



**MORALITY OF
THE MARKET:**

*RELIGIOUS AND
ECONOMIC
PERSPECTIVES*



**PROCEEDINGS
OF AN
INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM**



EDITED BY:

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THE FRASER
INSTITUTE



Morality of the Market:

**Religious and
Economic
Perspectives**

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Bennett, Frankel, Martin, Norman and Novak have made significant contributions to the book, but were not in attendance at the conference—eds.

Preface

Religious convictions

This book is based on the proceedings of a conference held in Vancouver, like its companion volume *Religion, Economics and Social Thought*, under the auspices of Dr. Neil McLeod of the Liberty Fund Inc. It was administered by the Centre for the Study of Economics and Religion, a division of the Fraser Institute. The entire project grew out of a perception that there is some useful purpose to be served by dialogue between theologians and economists on the virtues and vices of the free market order. The particular stimulus for the conference, and now the present volume, was a growing conviction among the organizers that an anti-market orientation now predominates within the ecclesiastical establishment—that the “high ground” within the churches is occupied by those whose political positions would properly be described as left of centre. For those who both hold religious convictions and espouse non-leftist political philosophies, this is a troubling state of affairs. It is troubling because when the church or synagogue speaks out on social/political/economic issues, the moral authority of the institution tends to lie behind what is said. There is the implication, plausibly drawn, that the social/political/economic position taken is a logical outgrowth of the religious conviction.

A nexus between religious conviction and policy prescription raises an immediate set of questions: does Judaism—does Christianity—, properly understood, and faithfully applied, have direct implications for social/political/economic organization? Are such implications independent of judgements of fact about the workings of alternative institutional orders? And if not, can the empirical judgements and social theories used by theologians and ecclesial officials sustain the critical scrutiny of prevailing social science orthodoxy?

These are big questions, and should not be allowed to be answered by default. But, in addition, there is another question that naturally arises: since the churches and synagogues appear not to have always held the views that now seem to be in the ascendancy, what has caused

the change? Is there a new and more vigorous grasp on religious truth — a new attentiveness to socio-political implications that has always been there? Or is it a response to external forces in the social order itself? And are these alternatives mutually exclusive?

Spontaneous order

Nominally, the conference was supposed to be focused on this latter set of questions. In fact, most of what went on dealt with the former set. This drifting of the domain of discourse is rather in the nature of the beast. A gathering such as this is necessarily an exercise in what we might term “non-teleological constructivism”: one puts together an interesting group of people under a given agenda and a given set of rules for debate, and then one must simply allow things to take their course. What emerges is necessarily a creature of the participants, rather than of the organizers, and there is often chaos, much talking at cross purposes, and some detouring along the way. But there is also much serious attention to interesting and important issues, and much genuine intellectual engagement as people with quite different views seek to articulate their own positions and grapple with the perspectives of others. The result makes, in our view, quite fascinating reading.

Apart from anything else, professional economists and professional theologians rarely confront one another in a context where there can be an engagement of minds. This conference provided that context. And served to reveal an intellectual territory that cries out to be explored. The debate here reported makes a beginning.

Although this project grew out of one particular set of political concerns, in selecting conference participants—indeed in framing the entire enterprise—the organizers made a conscientious effort to put together a group which would represent a variety of viewpoints. No stone was left unturned in an effort to include spokespersons from all points on the political/economic/ideological/religious spectrum. The conviction was that representatives of the differing ideological and theological positions should be given an opportunity to engage with each other in meaningful dialogue. Equally, in editing the papers and the transcript of the discussion, we have tried to exercise a light touch — to allow all points of view to be heard. A similar balance is reflected in the selection of two major protagonists in the debate to provide an overview of these conference proceedings. Michael Novak and John Bennett represent quite different positions on the central issues ad-

dressed. We are grateful to them both for their commentaries. Their contributions mark the conclusion of the book—not to represent any sort of coming to a mind, but rather to indicate that the debate is necessarily an ongoing affair. The broad representation of disparate views is a unique feature of this book, and we value that broadness highly.

Extemporaneous discussion

At most academic conferences, a transcript of the conferees' extemporaneous discussion is neither produced nor published. The reason, presumably, is that such a record is generally too costly relative to the value of the remarks. We believe this conference to be an exception. Consequently interspersed among the formal papers and commissioned responses is much of the informal dialogue by the conference participants.

