

Reclaiming the Relation of Religion, Politics, and Economics

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The prevalent opinion still holds that religion possesses an identity of its own and that it can be defined as a discipline of study.¹ Many modern scholars have assumed that religion has its own distinct essence.² Many post-modern scholars no longer believe in such essences. Nevertheless, they also tend to agree that part of the definition of religion is that it is not politics and not economics, to name two other prominent disciplines. Religion is, thus, maintained as a discipline even once essentialist understandings of religion have been put to rest. However, such definitions of religion are not only too narrow; they cover up what is most interesting about religion today, namely the interaction of religion with other disciplines, particularly with politics and economics. In this chapter, I am calling into question long-held assumption that religious phenomena are related more closely to other religious phenomena, that economic phenomena are related more closely to other economic phenomena, and that political phenomena are related more closely to other political phenomena. Often, the opposite is the case: certain economic notions of the “invisible hand of the market,” for instance, are more closely related to certain religious understandings of divine omnipotence than to other economic understandings of how markets function.

New horizons open up if we set conventional disciplinary categories aside for the moment and examine some particular approaches to religion, economics, and politics in order to investigate what they have in common and what sets them apart. My hypothesis is that certain manifestations of religion

have more in common with certain manifestations of economics and politics than with other manifestations of religion. If this is true, then scholars in religious studies, politics, and economics will have to deal in more serious fashion with the diversity of approaches to these three disciplines that prohibits narrow definitions of each of these fields. Furthermore, if this hypothesis is true, we will need to search for kindred spirits not only within our own fields but also across disciplinary boundaries. It is my hope that in the end this search will lead us to a broader and, hopefully, more constructive understanding of the various disciplines.

Broadening the Horizons of the Study of Religion

The basic observation that underlies my argument is that religion, economics, and politics—to name three prominent disciplines that mark our age—bleed into each other in more ways than is commonly recognized. In the United States, for instance, people subscribe to the principle of the separation of church and state, a principle that is anchored in the U.S. Constitution. The historical reasons for the development of this principle are clear: certain ways of relating church and state, as well as religion and politics, in the past have produced catastrophic results, including extensive wars of religion in Europe in the seventeenth century.

The truth is, however, that despite this principle of the separation of church and state there are few modern nations today where religion and politics are tied together more closely than in the United States. The Christian Religious Right, for instance, is deeply involved not only in politics as such, but in the politics of the Republican Party, the so-called Tea Party movement, and other conservative political enterprises.³ At the other end of the political spectrum, progressive resistance movements like the Civil Rights movement, a newly emerging religion and labor movement in the United States, and the most recent Occupy Wall Street Movement find support in religious communities as well.⁴

The frequently unacknowledged relation of religion and politics in the United States is mirrored in the relation of religion and economics.⁵ Classical capitalist philosophy noted the transcendent “invisible hand of the market” (Adam Smith), and neoliberal capitalism continues to be deeply linked to religious and quasi-religious assumptions. The tip of the iceberg in this regard can be seen in the seemingly trivial fact that prayer is often part of corporate board meetings in the United States. The relation of religion and economics is now investigated not only by scholars of religion but also by a growing number of economists.⁶ This relation of religion and economics goes at least as deep as the relation of religion and politics, but it is even less acknowledged

and reflected. When the separation of church and state became the accepted doctrine of the United States in the nineteenth century, there did not seem any need to state an explicit separation of church and economics or of religion and economics.

In this regard, it might be interesting to take a look at Europe, where religion is even less visible in relation to economics. While prayer or open talk about divine agency or God is frowned upon in the European context, I suspect that there is a religious moment built into the assumption that economics as currently practiced corresponds to the way things are, i.e., that economics “comes natural.” I will come back to this later, arguing that what is linked here is not religion, politics, and economics in general, but very distinct and particular forms of religion, politics, and economics, which share a set of family resemblances.

