

Keys to the Kingdom or Devil's Playground?
The Impact of Institutionalized Religion on the Perception and Use of Leisure

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Abstract

Through the analysis of historical documentation including holy books, sermons and civil legislation, it is evident that organized religion imparts constraints on leisure. This study concludes that world religions have and continue to influence and restrict leisure behaviors in positive and negative ways. This is particularly true as religious organizations either deliberately or unwittingly support a communal vision as dictated by civil authorities. In current secular societies, the goals of church and state may be mutually exclusive. It is imperative that theorists and practitioners acknowledge the diversity of religious expression within their respective communities.

Introduction

Recent events in world history have forced western societies to confront the stark realities of worldviews that differ significantly from their own. Beneath the threat and actual realization of unbridled aggression both within and beyond national boundaries are cultural principles that allow for repression, social control and hegemony. The dismantling of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan revealed religious practices that sought to control a society through the regulation of such leisure activities as movies, secular music, television and communal celebrations, with even greater restrictions aimed at women. Broadcast images of the emancipation of Kabul depicted residents of all ages playing recorded music, literally dancing in the streets, repositioning radio and television antennas on their roofs, celebrating not only their freedom but also their culture, long suppressed under Taliban rule. While the details of the oppression were shocking, historically speaking, the practice is not unique to this fundamentalist Islamic sect.

Throughout history institutionalized religion provided the setting for many of the greatest advances in human culture, yet when closely tied to temporal power, religion plays the role of oppressor, tyrant and executioner.

Rappaport (1999) describes religion as binding us to an external force, stabilizing our meaningful interaction with the world, an anchor for our volatility. Religion creates

taboos, forbidden behaviors and activities, identified as such for the protection of social order, the maintenance of health and relative peace, and the establishment of hierarchical structure within societies.

Rifkin (1987) sheds further light on the impact of the religion on the use of free time,

Most societies create an “image of the future”... The state is the caretaker of this communal vision. Effective rule, in every society, depends on the ability of those in power to establish a compelling image of the future and then convince the people to sacrifice their time in hope of gaining access to the perfect kingdom that exists just beyond the time horizon.¹

Religion, as an instrument of socialization, establishes temporal controls in concert with a promise of eschatological rewards for those who conform to the established norms.

Ecclesial regulations governing the use of leisure are accompanied by sanctions against particular behaviors, sometimes including rather harsh punishments.

This study attempts to present an analysis of organized religion as the ‘caretaker of this communal vision’ and leisure as the medium through which this image is realized. This study is not intended to be a treatise on faith, which animates religion, but rather an examination of the role of religion as a formative influence on leisure perception and use. Included in the study is an analysis of the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam as seen through ecclesial proclamations, holy books and temporal rulings.

Theoretical Background

Leisure, for our purposes defined as free time, provides the opportunity to explore and manipulate one’s environment. One may, during leisure, choose to follow cultural norms or challenge accepted ways of living. Research regarding the relationship between

leisure and religion in western societies can be loosely organized in three major concentrations.

The historical relationship between specific religious traditions and leisure behavior has recently been addressed and is illustrated in several works (Daniels, 1993, 1995; Cross, 1995; Struna, 1996; Vale, 1997; Shivers & deLisle, 1997; Coldwell, 1998; deLisle, 2002).

The relationship of leisure and religion from a sociological perspective has received attention of scholars from many diverse fields of study (Poack, 1934; Coutts, 1955; Robbins, 1955; Eliade, 1958; Neumeyer & Neumeyer, 1958; Larrabee & Meyerson 1961; DeGrazia, 1962; Pieper, 1963; Swanson, 1967; Dever, 1969; McKechnie, 1969; Staley & Miller, 1972; Dahl, 1972, 1974; Dumazdier, 1974; Marrus, 1974; Boekenstein, 1976; Weber, 1976; Parker, 1977; Shivers & Ibrahim, 1979; Yeo & Yeo 1981; Rojek, 1985, 1995, 2000; Elias & Dunning, 1986, Loomis 1988; Iso-Ahola 1980; Goodale & Godbey, 1988; Kaplan, 1991; Ryken, 1991, 1995; Fain, 1991; Heintzman, Van Andle and Visker, 1994, 1995).