The format of this conference entailed the advance submission to all the participants of ten major papers and one or two written critiques of each paper. Except for minor editing, these ten papers and the prepared responses to them are published in this volume, largely as they were submitted prior to the assembly in Vancouver. The one exception: happily, we were able to secure the publication rights to Professor S. Herbert Frankel's, "Modern Capitalism and the Jews," a paper written several years earlier (but not at that time published) in response to the work done by Milton Friedman on this subject. Professor Friedman's paper is one of the ten papers around which this conference was structured. We count it a privilege to add Professor Frankel's paper* to the volume, though he was not present in Vancouver.

The format of the volume is thus as follows: 1) the major paper; 2) the written comments; 3) the author's reply (in several cases); 4) the informal discussion which includes:

- a) the oral remarks (strictly limited by a time constraint) of the commentators;
- b) the oral response of the author of the major paper (each paper-

* The paper has been published recently as an occasional paper of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies—eds.

- giver was allowed five to ten minutes for this purpose);
- c) the discussion that followed the opening of the floor to all participants.

At this juncture, both the paper-givers and the commentators were treated by the moderator on a par with other participants. Often the oral response of the major paper-giver proved to be one of the most valuable portions of the conference, for the speaker was then responding, in his own words, to the criticism or praise that had just been uttered.

An exception to this format occurs with the first paper, "Introduction: Religious Belief and Political Bias" by Anthony Waterman. This session did not begin with the commentator of Waterman's paper. Instead Professor Waterman opened the session with a brief assessment of the issue of characterizing bias in the context of religious belief. This was done to set the introductory tone for the conference. A final note on the conference format: the much regretted absence of David Martin and Edward R. Norman, whose papers were two of the major ones at the conference, meant that we did not have the benefit of their oral responses to their commentators, nor their additions to the dialogue.

To meet the page constraints of this volume, a portion of the transcript has not been published. Exercising the editorial discretion for this excising task was at times difficult. But in what follows, we believe we have retained the substance of the issues discussed and the positions that were staked out and defended.

Tasting economics

Sir Dennis Robertson used to advise his economics students that the best way to learn about pudding was to taste it. He believed this counsel had relevance to the learning of economics as well. Sir Dennis's advice also applies to learning from this book; it is best to start by tasting it. Hence our Preface presents no lengthy summary of each article. Nor is an annotation of the transcript attempted. Instead, what we have done, for the assistance of the reader who will dip selectively into this book, is to only highlight the various contributions.

In Part One the Introduction sets out the question, can there be a mapping or correlation between religious beliefs and political convictions. In his remarks, Professor Waterman defends the proposition

that religious belief does not imply a preference for any particular form of social organization. Therefore an externalist conception of faith and political bias may be necessary to explain any correlation between religious dogma and a preference for a particular economic/political policy, i.e., the explanation for the correlation is external to religion, not intrinsic to it.

The discussion moves around several issues, such as whether disagreement on social policies between people of like faith is a function of differences in their level of understanding and sophistication in economics. Also addressed is whether religion, by inherently dealing in symbols, cuts against any clear, uniform derivation of economic policy. A portion of the discussion concerns the possibility of testing the proposition that a particular faith determines a political belief, and whether such a test requires that the particular religion alone must entail that particular policy orientation. A division arises, which surfaces again and again: the economists generally holding to a cleavage between questions of fact and questions of value; the theologians (generally) disagreeing that such a line could be drawn. The discussion becomes spirited on epistemological issues, e.g., is there such a thing as a fact, or are these only tautologies, and how can religions deal with the mixing of facts and values. All this establishes a starting point for more specific topics that are addressed in later sessions.