In the ancient world, the modern notion that religion is a reality that exists in separation from politics or economics, or that religion is a private affair that is restricted to civil society, would have been inconceivable. Operating on the basis of this modern notion of religion has, unfortunately, prevented both scholars and practitioners of religion from noticing some of the more interesting roles that religion has played in the past and is playing now. In the historical study of Christianity, for instance, the traditional modern opinion that the Emperor Cult of Ancient Rome had to do with the cooptation of religion — defined as a private/civic affair — by politics — defined as a public/political affair — has prevented generations of scholars from investigating its deeper significance and power.⁷

The narrow modern definition of religion has also prevented us from investigating the full implications and consequences of the rejection of this Emperor Cult by the early Christians. Was this merely a private act of faith, as has often been assumed, or were there larger political implications that were genuinely related to faith and religion? As a result, we have failed to understand significant components not only of ancient Christianity and what kind of religion it was, but also of what made up ancient Roman culture and, thus, what is at the root of our Western civilization.⁸

Another example from the study of Christianity illustrates this issue further. The narrow modern definition of religion typically misses the point of Jesus’ well-known response to the question of whether colonized Jewish people should pay the taxes levied by the Roman Empire. Jesus’ famous statement to “give ... to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21) provoked the amazement of his audience, according to Matthew’s narrative, suggesting that something more interesting is at stake here than the mere distinction of religion and politics in two separate realms. For Jesus, like for his audience, it would not have made sense

to assume that “the things that are God’s” could be limited to religion and the private realm, while the rest of the world would belong to the emperor as a matter of course. As any righteous Jew would have known, everything belongs to God because God is the creator of the world, and so the request to give God “the things that are God’s” sets the Jesus movement on a course of conflict with the political powers of the emperor. In this light, Jesus’ execution on a cross as a political rebel makes sense and points to the deeper realities of religion. Modern religionists and much of modern Christianity, on the other hand, could only see Jesus’ crucifixion by Rome as a terrible misunderstanding.⁹

Economics as Religion

Postmodern theories of religion have helped us to understand again that religion has never functioned merely in the isolated world of private affairs and that it has had broader implications all along, including implications for politics and economics.¹⁰ Nevertheless, in a world where the modern academic disciplines are still in charge, there are still boundaries that appear to be in the way, despite an increasing number of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary efforts. One of the current boundaries that separate religion from economics is that religion is seen as a venture that deals with the realm of ideas and values, while economics deals with material reality and the real world. Even when more complex definitions of religion and economics are used, these distinctions remain in effect, for instance when religion is considered a discipline that deals with matters of culture, while economics is considered a discipline that deals with matters of fact and, thus, shares some traits with the so-called hard sciences.

Based on these types of distinctions, some economists have argued that modern economics has come to function like a religion, as it moves from the analysis of economic phenomena and the calculation of numbers to the promotion of big ideas. Leading economists, in the account of economist Robert Nelson, function like priests in that they keep the big ideas of the discipline alive by preaching them in good and bad times, unconcerned by economic data.¹¹ The definition of religion operative in this context is tied to the promotion of big ideas and values, which takes place independent of empirical assessments of concrete situations and unaffected by scientific critique.

Nevertheless, despite operating with a traditional definition of religion, Nelson’s observations blur the boundary between religion and economics in some important ways, as economics is seen in a different light. Nelson’s observation that economics has come to function like a religion, presented a decade ago, finds support in the context of the responses to recent economic crises.

In the United States, for instance, not even the harsh reality of the so-called Great Recession of 2008 and 2009 was able to dislodge the big ideas and values of neoliberal capitalism. Mounting evidence that these big ideas and values do not correspond to reality is rarely considered by the mainstream.¹² Core ideas of neoliberal economics, like that a rising tide will lift all boats or that wealth accumulated at the top will trickle down, are in tension with the observation that the rich keep getting richer, the poor keep getting poorer, and the middle class is thinning.¹³ Still, the majority continues to believe with quasi-religious certainty the neoliberal creeds that economic deregulation is preferable to regulation, that economic privatization is preferable to other alternatives, that large corporations and banks need to be given special treatment by the government in order to promote economic growth, and so on.