Additional studies, particular to North American research, examine the role of religious organizations as recreational services providers: (Lee 1964; Randolph 1970; Smurawa, 1972; Faust 1981; Adkins, 1987; Ernce, 1987; Emard 1990; Doohan 1990; Muller, 1999).

Leisure is a theological construct; free time is necessary for the practice of ritual and religion (Shivers & deLisle, 1997). Leisure has been described as an opportunity for spiritual growth (Heintzman & Van Andle, 1995). Conversely, the moral constraints placed on leisure are said to originate in religion (Overman, 1997). Prebish (1993) notes

that ancient games, medieval festivals and modern day sport, all examples of leisure behavior, are linked to religious belief and practice.

It is curious that despite the apparent influence of religion on the perception and use of leisure, religion's role in the use of leisure has not received much attention by scholars (Goodale & Godbey, 1988). According to Spence (1973) a theology of leisure does not exist.

The influence of religion on the perception and use of leisure is not restricted to western Christian cultures. Additional research has been conducted providing insight into the role of leisure in other religious cultures including Judaism, (Heschel, 1951; Hillel, 1968, 1979; Katz, 1976; Lamm, 1986; Kalin-Bundt, 1981) and Islam (Ibrahim, 1991; Yuradon, 1992; El-Sayed, 1997).

Leisure Constraint Theory

The present study also finds grounding in leisure constraint research. Jackson (1997) offers a contemporary understanding of constraint,

Factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure.²

Godbey (1997) notes that the most powerful constraints to involvement in activities during free time are not related to time or resource but

... involve individual psychological states and attributes which interact with leisure preferences... interpersonal barriers include stress, depression, anxiety, religiosity... prior socialization into specific leisure activities... and subjective evaluations of the appropriateness and availability of various leisure activities.³

It is this reference to human psychology, to the concepts of religiosity, prior socialization, and an evaluation of appropriateness of leisure activities, that beckons an examination of

religious belief and practice as a possible constraint to leisure participation. Jackson (p.461) notes that ‘an individual may be affected by a constraint even if he or she does not perceive it or articulate it.’ The present study argues that the impact of organized religion, particularly when supported by the temporal authority and sanctions of the state, constitutes multiple levels of constraint towards leisure participation.

Methodology

This study analyzes historical data in order to determine the impact of Judaism, Roman Catholicism, the Protestant reform movement, and Islam on leisure perception and use. Each tradition under consideration shares a common belief in monotheism and is founded in the Semitic tradition of Abraham. The present study explains the basic tenets of each faith in sufficient detail to position their social teaching regarding leisure in a proper perspective. Ecclesial and civil regulations accompanied by harsh sanctions controlled both the inclination towards, and participation in, certain leisure activities. Many of the moral constraints placed on leisure enabled societies to realize both temporal and spiritual goals. The issue, however, extends beyond moral advisement and will be shown to be a pervasive attempt to control the lower classes of society through restrictions on leisure behaviors.

Theological Systems

Judaism

Judaism held the ideas of rest, worship and celebration to be critical in understanding their relationship to Yahweh. Keeping the Sabbath in the tradition of

Genesis 2:1–3 provided a mandatory weekly period of leisure as evidenced in Exodus 20:8-11; Exodus 34:21–24 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15.

The Hebrews were a nomadic group of little significance in the larger scope of early human civilization. The practice of observing a day of rest by the Hebrews can be traced to the influence of the Canaanite agricultural calendar, based on a seven day week. The seventh day of each week was associated with evil and all forms of work were to be avoided. According to Buttrick (1980) neighboring Babylonia practiced an observance called *sabbatu*, a day of ‘quieting the heart’. The Babylonians also identified the seventh day as taboo, a day which was cursed, work was prohibited, as the results were seen to be ill fated.