Stewardship, vocation, charity

In Part Two the paper entitled “Theological Perspective on Economics” by Professor Philip Wogaman introduces the theological concepts of stewardship, vocation, and charity. The commentators on this paper take rather different tacks. Professor John Cooper addresses the paper as an exercise in taxonomy, while Dr. Walter Block disagrees starkly with the ends that would result from the policy means commended in the paper. In his reply, Wogaman insists upon the primacy of theological commitments, over and above that to which is owed to economic theology—a point neglected by both his critics. Perhaps in no other session does the disparity between a theologian’s communitarian approach to social issues and an economist’s individualistic approach to social issues become more apparent. Also striking is the agreement between the (friendly) disputants on the *ends* to be sought. This is the source of many interesting discussions. For example most religions hold ethical conduct to be an obligation but

should the state enforce moral behaviour? Is good conduct a religious act only if carried out voluntarily? The answer to these questions divides several of the participants, and of course has enormous implications for the merits or demerits of different social policies. Several case examples of ethical issues that might arise through the operation of a market system are cited, with respondents commenting (but not uniformly) as to the implications of each from the perspective of Christianity and Judaism. The discussion ranges widely, from the question of unionized farm labour to the current Law of the Sea negotiations.

Perhaps the most narrowly focused discussion of the entire assembly concerns Edmund Opitz's paper, "*The Christian Century* on Religion and Society." His sole commentator, the *Century's* current editor, Dr. James Wall, was able to offer an insider's response to Opitz's negative assessment of this influential journal of U.S. Protestantism. In his rejoinder, Opitz defends against the charge that his view of *The Christian Century* sets up an artificial straw man: Marxian collectivism. The subsequent debate about the bias and influence of *The Christian Century* is augmented by the intimate knowledge of the journal by several of the other conferees. The remarks during this session came mostly, but not exclusively, from the theologians (rather than the economic professionals). For some of the economists, this was their introduction to the tremendous influence of Reinhold Niebuhr, whose name surfaced again and again as the question of the political orientation of this periodical was examined.

Interface

Professor Roger Shinn's paper on the interface between theology and the social sciences is well placed on the agenda. By the time it was discussed, the character of the debate as to what forces, if any, determined the social policies that stemmed from religious belief and activity, was taking shape. It was as if the foundation of a house had been laid; now the framing-in of the structure could begin. In the discussion, respondents returned to the issue: are theologians sufficiently trained in economics to pronounce intelligently on economic policy? Further prodding the debate was the deeper philosophical question of whether the search for social justice itself could be rendered identifiable, or desirable.

In addition to this very fundamental issue, several conferees voice

disagreement over the *right* (apart from the competence) of theologians to pronounce upon economic policy matters. As a corollary, more than one economist argues the position that the economist *qua* economist has no right (possibly even competence) to pronounce upon economic policy matters. Once again, during this colloquy, the question was raised as to whether one can separate the positive analysis of a problem from the ideological presuppositions the analyst brings to the problem; and if not, does this not tend to bias the results of the purportedly positive-scientific analysis? This was the matter of methodology that often provoked a very helpful and illuminating dialogue. On a different level of discourse, that of ethics, the question of whether ethical behaviour was, at root, social or individual, is a running issue throughout; it comes up pointedly in this section.

Internalist explanations

Part Three is concerned with internalist explanations of policy bias in religious thought. It begins with Geoffrey Brennan's paper on "Markets and Majorities." Professor Brennan's contribution, a public choice explanation of why religious bodies and individuals may prefer collective political action over and above market action, provoked comments by his discussants, Professors Kenneth Boulding and David Meiselman, on the character and rationality of voting. The notable analogy was drawn more than once that voting is akin to a religious or liturgical act. Part of the discussion involved pondering the question: does the economist's model of voting behaviour explain why the church might be overtly hostile to the market system or might instead only choose to ignore it. Another matter of concern to both economists and theologians is whether voting for a particular social policy was simply a form of cheap grace, i.e., perceived as being virtuous at little personal cost or sacrifice.

Also under the heading of internalist explanations is Professor E. J. Mishan's paper on "Religion, Culture and Technology." Professors Kenneth Elzinga and David Friedman criticize Professor Mishan's thesis that technology and mass advertising ineluctably lead to decadence and a decline in religious fervour and influence. Mishan begins his response with an analysis of sexual gadgetry such as the vibrator, and goes on to condemn other aspects of our "liberative" society. The ensuing dialogue concerns the relationship between the advance in science and the alleged decline in religion, as well as the connection be-

tween the role of myth and religion in modern society. The role of the market system in eroding society's ethical consensus is debated. More than one discussant raises the question, not of causal relationship, but of what is factually known about the decline in morals and the decline in religious influence. An important footnote to this entire section is whether intellectuals have a propensity to decry their age and culture, regardless of the actual level and trends of integrity and ethics in existence at the time.