In the United States this type of religion and the ideas it promotes is so effective that all major political parties continue to affirm the creeds of neoliberal economics without raising too many questions. The big ideas and values of neoliberal capitalism are so established that alternative economic analyses have a hard time rising to the surface and that potential debates are vehemently discouraged. There is little public awareness that alternatives exist. Moreover, alternative economic approaches are quickly branded with the ominous label of “socialism.”

While Europe may be somewhat more open in this regard, similar dynamics of neoliberal economics as religion can be observed there as well, as both European corporations and governments continue to uphold neoliberal economic principles in pushing privatization, economic deregulation, and reducing checks and balances on free trade. Unfortunately, however, more often than not the religion of big ideas and values turns out to promote “pie in the sky”—an illusory hope that never becomes true in most people’s lifetime—and here both dominant religious and economic discourses share another set of family resemblances.

Religion scholars Jeremy Carrette and Richard King have shown the consequences of these dynamics for religion. Under the conditions of neoliberal capitalism, they have observed, “religion is rebranded as ‘spirituality’”—i.e., devoid of its material qualities and embodiment—in order to support the ideology of capitalism.”¹⁴ Religion in this context loses some of its material qualities and rootedness in alternative ways of life that differ from the dominant paradigm. All that remains are free-floating ideas that seem to have little connection to what is going on in the real world.

What Carrette and King overlook, however, is that not only religion but also economics itself takes on the qualities of this free-floating spirituality in order to maintain the status quo of capitalism. Neoliberal economics as religion keeps promising “pie in the sky” to the public, whose savings and retire-

ment accounts as well as house values have taken major hits, especially in the United States, while a small group of top investors makes more profits than ever before.

In this example a certain kind of religion and a certain kind of economics are moving in sync with each other. It is not that religion is merely used by economics here; economics itself functions like a particular type of religion, a religion that has adapted to economic conventions. At any rate, what ties these types of religion and economics together is the promotion of big and lofty ideas, which are not only devoid of material qualities and embodiment but which are constructed in order to defy any empirical evidence that reality might be different.

In the United States, these types of religion and economics are especially deep-seated, as they have made their way into the public psyche through the promotion of what is called “positive thinking,” which is supposedly the key to the American Dream. The assumption is that thinking positive thoughts, against all odds, would create success at all levels. Barbara Ehrenreich’s recent book *Bright-Sided* presents the troubling history of positive thinking in the United States. She notes its all-pervasiveness from the academy to religious communities and the world of business. Not only has this approach not worked, it has made things worse for those who believed the hype.¹⁵ It appears, therefore, that these types of religion do not work for the majority of people, dubbed the 99 percent by the Occupy movement.

Reconceiving Religion and Consequences for Economics

As economics takes shape in ways that match what some have defined as religion, traditional definitions of economics are destabilized; economics is more than an account of reality and of the facts of finance. By the same token, we can now take another look at the definition of religion itself, which is not stable either. Although the description of religion as the promotion of free-floating ideas and values captures some forms of religion, it does not capture religion in general. To be more precise, what this definition appears to capture are particular form of religions, which are endorsed and promoted by those who are in positions of power and control—dubbed the 1 percent by the Occupy movement in view of the contemporary divisions in capitalist societies—and who have an interest in covering up what is going on in the trenches where the real battles of life are fought.

The Emperor Cult in the Roman Empire, for instance, was designed to promote the big ideas and values of the empire, especially in situations where people would have raised questions. The notion of the divinity of Caesar is