What distinguishes the Hebrew Sabbath is its incorporation into their understanding of monotheism. The commandment to observe the Sabbath (Exodus 34:21) commands abstention from all agricultural work on the seventh day. As other occupations evolved, subsequent passages forbade commerce and all other forms of labor including household duties and all comparable activities. The Sabbath observance, originating in the superstitions of neighboring people, became a privileged day, one of relaxation, rest and sharing in the divine plan. This status was later to be shared with the entire household; servants, domestic livestock, visitors and strangers in their midst. The Sabbath introduced practices of worship, equality and justice, communal celebration and a spirit of rejoicing in the people of Israel.

For the Jew, observance of the Sabbath as a measure of covenantal fidelity became more demanding during the ensuing generations. Thirty nine specific activities related to labor were prohibited on the Sabbath. The list of forbidden work activities grew

to include basic necessities such as lighting a cooking fire in the home (Ex.35:3) and restrictions on excessive moving about (Ex. 16:29). Warfare, even in self defense, was also prohibited on the Sabbath (I Macc. 2:39-41). Smith (1991) identifies six hundred and thirteen commandments in the Hebrew bible that regulate human behavior. Faithfulness to these laws resulted in God's blessing, while transgressions were met with disaster. It was in this way that individual behavior, the use of leisure and the observance of the Sabbath, had implications that extended to the eschatological vision of the entire community. Maimonides, a twelfth century rabbi, held that the proper use of leisure was the essence of the Messianic vision of Judaism.

Contemporary Perspectives on the Jewish Sabbath

Lamm (1986) mentions that there is not a consensus on the role of leisure in Jewish tradition. Heintzman (1995) informs us that despite the centrality of the Sabbath in Hebraic law and numerous references to the importance of rest in all its forms, the bible does not present a complete theology of leisure. Kalin-Bundt (1981) contends that the Sabbath, in contemporary Judaism, continues to be an expression of leisure and is a natural part of the Jewish life cycle.

The basis for understanding sabbath leisure in this context is the sacredness of time. The prohibition of work (*melakhah*), is the basis of Sabbath observance, however, the concept of rest (*menuhah*) is also central to this practice. This idea of rest was established in order to give glory to the name of Yahweh. This rest was the apex of human existence, the six days of labor were ordered towards the seventh day of *menuhah*. The concept of *menuhah* includes two separate ideas; *shevitah* – the cessation of work and *nofesh*, the refreshment of the spirit.

The *shevitah* allows for rediscovery of self through a disengagement from the world, a period of becoming reacquainted with one's true self. It is the sense of re-creation that helps one to reinstate a sense of personal integrity.

Nofesh reaches beyond the self as it is known, to self-transformation. Rather than remaining within personal boundaries *nofesh* calls for transcendence, for the permission to experience 'an additional or expanded soul' *neshamah yeterah*. The prescribed method of achieving this expanded soul is found in the study of the Torah. This realization of self-improvement through study and contemplation is reminiscent of the Greek concept of *scholē*.

We see in the Judaic tradition a strict adherence to societal norms expressed through the practice of Sabbath observance. To be a Jew was to observe the Sabbath, to abstain from numerous forbidden behaviors. Failure to do so in the prescribed manner risked banishment and death. The spiritual significance of rest within the Sabbath theology, however, also fostered a sense of personal well being and growth. This central value was extended to all who lived in the Judaic system, introducing a sense of justice and equality. In the Hebrew Sabbath we also see an emerging dichotomy of repression and spiritual growth that will find its way into the beliefs and practices of Christianity.

Early Christianity

The earliest disciples of Jesus did not envision creating an institutionalised system of beliefs nor a hierarchical structure to govern the lives of believers. The *parousia*, or second coming, was anticipated within their lifetimes.