Sociological issues

In Part Four the discussion turns to sociological issues, beginning with David Martin's paper on "The Clergy, Secularization and Politics." His discussant, Professor Ronald Preston, raises the possibility that those who purport to disapprove of the church pronouncing on social issues are either those with only nominal commitments to their faith (hence they dislike any changes), or those who simply disagree with the particular pronouncements (witness the fact that these individuals are not vocal when the church sanctions the *status quo*). The discussion also returns to the basic methodological question of the validity of both internalist and externalist explanations of religion's political orientation. An unanswered question is whether an externalist account of a social phenomenon, such as the alleged tilt of clergy to the left, can be offered up in any way other than to dismiss the validity of that particular policy orientation. A historical dimension to this subject is also cited, by reference to the tension (at least in the U.S.) between the Puritan tradition of trying to save society versus the Pietistic tradition of trying to save souls. The evolving modern day resolution of this tension may help explain the increasing politicization of the clergy—both right and left.

Professor Milton Friedman's paper, "Capitalism and the Jews," explores the thesis that Jews, who benefited and were even protected by the economic system of capitalism, nevertheless are often the market system's most penetrating critics. Professor Friedman's commentator, Professor Aaron Levine, examines the ancient traditions of Judaism, to further explore the dimensions and roots of this alleged antipathy. He concludes that any antagonism need not exist out of adherence to the structures of Jewish faith. Professor Frankel takes Milton Friedman's views strongly to task for being "a-historical and indefensible," and guilty of the "fallacy that races of people can be regarded as hav-

ing identifiable general social characteristics or attitudes which determine their behaviours.” For his part, Friedman totally rejects the Frankel criticism, holding it to be really a critique of Sombart, not of his own views. As can be seen by a perusal of the text, the fur really flies when these two intellectual giants take the hammer and tongs to each other’s theories. It is no exaggeration to say this controversy alone is worth the entire price of admission.

In the informal discussion which follows, it is maintained that Judaism never contemplated a *laissez-faire* economic order. The ensuing dialogue addresses the empirical issue of the extent, if at all, that *religious* Jews are or ever were anti-market (as opposed to Jews who left their community of faith). The deliberation also turns to the manner in which liberal democracy, the political system in which Jews are most likely to prosper, requires the market system as a necessary corollary to its existence. The dialogue also embraces the place of Jewish intellectuals in the neo-conservative movement, with disagreement being voiced as to whether these individuals can be construed as being friends of the market system or not. Keen interest is also shown in the economic policy orientation of the Zionists and of modern Israel.

Economic justice

Part Five begins with Paul Heyne’s paper on “The Concept of Economic Justice in Religious Discussion.” Professor Heyne, whose formal training is in both theology and economics, chose to wear his economist’s hat in drafting this paper, though his commentator, Professor Richard Baepler, perceives remnants of Heyne’s theological training in the work. The endeavour to derive a working concept of justice from the concept of property rights provokes lively discussion on the subject of the original delineation of the rights to property. The dialogue turns from the Lockean and Humean approach to this problem to the modification of Locke proposed by Robert Nozick and the libertarian concept of self-ownership. The just determination of property rights is seen by most participants as very basic to the moral foundations of the market system. The task of applying the property rights approach to the Third World generally, and to groups such as the latifundia in particular, evidences a disagreement even among defenders of the market system on this subject. Conferees differ as to whether there is a normative solution to the problem of rights delineation, either through Locke or James Buchanan’s explication of a social con-

tract, or whether the search for such a solution involves an infinite regress.

Further enlivening the session were debates about the merits of impersonal rules versus personal benevolence, and which of these categories were closer to the ideal of rendering justice, particularly for the unfortunate. The colloquy was further stimulated by the defense of the proposition that justice was not a definable concept for a society to pursue; hence the desirability of an alternative policy: the protection of the pursuit of individual liberty.

Religious secularization?