one of these big and free-floating ideas. Designed to promote the power and elite status of the emperor by eliminating the need to prove himself in real-life situations, this idea of divinity would protect him from the challenges of his peers who did not agree with his designs. Equally important, the idea of the divinity of Caesar would protect him from those who did not have much to gain from the empire and from those who were the victims of its conquests. If they could be convinced of his divinity, they would be more willing to follow his lead and opposition would appear to be hopeless. This big idea, proclaimed by the priests of the empire, was useful in maintaining the power of the status quo of the empire and in warding off questions about the reality of life in the empire, especially questions about the reality of life at its margins.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, the big idea of the superiority of the Christian religion was designed to ward off any challenges posed to what at that point was considered “Christian civilization,” even by those who otherwise argued for religious pluralism and understanding. The work of German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) is especially interesting in this regard, as Schleiermacher provides arguments for the value of other religions while maintaining the superiority not only of Christianity in general but his own type of Prussian Protestantism in particular.¹⁶ Empirical evidence of this superiority is not required, as those who hold to this religion seem to be in agreement about its qualities. In a discussion of miracles, which is not a small matter in Christian theology, Schleiermacher’s response can presuppose that his readers agree: “Even if it cannot be strictly proved that the Church’s power of working miracles has died out..., yet in general it is undeniable that, in view of the great advantage in power and civilization which the Christian peoples possess over the non-Christian..., the preachers of to-day do not need such signs.”¹⁷ The big ideas of power and civilization trump even the divine agency itself. Religion, where it takes shape as big ideas and values that resist empirical assessment, has an important role to play in support of positions of power and control.

Today, the big ideas promoted by the so-called Gospel of Prosperity, which proclaims fantastic wealth and success for those of its adherents who engage in the right religious practices, are designed perhaps not primarily with the goal to make more people wealthy, as is often assumed. Just the opposite appears to be the case: the big ideas promoted by the Gospel of Prosperity help to fend off challenges from those who are not gaining the promised wealth and success. In this way, the Gospel of Prosperity contributes to the power and control of the 1 percent over the 99 percent. The losers can now be held in check and blamed for their own misfortune. The barely chastened promotion of big ideas by neoliberal economists fulfills a similar task, which is not primarily to increase the wealth of the community but the wealth of

the economic elite, while blaming those who are unable to survive economically for their own exclusion from economic power.

What all these examples share in common is that free-floating big ideas and values serve to cover up and thus maintain the power differentials, and as such are designed to prevent closer investigations of economic and political realities, especially from the point of view of the 99 percent.

Nevertheless, this is not the only way in which religion functions. Religions that are not as strongly aligned with the dominant powers, or that resist these powers in some form or fashion, often display different dynamics. In the Roman Empire, for instance, alternative religious movements could not survive merely by promoting big ideas; rather, they had to prove themselves against the powers of the empire. These movements needed to demonstrate somehow that they made a difference. This appears to be the context of Jesus' response to John the Baptist in the Gospel of Matthew, as John began to have doubts about the Jesus movement.

Jesus' response is very different from those who promote big ideas, and it does not even seem to be particularly religious in terms of the dominant definition of religion: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them" (Matt. 11:4–5). Rather than demanding trust in great ideas, Jesus provides evidence of what difference his movement is making. Good news to the poor, in this context, cannot be pie in the sky or the proclamation that a rising tide will — eventually — lift all boats; good news to the poor only makes sense if it is the tangible transformation of reality.

Currently, the religiosity tied up with liberation theologies in Latin America and elsewhere is in a similar position. While often pronounced dead and outdated by those who promote dominant religion, liberation religiosity stays alive by being tied to movements that are making a difference in the lives of people. This happens, for instance, by raising levels of awareness about what is going on in real life, by organizing alternative communities not only religiously but also politically and economically, and by making it clear that religion takes a stand with those who struggle against oppression. Big ideas and values, in this context, are not necessarily off limits but they need to prove themselves in some form or fashion in real-life contexts. If there is a disconnect, these ideas are bound to be transformed and reshaped in relation to the struggles of the people.

Here, religion assumes a different form. Rather than the promotion of free-floating ideas and values from the top down, religion is the negotiation of the pressures of real life in such a way that alternatives are nourished and become visible — the sort of alternatives whose existence the status quo refuses

to admit. It is well known that the Christian Base Communities in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s managed to form alternative bodies in their resistance against dominant religion, economics, and politics. What is less well known is that these things are still going on in some shape or form. As these activities continue, they become more multifaceted and complex. As far as the projects of the Christian Base Communities in Latin America are concerned, other religious groupings have joined the resistance, including indigenous religions and some Pentecostal strands of Christianity.