Jesus, throughout his ministry, questioned the legalistic interpretation of the commandments, particularly the restrictive elements of the Sabbath observance. Jesus insisted that the constraints placed on human activity by the Sabbath laws were counterintuitive to the actual message of the covenantal relationship. Examples of his teaching on the Sabbath can be found in Matthew 5:17-48; 11:28-30; 12:1-14 and Mark 2:27.

The early faith community found itself in conflict with the leisure practices of the times. The Roman strategy of 'bread and circuses' was employed in order to keep the multitude of lower class, slave and disenfranchised members of Roman society from rising up against the ruling class. The rejection of Roman leisure, the Baths, gambling, the killing of animals and humans for entertainment, and sexual promiscuity set the stage for the persecution and death of many Christians as they refused to become a part of the social order of the day. With the gradual acceptance of Christianity and its elevation to the state religion by Constantine around 312AD, Christianity spread throughout the western world. In 321AD for religious and political reasons, Sunday was declared a day of rest, the new Sabbath.

The Catholic Church, for the first thousand years of its existence, retained social control through the imagery of sin and forgiveness. Ritual reinforced this vision as the sacraments provided a link between the imperfect world, the result of free will, and the eschatological vision of salvation. Catholicism created a structure that admitted sinfulness as the natural product of individual free will expressed during leisure. There was, however, a price to be paid for salvation. The sacrament of Penance required acts of piety, satisfaction for sin, including the monetary payment towards relief of the temporal

penalties of sin. The Church was becoming a spiritual bank of sorts, keeping accounts of the credits and debits of daily life. The new economy emerging in Europe, based on banking and credit, created an environment wherein this type of spiritual transaction seemed both logical and beneficial.

Leisure activities such as festivals, songs, games, pilgrimages, home activities, sport, drinking, superstitious practices, religious fraternities, and other communal practices all cooperated to support the established order of life. Immoral behavior was expected and even celebrated prior to the beginning of the observance of Lent. While the theology of Penance required the commitment to 'sin no more', the reality was a system that forgave sin readily, for a price.

Over one hundred feast days were established during which labor was to cease and time was to be spent in reflection. This excessive amount of leisure resulted in a slow devolution of societal norms. Holy days became a day spent in the tavern; involvement in socially denigrating behaviors flourished.

By the fourteenth century, the hierarchy dismantled the Church's vision through their own disregard and lack of commitment to their founding principles. Economic, political, religious, social and geographic upheaval shaped the patterns of settlement and migration during the Middle Ages. An agricultural economy rooted in the feudal system of the landed gentry, served by an impoverished and heavily taxed populace of serfs and freemen, was being usurped. A prolonged period of moral decline descended upon the Church, resulting from its tacit acceptance of leisure behavior that required forgiveness and payment for sin.

Reformation Theology

The main proponents of the reform movement included the efforts of Luther, Calvin, and Henry VIII of England and the political forces that aligned themselves with each of these leaders. Its effects permanently altered the theological, political, social and geographical identity of western culture.

The Reformation interrupted the Church's communal vision of the future by radically redefining the present. The reformers, at great risk, attempted to bring about a more immediate vision whereby the eschatological achievement of 'perfection' would be realized on earth. This was to be accomplished by constantly living the vision through a life of total dedication to the gospel message. All behavior, and in particular discretionary leisure behavior, was to be directed towards the perfection of one's earthly relationship to the divine. Wasting time, involving oneself in frivolous recreational activities was sinful. Free time was to be filled with labor according to one's calling, and to prayer and mortification of the senses. Pleasure, enrichment and idleness were not the righteous uses of leisure according to the reformers.

Leisure was to conform to the will of God as interpreted by religious and civil authorities. As Parker (1977) notes:

In pre-industrial society... leisure was a set of socially structured occasions and rituals.... Leisure, due to the fixations of the reform movement became secondary, existing only to support the work at hand. The Protestant ethic ennobled work and relegated leisure to the status of spare time, though spare time activities could acquire value if used to restore men for work.⁴

Ultimately the utopia envisioned by the reformers was usurped by the elite and merchant classes resulting in cultural hegemony, as the civil authorities attempted to define and control the symbolic and ritual behaviors of the populace.