The final paper in Part Five entails a discussion of “Where We Are Today.” This is Professor Edward R. Norman’s, “Religion, Ethics and Politics in the 1980s.” The dialogue in this session focuses very directly on the factual issues discussed and explored conceptually: have Christian religious organizations become secularized, and if so, is their secularization virtually indistinguishable from the political left-wing? The commentator, Professor Walter Berns, agrees with Norman’s empirical assessment of this situation, and offers evidence gathered by himself on this subject, though he differs in his assessment of the character of this problem. Other participants at the conference disagree sharply that mainline religious groups have an affinity with Marxist or leftist groups, and further argue a rationale for religious groups in North America adopting a double standard in criticizing the actions of democracies rather than left-wing totalitarian regimes. Critics of the Norman position, such as James Wall and Philip Wogaman, suggest that a distinction must be made between position papers of mainline churches and working papers that do not carry the endorsement of these groups. In addition to a divergence of opinion over the actual teachings of what is being advocated within various church documents, there is an informative discussion over the Hobbesian doctrine of separating the government from the “intellectuals and priests,” a doctrine designed to minimize the influence of the latter on the former. Some participants such as Geoffrey Brennan find the discussion of Hobbes disturbing, because of the implication that the Christian faith and a society based on libertarian principles is potentially inconsistent. This provokes a discussion of whether a society with a civil government, Hobbesian in structure, can ever foster the religious principles arguably necessary for its sustenance. One of the closing points

proffered is the prediction (perhaps made hopefully) that with the increasing ascendancy of free market thinking among economists today, it could be expected that this analysis will eventually permeate the thinking of politicians, journalists, and eventually the clergy as well. If so, then even this latter group will return to their previous position of support for a system of natural liberty based on private property and voluntary exchange under a democratic political order.

The arguments, confrontations and strongly held positions maintained in this book range widely over the spheres of economics, politics, sociology and theology. The Fraser Institute is pleased to publish the findings of our panel of scholars as a signal contribution to each of these fields. However, due to the independence of each participant, their views may or may not conform, severally or collectively to the views of the members of the Fraser Institute.

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

Religious Belief and Political Bias

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“To think of God’s concern for this world really means that we are committed, in some form, to the idea that certain solutions to problems are more a reflection of God’s unbounded love than are others: and that is also where our biases had better be.” This proposition, contained in a recent book by Phillip Wogaman [1977, p. 32], is widely entertained by religious believers of many different kinds. A correlation is believed to exist between a given set of religious beliefs and theological interpretations on the one hand, and a particular set of political commitments on the other. Moreover, the correlation is held to be rationally defensible in terms of the ethical and epistemological assumptions embodied in the religious beliefs, and not merely a social phenomenon explicable in terms of some exogenous cause. As William Temple was once incautious enough to say: “The alternative stands before us – socialism or heresy . . . socialism . . . is the economic realization of the Christian Gospel” [Preston, 1976, p. 23].

The purpose of this conference is to elucidate the theological and scientific content of Wogaman’s proposition, and to subject it to critical examination. In this introductory paper I will attempt to define the issues: first, whether the putative biases imparted by religious belief are worth talking about; secondly, how these might be explained; and thirdly, whether an “internalist” explanation might suffice as a rational justification of bias. “Bias” is understood to mean a predispo-

sition to prefer one of a number of possible economic and political systems, leaving the onus of proof with those who dissent.

I. THE EXISTENCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF BIAS

The very idea of an option between alternative systems is revolutionary and modern. And so, therefore, is that of political bias. It follows that a discussion of the relation between religious belief and political bias must be based to a large extent upon the experience of industrial society in the liberal-democratic West.

Social thought in the Church to the seventeenth century

Viner and others have maintained that the early Christian church, not only in Apostolic and sub-Apostolic times but also well into the patristic period, had no recognizable body of social thought [Viner, 1978, pp. 9–13]. It is true that Clement of Alexandria (c. 200) earned the title “Consoler of the Rich” for his denial of the heretics’ claim that the rich could not be saved; that Lactantius (c. 310) attacked communism on the grounds that it was unjust to take away one man’s property to give it to another; and that Theodoretus (c. 435) wrote a reasoned defence of social inequality that anticipated eighteenth century Anglican apologetic [Viner, pp. 18–20]. It is equally true that Ambrose (c. 380) and many others of the Fathers before and after condemned the rich in the harshest terms for their selfish misuse of wealth and power at the expense of the poor [McGuire, 1967, p. 374]. It is the case, moreover, that Augustine (c. 420), the greatest and most influential of the Fathers, argued that since private property originated in a sharing by Man of God’s gifts to the whole human race, its ultimate distribution must rest with the state. But Augustine drew no reformist or socialist inferences from this, for he, like all the Fathers, was profoundly “other-worldly,” thought little of any scheme for social and economic progress, and would have echoed the words of his fellow-African Tertullian (c. 200): “I have no concern in this life except to depart from it as speedily as possible” [Viner, p. 2].