In the United States, religious resistance movements have a history that goes back to the beginnings of the nation, from abolitionism to women's rights and Civil Rights movements. Today, a budding religion and labor movement is beginning to shape religiosity as it negotiates the increasing pressures that impinge on the lives of workers.¹⁸ In addition, the current activities related to the Occupy Wall Street Movement are related to religion in less obvious ways, but connections exist. The Occupy Faith movement is only one example. The implications of the Occupy movement for religion and our understanding of the divine and of religious communities, as well as the implications of alternative religion for the Occupy movement are tremendous. My colleague Kwok Pui Lan and I are talking about a "theology of the multitude" that is emerging here.¹⁹

Talking about religious notions like, for instance, the work of Jesus Christ in this context is not code for unquestioning endorsements of the powers that be, as is often the case when the mainline invokes concepts like the "lordship of Christ." Talking about the work of Jesus Christ here demands a discussion of the difference Christ makes in the lives of those who experience the tremendous pressures of the labor market in a country like the United States, where the unemployed and the employed are played off each other in order to drive down wages and benefits.²⁰ The big ideas of wealth and success give way to considerations of Christ taking the sides of the people ("the last will be first," Matt. 20:16), taking a stand against Mammon and for God's care of the world (Matt. 6:24), and organizing an alternative way of life (riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, when the Roman governors rode on horses, Matt. 21:1–10).

Alternative ideas and values arise out of this engagement, grounding lofty ideas like the love of God and love of neighbor (Mark 12:28–34): when seen from the perspective of everyday labor, for instance, love of neighbor cannot be reduced to religious sentimentality and status-quo notions of charity. Love of neighbor means solidarity in the struggle, based on an understanding that self and other belong together, not giving in when the going gets tough, and seeing things through until reality and idea inform each other.²¹ The idea of the love of God acquires a new meaning in this context as well.

In sum, religion does not necessarily have to be defined as the promotion of big ideas and values that are disconnected from everyday life. Another way of putting this would be to say that religion does not have to be defined by the common sort of “blind faith” that does not request evidence — or that is designed to resist it. Religion can now be understood in alternative fashion as testing and reshaping big ideas and values in relation to the struggles of real life under pressure. This broadening of the understanding of religion has implications for how we understand economics. Economics does not necessarily have to be a religion in the sense of the promotion of blind faith either. Economics, too, can be reconceived as testing and reshaping big ideas and values in relation to the struggles of real life under pressure. In this scenario, economic crises such as the ones of recent history can become opportunities to challenge the proclamation of lofty ideas in both economics and religion, and to reshape and redesign both economics and religion in new and interesting ways.²²

That I am not completely off track with these reflections is demonstrated by the fact that there are indeed new developments both in economics and religion that move in these directions, as they are driven by close attention to the struggles of real life under pressure, especially the struggles of the increasing numbers of those who are not benefiting from the status quo.²³ This should be common knowledge. Unfortunately, these developments are often overshadowed and covered up by the designs of dominant religion and economics, which are desperately trying to hang on to the big ideas and values of the status quo in order to ward off mounting challenges.

All these observations support my hypothesis: certain forms of religion share a greater affinity with certain forms of economics than with other forms of religion. The similarities and differences can be found in the basic structures: one structure promotes the proclamation of big ideas and values that are disconnected from everyday life as part of its design, while another structure requires hammering out ideas and values in the midst of the struggles of life. In this context, the question of power merits further investigation, as these structural differences seem to be related to the differences between dominant forms of religion and economics, which work for the 1 percent, and their subaltern variations, which work for the 99 percent.²⁴

I must admit my own bias here for, after much deliberation, I have come to the conviction that scholars are ultimately better off not only when they test big ideas and values in reality, but when big ideas and values are developed in the context of real-life struggles that take into account the perspectives of those who are relegated to the margins of power. This perspective from the underside is valuable not only for those who are forced to dwell there but for all of us — and ultimately even for the 1 percent — as it forces us to deal with

the destructive potential of detached ideas that know no limits and are ultimately unsustainable in a limited ecosystem. In small compass, this is the difference between the religion that supports the concerns of the 99 percent and the religion that supports the concerns of the 1 percent.