Luther

Luther, inspired by the writings of St. Paul and St Augustine, rejected the notion of man's free will, embracing the notion of predestination. Work was elevated to a divine calling. The calling was spiritual in that the Elect were chosen for salvation, and worldly as each man had a specific job to do on earth. Work, as opposed to idleness, became a form of ascetic exercise, a holy task akin to prayer, occupying the body and reducing the occasion for sin. Luther speaks to the primacy of work and the dangers of leisure:

All festivals should be abolished, and Sunday alone retained... The reason is this: The feast days are now abused by drinking, gaming, idleness and all manner of sins, so that on the holy days we anger God more than on other days... the holy days are not holy and the working days are holy... Over and above the spiritual injury, the common man receives two material injuries from this practice, he neglects his work and spends more than at other times; he also weakens his body and unfits it for work... Above all, we ought utterly to abolish the consecration days, since they have become nothing else than taverns, fairs and gaming places and serve only to increase God's dishonor and to the damnation of souls...⁵

Luther also sought to abolish the practice of pilgrimages and criticized excessive or unnecessary reading.

Luther saw the Sabbath as being fully devoted to 'hearing mass, praying, to rest and celebration in the Lord'. The enforcement of a day of worship was a radical change from the observances of the Roman rite and placed limitations on both the amount of leisure available and on the types of activities that were permissible during free time.

Acceptance of reform theology was for the nobles and landowners an aid in their efforts to free themselves from the administrative and financial controls of the Roman

church. Political objectives were frequently aligned with Church directives, both profiting from the ability to enforce restrictions on wealth, land and leisure. The Reformation became a matter of life and death as allegiance to a theology was intimately linked with political survival. Leisure practices that transgressed theological boundaries were also seen to be a threat to the government and were considered treasonous.

Calvin

Calvin worked to establish a civil society based on his interpretation, understanding and application of biblical teachings. Calvin preached and produced sermons, catechisms, and doctrinal tomes defining his vision of righteous living.

Coldwell (1998) cites over one hundred articles and books addressing Calvin's teachings concerning the use of the Sabbath. These works includes Calvin's *34th Sermon on Deuteronomy*, *Sermons on Job*, *Harmony of the Last Four Books of Moses*, and his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, first published in 1536. Reactions to Calvin's teaching came as early as 1559, in John Aylmer's comments on recreational activities that took place on the Sabbath, found in *A Harbor for Faithful Subjects*. Proper leisure behavior became the most significant measure of one's adherence to the Calvinist reform.

Calvin's *Ordinances Ecclesiastiques*, with an emphasis on discipline and moral living in the face of a population comfortable with excesses, led to the Church Elders assuming the role of moral police, investigating the behaviors of citizens. Actions deemed inappropriate or a threat to order were reported to the authorities and the perpetrator was tried and swiftly punished by the Consistory through public censure, penance, excommunication, imprisonment or death. According to Calvin,

The Elders office is to watch over the life of each person, to admonish amicably those whom they see to be at fault and leading a disorderly life, and when

necessary report them to the Company, which will be authorized to administer fraternal correction and to do so in association with others.⁶

In Geneva, between 1542 and 1546, there were no less than fifty eight executions and seventy six banishments. Those who remained subjected themselves, at least publicly, to the demands of 'godly living'. The accepted use of the Sabbath for the Calvinists excluded numerous recreational activities such as bowling, soccer, dancing, visiting taverns, gambling at cards and dice, and other activities that were seen to be immoral. Superstitions such as possession of images for worshipping, the participation in pilgrimages, festivals or fasts, or attendance at Mass were subject to varying levels of punishment. Drunkenness was punishable by whippings, fines and imprisonment.