Quentin Skinner has argued that it was the influence of Augustine in particular which long inhibited such discussion of political questions as might have been possible in a static, subsistence-level, agrarian economy. Aristotle had established the position that politics — as the art of government — ought to be subject to rational inquiry. “The

idea was lost to view, however, with Augustine's immensely influential insistence in *The City of God* that the true Christian ought not to concern himself with the problems of this temporal life, but ought to keep his gaze entirely fixed on the everlasting blessings that are promised for the future" [Skinner, 1978, II, p. 349]. The revival of Roman law at Bologna by the end of the eleventh century, and the ideological needs first of the Italian cities in their struggle with the Empire, then of the Empire in its contest with the Papacy, produced a rebirth of political thought in Europe by the fourteenth century [Skinner, 1978, I, chap. 2]. By the end of the seventeenth century, under the impact of the Reformation and its political aftermath, a fully developed political philosophy had emerged with a theory of the state as its centrepiece. Two points must be noted in connection with the theme of this paper.

First, there was as yet no distinction between a secular, or academic "political philosophy" and a specifically ecclesiastical "Christian Social Thought." The church did not stand aside from society, judging and admonishing. Church and society were generally regarded as one and the same thing, and in the work of extreme statisticians such as Hobbes, of course, the church was actually subsumed under the state. Secondly, despite the existence of revolutionary elements in some Reformation political thought there was little, if any, conception of alternative political and economic systems. Locke was remarkable in justifying the English revolution of the seventeenth century not by the usual Whig appeal to the ancient constitution but with an abstract theory of rights and obligations [Tully, 1980, *passim*]. Yet there is no trace in Locke of that pluralistic view of political possibilities which is characteristic of modern thought and which provides the opportunity for, if not the necessity of, "bias."

Eighteenth century Christian political economy

Three interrelated phenomena of the second half of the eighteenth century afforded the conditions of modern political thought: the Enlightenment; the collapse of the *ancien régime*; and the beginnings of industrialization. The Enlightenment—specifically the French, as distinct from the Anglo-Scottish, Enlightenment [Kristol, 1979, pp. 17–19]—by driving a wedge between the "religious" and "secular" ways of perceiving reality, created the intellectual possibility of a distinctly "Christian Social Thought." The destruction of the *ancien régime* by the French Revolution detached the Church of Rome from

its age-old alliance with European feudalism and set it loose to find a new social and political role in an increasingly bourgeois world. And industrialization, by opening the possibility of continuously rising living standards, the defeat of scarcity and rational control of the human environment, engendered an attitude of mind capable of conceiving alternative states of society as serious political options. The three together are necessary and sufficient for a relation to exist between religious belief and political bias.

The earliest occurrence of such a relation is found in the school of "Christian Political Economy," which originated in the first *Essay on Population* of T. R. Malthus [1798] and which flourished during the first third of the nineteenth century through the work of J. B. Sumner, Richard Whately and Thomas Chalmers [Waterman, 1983]. Despite the seeming radicalism of classical Political Economy, its Christian practitioners succeeded in welding certain of its theorems to late eighteenth century Protestant theology so as to construct a powerful ideological defence of the economic and social *status quo*. As against the romantic anarchism of Godwin, Rousseau and Condorcet, and later the revolutionary and reformist workers' movements of early nineteenth century Britain, Malthus and his followers sought to show the inevitability of poverty, inequality, competition, private property, marriage and wage labour: and to exhibit these as examples of the goodness, wisdom and "contrivance" of God. At the very outset of modern "Christian Social Thought," the political bias imparted by religious belief was very definitely to the right.

It is important to distinguish this conservative tendency of Christian Political Economy from the superficially similar conservatism of nineteenth century Papal social teaching. The former was essentially modern in spirit, intellectually radical, coherent and sophisticated. The latter was merely a sign of the cultural lag which then existed between the Church of Rome and industrializing Europe, epitomized in the eightieth anathema of Pius IX's *Syllabus* (December 8, 1864) condemning the proposition that "the Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization" [Denzinger, 1937, para. 1780; Corrigan, 1937, p. 295].