Complexity and Construction

In my argument so far it might appear as if there were only two options. The reality is, of course, more complex, as there are a variety of ways of relating big ideas/values and the struggles of life. The logical extremes are positions where big ideas/values are promoted in order to deny or reject the relevance of particular struggles of life. Some parts of neo-liberal economics appear to function in this way, as particular problems like poverty or unemployment are believed to take care of themselves and do not need to be addressed — must not be addressed, in Adam Smith's account²⁵ — so as not to disturb the big picture. On the other hand, there are a variety of grassroots approaches, where the big ideas/values of particular traditions are rethought exclusively in light of specific forms and shapes that particular struggles take.

In the developments that have often been described as “postmodernity,” we have been forced to deal with difference, otherness, and pluralism in new ways. Postmodern thought has argued that there are usually more than two options. The greater openness that has resulted from this situation is welcome and much needed, and it undergirds my argument in some ways. Nevertheless, the postmodern situation has also led to some complacency, according to which pluralism now can be taken to mean everything is of equal value and that “anything goes.” In this case, the religion of neoliberal economics or of the 1 percent would be just one more religion among others, which is just as valid as other religions. The sort of interreligious dialogue that emerges at this point has the advantage that it includes economics as religion by default,²⁶ yet the pluralistic creed of postmodernity favors all religions equally and so no decision can be made about value or validity and power relations are left out of the picture.

While this sort of postmodern pluralism is certainly preferable to the witch hunts of the past where only one position prevailed, I want to suggest a different approach. The dialogues between religion and economics that emerge when we question some of the traditional boundaries between the various disciplines might help us establish new, more productive boundaries. Rather than dwelling on the differences between religion and economics in general, we might pay closer attention to the differences between religions and economics that promote lofty ideas on the one hand and, on the other hand, religions and economics that negotiate ideas and values in the struggle

against marginalization and oppression. Here, a new sense of disciplinary boundaries emerges, according to which the lines are drawn between some form of religion and economics and other forms of religion and economics. The feminist study of religion and theology, for example, might have more affinity to feminist economics than to the mainline study of religion and theology, and the mainline study of religion and theology may have more affinity to mainline economics than to liberation theology.

In this context, the classical insight of many oppressed people that the gods of the masters and the gods of the people are not the same begins to make sense. This insight has been expressed on many continents. In South Africa, it was a central discovery in the struggle against Apartheid. In Latin America, liberation theologians have addressed this issue, which is also expressed in José María Arguedas's novel *Todas las Sangres*.²⁷ What needs to be explored further is what difference religion and economics make in particular contexts; and whether and how they "practice what they preach."

As the lines that differentiate these approaches are drawn more clearly, constructive projects can also take shape with more rigor and vigor. On one side of the political spectrum this is already happening. Conservative think tanks in the United States, like the American Enterprise Foundation and the Institute for Religion and Democracy, encourage collaboration across the traditional lines drawn by current academic disciplines. Progressive voices might do well to consider how religious, economic, and political approaches that pay attention to perspectives emerging from the 99 percent might inform, reshape, and reinforce each other. These new kinds of interdisciplinary/inter-religious dialogues will, no doubt, be more open ended and less homogeneous than their conservative counterparts, because of the open-ended nature of life in the diversity of the 99 percent and the varieties of pressures that are experienced here.

Another interesting question suggests itself at this point. In the complex situation of negotiating big ideas/values and the struggles of life, what would we find if we began to investigate particular struggles in particular contexts? For instance, what if we pursued the struggles in the world of labor in this way as one manifestation of the tension between the 1 percent and the 99 percent? How would our definitions of religion, politics, and economics be affected? To be sure, such an investigation would be a complex one, as in this particular investigation issues of race, gender, globalization, etc., all would have to be addressed as they are relevant to labor issues.

The approach that I am proposing would require some in-depth studies that have broader value beyond the world of a few specialists and that would have the potential to spawn collaborative projects between religious studies, economics, and politics, which are rarely happening now.

Notes

1. This chapter is a rewriting of the keynote address given at the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies conference on March 11, 2012.