People are not to invite one another to excessive drinking under penalty of three sous. Anyone who sings indecent, dissolute, or outrageous songs or dances the fling or some similar dance shall be imprisoned for three days and then shall be sent to the Consistory. Fornication, (unmarried partners) shall result in a fine of sixty sous and six days imprisonment on bread and water.⁷

Confessions were obtained by the Consistory through humiliation and torture; punishments were severe and corporeal. It was the role of the Consistory, and particularly the Elders, to control the use of leisure through investigation and reprimand. According to Kingdon (1972) an immediate result was a kind of moral terror in Geneva.

Calvin's insistence on moral reform and the elimination of certain pastimes created hardship for those who made a living from the recreational enjoyments of others.

England

The English Reformation was about politics, not Protestantism. Henry VIII, once proclaimed a Defender of the Faith by the Roman Church, broke away due to marital

difficulties and concerns about an heir to the throne. The English reform is a fascinating story of intrigue, loyalty, treason, persecution and death as the royals, from Edward to Elizabeth, reversed course several times on matters of civil and ecclesial authority. The following injunctions, enacted by Elizabeth during the latter period of reform, serve to illustrate the role taken on by the Church/State in the use of leisure by its citizens:

... said ecclesiastical persons shall in no wise at any unlawful time, nor for any other cause, than for their honest necessities, haunt or resort to any taverns or alehouses. And after their meats, they shall not give themselves to drinking or riot, spending their time idly by day and by night at dice, cards, or tables playing, or any other unlawful game; but at all times, as they shall have leisure, they shall hear or read somewhat of Holy Scripture, or shall occupy themselves with some other honest study, or exercise... having always in mind that they ought to excel all other in purity of life, and should be examples to the people to live well and Christianly.⁸

The situation was complicated by the return of a group of religious exiles seeking to purify the Anglican reform. H.C. Porter (1970) identifies several distinct groups under the heading of Puritan: Separatists who sought to distinguish themselves from other Protestants; Evangelical Puritans who wanted a more precise reform but remained in the national church; English dissenters who followed a long tradition of dissent back to the Lollards and the Presbyterian class movement with a political as well as theological agenda of reform. The development of the puritan mindset can be traced to those early reformers who fled England under the reign of Mary and found refuge in cities like Geneva and Zurich. Pettegree (2000) observes the effects of post-Genevan reform on England which he describes as a

...battle between the external profession of faith that was typical of Catholic and Anglican practices with the conversion of the individual soul and community desired by the Puritans. Sin, morality and recreational behaviors are one method of determining the success of the efforts of each party. England was transformed from a festal society into one of sabbatarian discipline, daily piety, bible reading,

prayer and sermon attendance. The internal transformation of the faithful was less successful. The reformation could not reasonably encompass the conversion of England, however dramatically it shaped the history and culture of the English people.⁹

Cross (1995) comments on the attitudes of the Puritans towards pleasure:

Leisure also threatened to profane (give offense to) God and His mission of creating his kingdom on earth. As one of God's chosen people, the Puritan believed that he not only had to avoid pleasures in his own life but to struggle against them in the community.¹⁰

Robert Lee (1964) describes Puritanism as a revolt against the holy days.

Puritanism is associated with strictness in morals, sobriety in conduct, piety in religion, thrift in business, diligence in work and suspicion of pleasure. Social controls impacted all accepted forms of leisure, including the closure of drinking establishments, the discontinuance of many popular forms of sport and animal entertainment, gambling and the arts. Ryken (1994,1995) addresses both the truths and myths of the Puritan perspective on leisure noting that popular conceptions may not accurately reflect the historical realities.

The English Church, reminiscent of the efforts of the Lutherans, reduced the traditional Christian calendar and introduced new patriotic and nationalistic celebrations. There were, amongst the pious, efforts to distance the 'godly' or 'true believer' from all forms of popular recreational activity. The alehouse, the inn and the theatre were places of temptation and sin, inappropriate places for the true Christian. *The Act of 1541* forbid certain games in alehouses including bowls, dice, cards and plays. The role of the pub as a center for recreational activity increased during the reformation period as many forms of public recreational experience were eliminated. The decline in communal activities is

attributed to many causes including the denial of festivities in the church yards, the Puritan attack on seasonal feasts and Sunday dancing and sports, the hostility of the magistrates towards disorderly recreations, and the expense associated with elaborate festivals and events.