Modern thought and the anti-capitalist trend

Before the appearance of the *Syllabus* and the strongly conservative encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) of Leo XIII, the current of thought

in English Christianity had turned away from acquiescence in capitalism and its putative consequences, poverty and inequality, and begun to run in a reformist and even socialist direction. “Christian Socialism” first appeared in England from 1848 to 1855 in the work of Maurice, Ludlow, Kingsley and others, and was in part a response to the economic conditions of the “Hungry Forties” [Norman, 1976, pp. 167–75]. After a temporary eclipse it reappeared in the 1870s and ever since that time, though with continued development, has exercised a growing influence upon the intellectual elite in English-speaking Christianity. Though the doctrines of Christian Political Economy were never entirely forgotten, and have to this day afforded support for such articulate conservatives as Margaret Thatcher [1978] and Enoch Powell [1977], there is a widely-held belief that a certain Leftward bias – not so much pro-socialist as anti-capitalist – is an unquestioned orthodoxy among Christian intellectuals of virtually every Protestant tradition, European and American no less than British. Meanwhile the social teaching of the Roman Church which in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) recognized a species of socialism with some claim to consideration [Chaigne, 1965, pp. 157–161], has moved since *Gaudiam et Spes* (1962) of the Second Vatican Council and *Populorum Progressio* (1967) of Paul VI to the (partially) “Marxist perspective” of John Paul II’s encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (1981) [Baum, 1981b, p. 1]. In this the Roman hierarchy has been influenced by the revolutionary experience of the church in Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World, and by the semi-Marxist “Liberation Theology” which is its rationale. Liberation Theology has also been influential among Protestants and especially within the World Council of Churches, an official of which acknowledged lately that its staff were “nearly all socialists” [Norman, 1979, p. 26, n. 50].

Whether the bias exhibited by Christian intellectuals and church leaders is now in fact Marxist, or whether it is the more moderate “democratic socialism” preferred by Wogaman [1977] and asserted by E. R. Norman to be more characteristic of ecclesiastical elites [Norman, 1976, pp. 461–74] cannot be determined here. Nor can the extent of the Rightward bias increasingly to be found among theologically literate Christians, especially in the United States [Baum, 1981a]. The existence of various biases, claiming justification in some version of Christianity (or other religion) seems beyond doubt. The question to be settled is that of their significance.

The epistemological kernel

The most important issue is epistemological. Does religious belief supply the “values,” and an autonomous social science the “facts”:—as will be assumed in the second section of this paper? or can religion actually enhance our perception of the facts themselves? The latter was the view entertained by the Papacy, at any rate, down to the 1930s at least. In *Rerum Novarum* Leo XIII did not hesitate to assert empirical judgements in the same breath as theological pronouncements [Waterman, 1982]. In the account of that encyclical supplied by Pius XI, “the eyes of all, as often in the past, turned towards the Chair of Peter, that sacred depository of all truth,” whereupon “the venerable Pontiff taught mankind new methods of dealing with social problems” [Pius XI, 1931, paras. 7, 9]. *Mutatis mutandis*, a similar view of the intellectual sovereignty of theology is not unknown among Protestants, especially those of the Neo-Calvinist, Kuyperian philosophical school [e.g., Vickers, 1975, p. 13]. Though the more liberal-minded Christians (most likely to exhibit a Leftward bias) have been less willing to assert the epistemic primacy of theology, something of this kind is sometimes implied by a willingness to ascribe political preferences to religious belief.

Even where this is not the case, the question of whether religious belief can properly determine political judgements is of the highest importance for believers, and of considerable interest to all students of politics. The former must discover what “biases,” if any, their beliefs about God and the universe ought to dictate. The latter can never be indifferent to the springs of political behaviour.

II. POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS OF BIAS

It is useful to apply to the history of ideas a distinction between “internalist” and “externalist” explanations first developed to analyse rival methodological approaches in the history of science [Lakatos, 1978, I, pp. 102ff].