2. The most prominent modern examples, going back to the nineteenth century, are Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. and ed. Richard Crouter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Religion*, trans. Alexander Loos (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2004), but most modern scholars until recently assumed that religion had a distinct essence. Schleiermacher made, of course, also a major contribution to the self-understanding of the modern university in terms of fields and disciplines.

3. For an analysis of the landscape in the United States in the new millennium, see Mark Lewis Taylor, *Religion, Politics, and the Christian Right: Post 9/11 Powers and American Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).

4. See, for instance the formation of Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ) and Clergy and Laity United For Economic Justice (CLUE) within the past 15 years, as well as the Occupy Faith movement.

5. As I have demonstrated in a recent book, see: Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

6. See, for instance, Robert H. Nelson, *Economics as Religion: From Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), and Duncan K. Foley, *Adam's Fallacy: A Guide to Economic Theology* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

7. See, for instance, See Günther Hansen, "Herrscherkult und Friedensidee," in *Umwelt des Urchristentums*, vol. 1, ed. Johannes Leipoldt and Walter Grundmann (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1967), 140, who assumes that "rational politicians" like Caesar and Augustus made use of these religious sensitivities in order to support their political aims and claims that living cults were (mis)used for the "Loyalitätsreligion." While Hansen admits "genuine religious yearnings and feelings of gratitude" (ibid.), he doubts that "real religious feelings" were at the basis of this cult (ibid., 141).

8. See, for instance, the discussion in Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2007), chapter 2.

9. In this regard, the work of Richard Horsley and of John Dominic Crossan and others is instructive.

10. See, for instance, the work of scholars like Talal Asad, Tomoko Masuzawa, and Richard King.

11. See Nelson, *Economics as Religion*, xv.

12. See, for instance, John R. Talbott, *The Eighty-Six Biggest Lies on Wall Street* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2009), and Ha-Joon Chang, *Things They Don't Tell You about Capitalism* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010).

13. The numbers and the implications are discussed in Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, chapter 2.

14. Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 17. The consequences of this move have to do with "the tailoring of ... individualised spiritualities to fit the needs of corporate business culture in its demand for an efficient, productive and *pacified* workforce." Ibid., 29, emphasis in original. Yet simply "rethinking the ethical and social dimensions of tradition," as Carrette and King suggest, *ibid.*, will not do since the traditions themselves were shaped in the midst of similar struggles and can thus easily be co-opted.

15. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Production of Positive Thinking has Undermined America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), has written the history of positive thinking in the United States, noting its all-pervasiveness from the academy to religious communities and the world of business.

16. For the general context of this approach see Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); for an analysis of Schleiermacher in this context, see Rieger, *Christ and Empire*, chapter 5.

17. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1986), 450.

18. See, for instance, the work of Interfaith Worker Justice (www.iwj.org) and Clergy and Laity for Economic Justice (www.cluea.org; www.clueca.org), as well as some of the activities sponsored by Jobs with Justice (www.jwj.org). Accessed February 21, 2012

19. See Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui Lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude, Religion in the Modern World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

20. Protection and support for workers is much worse in the United States than in most industrialized countries, and what little remains of worker rights is under attack.

21. For my own relation to the labor and religion movement see http://www.joergrieger.com/?page_id=17.

22. In *No Rising Tide*, chapter 2, I talk about this as the use of the “logic of downturn.”

23. In the field of economic theory, for instance, feminist economists have introduced new and highly relevant reflections. See Marianne Ferber and Julie Nelson, *Feminist Economics Today: Beyond Economic Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) and Nancy Folbre, *Greed, Lust, and Gender: A History of Economic Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

24. For a helpful discussion of the notion of subalternity see John Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

25. According to Smith, a merchant who only intends his own advantage is “led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.” Moreover, “by pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.” Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 5th ed., 1789 (London: Methuen 1904), bk. IV, chapt. II, par. IV.

26. For an argument that economics needs to be included in interreligious dialogue see Paul F. Knitter and Chandra Muzaffar, *Subverting Greed: Religious Perspectives on the Global Economy* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002).

27. Referenced in Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Entre las calandrias: Un ensayo sobre José María Arguedas* (Lima: CEP, 1990), 79.

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