The efforts of the Puritans to sanctify the Sabbath resulted in restrictions upon sport and games on that day. The *Declaration of Lawful Sports* allowed for certain recreational activities to take place after church services on Sundays. James I later extended this law to all of England with the enactment of the *Book of Sports* in 1618. The laws were in direct opposition to the doctrinal inclinations of the Puritans and were an attempt by the government to control the ever-growing dissidence of this group.

Eventually the attitudes associated with the puritan perspective on recreational activities became the law of the land. This change marked the beginning of the civilizing process in modern England, with its restrictions on drinking, gambling, animal cruelty and carnal excesses. Others saw the restrictions as the exercise of power by the elite over the lives of the common folk in a manner similar, yet perhaps less effective, than the earlier efforts of Calvin.

Islam

Islam founded by the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century shares history and theological principles with Judaism and Christianity. Islam is predicated upon the Five Pillars of Islam, the principles that regulate the private lives of Muslims in their dealings with Allah. They consist of reciting the profession of faith, performing five daily prayers preceded by ablutions, paying a tax for the needy, fasting during Ramadan and conducting a pilgrimage to Mecca.

The Islamic view of the nature of man believes that human beings are not inherently sinful, but are capable of both good and evil. God has given people free will, the measure of one's faith are deeds and actions. However, human beings are considered weak and regularly fall into sin. Muslims believe that God will judge all human beings for their beliefs and actions in their earthly lives. A sincere belief in the afterlife is key to leading a well-balanced life.

Islam does not accept a secular view of government and society, but one based on the Qu'ran. Nor does Islam leave it to human beings to decide what is moral and immoral based on their whims, desires or man-made ideas. In Islam, wealth and worldly pleasures are acceptable as long as they are enjoyed in a way that is in obedience to God. Muslims are taught to keep in mind that the afterlife is their ultimate goal, and therefore one should be charitable and not become too attached to worldly things.

Islam according to Ibrahim (1991) has no equivalent word for leisure but does express the ideas of rest, play and recreation. Ibrahim (1988) identifies two Islamic teachings relative to leisure: 'recreate your hearts hour after hour, for the tired hearts go blind' and 'Teach your children swimming, shooting and horseback riding.' Three sets of desires are associated with leisure: a desire for amusement relaxation and laughter, a desire for stimulation of all the senses and a desire to wonder, learn and gain knowledge.

The Muslim tradition, like all the major religions, has experienced divisions resulting in varying interpretations of its social teachings. Ibrahim (1991) citing, works by Mahdi (1964) and Rosenthal (1958), identifies five distinct stages in the development of society. The third stage, one of tranquility, includes the prominence of leisure and the growth of crafts, fine arts and the sciences.

While not enforcing a strict consideration of a particular holy day each week, Muslims are encouraged to attend noon prayers on Friday at a mosque. The remainder of the day is left to individual discretion. The Islamic tradition supports many feasts and holy days throughout the year and allows for a variety of public entertainments and sport.

The rise in nationalism over the centuries has created additional religious and political agendas resulting in both liberal and extreme fundamentalist interpretations and applications of the teachings of the Qu'ran. These interpretations place limits on the leisure choices available to the faithful.

Conclusions

Is leisure the way to salvation, the earthly manifestation of the vision of eschatological glory, or is leisure a liability, allowing for depravity due to human free will and the natural disposition of humanity towards sinfulness? We have seen evidence of both in the examples provided. We can readily observe that leisure was of paramount importance in understanding one's relationship to the divine and to the acting out of this relationship of faith through organized religion. Furthermore, one cannot separate religion or leisure from the notion of morality. Moral living is an integral part of each religion's portrayal of the communal vision and reward for living a good life. The proper use of leisure in each case presents a means of fulfilling the call to discipleship.

