolution' in the 17th Century: The Debate (in order of publication in Past and Present, with other relevant publications.)

- * 1. S. F. Mason, 'Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England', Past and Present, no. 3 (Feb. 1953), 28-44.
- 2. Robert K. Merton, 'Puritanism, Pietism, and Science', in Robert K. Merton, ed., Social Theory and Social Structure, rev. edn. (New York, 1957), pp. 574-606.
- 3. A. E. Musson and E. Robinson, 'Science and Industry in the Late Eighteenth Century', Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 13:2 (1960), 222-44.
- * 4. H. F. Kearney, 'Puritanism, Capitalism, and the Scientific Revolution', Past and Present, no. 28 (July 1964), 81-101.
- * 5. Christopher Hill, 'Puritanism, Capitalism, and the Scientific Revolution', Past and Present, no. 29 (Dec. 1964), 88-97.
- 6. H. F. Kearney, 'Puritanism and Science: Problems of Definition', Past and Present, no. 31 (July 1965), 104-110.
- 7. Theodore K. Rabb, 'Religion and the Rise of Modern Science', Past and Present, no. 31 (July 1965), 111-26.
- * 8. Christopher Hill, 'Science, Religion and Society in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', Past and Present, no. 32 (Dec. 1965), 110-12. Comment on Kearney and Rabb.
- 9. Theodore K. Rabb, 'Science, Religion and Society in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', Past and Present, no. 33 (April 1966), 148. Note in reply to Hill.
- * 10. Robert K. Merton, Science, Technology, and Society in Seventeenth-Century England, revised edn. (New York, 1970), especially chapter IV: 'Puritanism and Cultural Values', pp. 55-79; and Chapter VI: 'Puritanism, Pietism, and Science', pp. 112-36.

- * 11. Cliff Bekar and Richard G. Lipsey, 'Science, Institutions and the Industrial Revolution', The Journal of European Economic History, 33:3 (Winter 2004), 709-53.

C. The Weber-Tawney Thesis: on Protestantism and the Rise of Modern Capitalism

- * 1. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (original German edition, 1904-05; English translation by Talcott Parsons, New York, 1930; 2nd edition: London: Allen & Unwin, 1976). Forward by Richard Tawney and Preface by Max Weber (pp. 1-31). See especially chapter V: 'Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism', pp. 155-83.
- * 2. Thomas Wilson, A Discourse Upon Usury [1572], edited, with an historical introduction by R.H. Tawney (London and New York, 1925), pp. 1-172. Especially, in Tawney's Introduction, Section III.i, on 'The Damnable Sin of Usury', pp. 106-21.
- ** 3. R.H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study (London, 1926; (London: 1926; reissued New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1937):
- * 4. Christopher Hill, 'Protestantism and the Rise of Capitalism', in F.J. Fisher, ed., Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England (London, 1961), pp. 15-39. Reprinted in part in David Landes, ed., The Rise of Capitalism (New York, 1966), pp. 41-52.
- A Marxist view. See also other publications of Hill in section D, on 'Puritanism and the Scientific Revolution.'
5. H. Luthy, 'Once Again: Calvinism and Capitalism', Encounter, 22 (1964).
- * 6. John H. Munro, 'The Weber Thesis Revisited -- and Revindicated?', Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire, 51 (1973), 381-91. A review article.
- * 7. J. H. Van Stuivenberg, 'The Weber Thesis: Attempt at Interpretation', Acta Historiae Neerlandicae, 8 (1975), 50-66.
- * 8. Hartmut Lehmann and Guenther Roth, eds., Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts, Publications of the German Historical Institute (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985): see the main bibliography for the essays included.
- ** 9. Stephen P. Turner, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Weber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See the following essays:
- a) Alastair Hamilton, 'Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*', pp. 151-71.
- b) Stanley Engerman, 'Max Weber as Economist and Economic Historian', pp. 256-71.
- * 10. William H. Swatos and Lutz Kaelber, eds., The Protestant Ethic Turns 100: Essays on the Centenary of the Weber Thesis (Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2005):
11. Judith Spicksley, 'Usury Legislation, Cash, and Credit: the Development of the Female Investor in the Late Tudor and Stuart Periods', The Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 61:2 (May 2008), 277-301.

QUESTIONS:

The issue for debate is fairly simple and straight-forward. At least half of the known entrepreneurs and scientists or inventor of the Industrial Revolution era were members of Non-Conformist or Dissenting

Protestant congregations, even though they comprised only 5% to 10% of the English population. So what explains their extraordinary role in the English Industrial Revolution of the British economy of the 18th and 19th centuries?

- * 1. Who were the Dissenters or Non-Conformists in early-modern England (from the mid 17th century) and in the Industrial Revolution era (18th - 19th centuries)? Why were they a minority that dissented from the official doctrines and dogmas of the established Church of England – a Protestant Church from the time of Henry VIII (from 1536). What specific religious, political, social, and economic conditions defined their minority status?
- 2. What unusual role did they play in the Scientific Revolution and in the Industrial Revolution, as businessmen and entrepreneurs? Was it because of their minority status or because of their religious status – or both? To what extent did Calvinism influence their beliefs and economic behaviours, in the context of the Weber-Tawney thesis (below)
- * 3. Define and discuss the Weber-Tawney thesis on the ‘Protestant ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism’ in the following terms, specifically involving Calvinism:
 - (a) Why did they emphasize the psychological ramifications of Calvin's doctrine of *Predestination* as the essential element in the development of the modern ethos or ‘spirit’ of capitalism?
 - (b) What significance did they ascribe to the Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines of the ‘Calling’? What did they mean by the term ‘secular asceticism’?
 - (c) How did they define ‘capitalism’, and how did they evaluate the nature and significance of pre-Reformation capitalist enterprise?
 - (d) How did they explain the ‘time lag’ in the impact of the Calvinist ethic upon capitalism: from the mid-16th to late 17th centuries? How else would you explain the differences in economic attitudes between the early ‘anti-capitalist’ Calvinist reformers, and the later ‘pro-capitalist’ Puritans and Dissenters of 17th- and the 18th-century England and New England?
 - (e) What effect, in their view, did Calvinist doctrines ultimately have upon the social concepts of work and labour? What indeed is meant by the ‘Protestant Work Ethic’? What significance did it have, if any, in the early-modern and Industrial Revolution era? Does it have any significance today?
- 4. To what extent may the pro-capitalist attitudes of Calvinist-Puritans in England, Holland, and New England of the 17th and 18th centuries be explained by other, non-religious factors: by the social and economic forces of the times? In particular how much of what is called the ‘Protestant Ethic’ can be explained by the economic functions and attitudes of those social classes adopting Calvinism? If so, why did such classes adopt Calvinism as their religion?