Each tradition presented offers positive encouragement regarding leisure. The concepts of *shevithah* and *nofesh* promote a sense of renewal and real transformation available through leisure experienced in Sabbath observance.

The early Christian communities came to understand the value of rest and the sense of justice, equality and love that was at the root of their faith. Catholicism used

leisure as an opportunity for remembering saints and holy events in an effort to provide motivation for salvation and respite for the difficult and unrewarding life of the peasant.

The Protestant reform, in the face of an oppressive feudal existence rife with suffering and excess, sought to recapture the messianic vision represented in the Bible. The reformers wished to rebuild society from the ground up, beginning with Sabbath observance and including the daily leisure dispositions of the faithful.

Islam provides for sacred leisure five times daily. Believers are encouraged to literally remove themselves from their daily concerns, to praise Allah and to be personally recreated by that act of prayer.

From a theological perspective, the concept of free will clarifies the role of leisure. For the Jew, Muslim and Catholic, free will is seen as a gift from the Creator. In this sense, leisure is critical to salvation as the moment of opportunity for the exercise of free will. For many of the Protestant denominations, free will is an aberration of Christian theology. Salvation is fully dependent upon grace as the only means for salvation. Leisure is mistrusted in that it is the opportunity for failure to live the 'just life'.

The matter is further complicated by the unfortunate alliance formed between theology and political necessity. Religion as an instrument of the state supported the ambitions of those seeking worldly gain.

The power structure of Jerusalem was characterized by the efforts of the Pharisees who enforced constraints on leisure through their interpretation of the Sabbath.

Roman Catholicism allowed for excess during leisure as a social release, knowing that the faithful would necessarily return to the fold through the spiritual and temporal exercise of the sacrament of Penance.

As a middle class emerged in Europe, there was a desire for order and control. The reformers saw the role of civil government as necessary in furthering the message of religious reform and salvation. Market economies required a level of civility and stability in order to be effective. The reform movements, through their insistence on 'godly living' and 'lawful recreations', controlled the citizenry for religious goals while creating a level of behavior monitoring and public sanctions that satisfied the needs of the ruling class. The middle and upper classes succeeded in eliminating the horizontal social bonding that was part of the festivities of the Church and the agricultural peasantry, establishing dominance over the lower classes in terms of popular culture, celebration and political participation.

Contemporary societies, whose diverse value systems reflect the evolution of past experience, are confronted with both secular and religious constraints regarding leisure. Evangelical and fundamentalist universities in the U.S. ban most forms of social dancing, movies, taverns and nightclubs, drinking or tobacco use by students or faculty, and hold students to strict dress codes. Holland, Michigan a predominantly Calvinist reform community enforces a ban on Sunday commercial activity. Utah County, Utah, a Mormon region, forbids all recreational activity on Sunday, banning swimming and locking restroom doors at local parks. Local Seventh Day Adventists, who strictly observe Saturday as the Sabbath, are restricted in their ability to enjoy the municipally owned facilities.

The American Atheist movement is a vocal critic of the restrictions placed on organized recreational activities and professional sports on Sunday mornings. It is seen as

an unfair constraint on leisure based on a particular understanding and enforcement of a religious communal vision.

Contemporary leisure scholars have ascribed an ethical or moral quality to leisure perhaps in an effort to raise the relevance of the discipline or to counteract the negativity ascribed to leisure over the centuries. The problem with such a utilitarian approach is the danger of failing to recognize the universality of leisure, a replacement for religious activity for some, and for others its fullest realization.

It is imperative for both theorists and practitioners to remain vigilant in their protection of the basic human right to freedom experienced during leisure.

Endnotes

1. Rifkin, Jeremy. (1989). *Time wars: The primary conflict in human history*. New York: Simon and Schuster. p. 145

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