The internalist-externalist distinction

The distinction between “internal” and “external” history had been employed by Kuhn and others in a way which implied their complementarity. “Internal” history abstracted from the social matrix within

which scientific inquiry took place, and concentrated solely upon the sequential development of ideas and theories. “External” history attempted “to set Science in a cultural context which might enhance understanding both of its development and of its effects” [Kuhn, 1968, p. 78]. Popper had attempted to show that “progress” in Science (as distinct from mere change) could and ought to be explained “internally” by reference to the “Logic of Scientific Discovery.” Kuhn, however, seemed to commit himself to the view that explanation of change must be sought in the “external,” sociological and psychological circumstances which brought about “Scientific Revolutions” and the triumph of new “paradigms” [Popper, 1959; Kuhn, 1962; Lakatos and Musgrave, 1970]. Lakatos therefore proposed an “unorthodox, new demarcation between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ history” [1978, I, p. 102, n. 1]: the former being an attempt to explain development in scientific understanding in terms of “normative methodologies” provided by the philosophy of science; the latter being at best a supplementary, at worst a rival attempt to explain the same phenomena by means of “empirical (socio-psychological)” investigations. “Internal” history is autonomous and primary: if a scientific development can be explained in terms of the rationality of the procedures which led to it, an “external” explanation, even if plausible, is redundant and ought to be excised by Ockham’s razor.

In the spirit of this usage I shall employ the adjectives “internalist” and “externalist” to label the alternative explanations of any observed correlation between intellectual principles and political bias. An “internalist” explanation is one which displays a rational connection between a given set of principles and a particular set of political preferences sufficiently cogent to permit us to say that the former can account for the latter. An “externalist” explanation is one which discovers the causes of bias not in rational inference from coherent principles but in social and psychological determinants of human behaviour.

What if both internalist and externalist explanations exist, either of which is sufficient to account for a political preference? One must be redundant; to which ought the razor be applied? Suppose, for example, that a wealthy man produces intellectually satisfactory reasons for preferring a capitalist to a socialist order of society. Suppose his critics provide convincing evidence that his (though not most peoples’) material interests are better served by capitalism than by socialism, and alleged that the “real” reason for his preference is the

desire to maintain a privileged position. Does the latter show that the reasons given for preferring capitalism are merely “rationalization” or “ideology?” Or does the former make the externalist explanation unnecessary, as Lakatos argued that it did in the history of science?

The primacy of internalist explanation

Though Lakatos’s reasons for asserting the sufficiency of internalist explanations are not available in this case, I shall suggest that here too a good internalist explanation makes otiose any externalist alternative. In the first place, as Schumpeter insists, “it cannot be emphasized too strongly that, like individual rationalizations, ideologies are not lies” [Schumpeter, 1954, p. 36]. Our ability to explain why a person supplied a particular reason for some action implies nothing, of itself, about the validity of that reason. It may be valid or invalid: and if valid, can be regarded as a satisfactory explanation of the action. Provided that generally accepted procedures exist for appraising the arguments themselves, it is simply irrelevant to speculate upon the social and psychological factors which entered into the mental processes of the person formulating those arguments. In the second place, to assert—when a satisfactory internalist explanation exists—that an equally satisfactory externalist explanation should be preferred is to incur the risk of self-refutation. For if a reason is supplied for the assertion, then he who makes it is committed to an internalist account of his own actions while denying it to others. But if no reason is given, the assertion is empty.

I shall take it, therefore, that internalist explanations of political preference have priority over externalist ones. The onus of proof will be taken to lie with those who urge the latter. Only if it appears that no coherent internalist explanation is or can be forthcoming is it helpful to explain political preference by external, non-rational causes. Before considering whether such might be the case, we must analyse further the concept of an internalist explanation as it applies to the particular case of a correlation between religious belief and political bias.

The application to religious belief and political bias

The existence of an internalist explanation of political bias is necessary but not sufficient to demonstrate that a set of political preferences has been determined by some set of religious beliefs. Three possibilities

exist. In the first place, the political preferences could be shown to be deducible from principles not in conflict with, but not required by, the religious beliefs. Secondly, they could be shown to be deducible from any of several different sets of principles of which the religious beliefs were one. Finally, the political preferences could be shown to be uniquely deducible from the religious beliefs, such that no other set of intellectual principles could have given rise to those preferences.

If what I have so far argued is correct, the proper strategy for investigating the relation between religious belief and political bias is clear. First, we must inquire whether a set of religious beliefs can uniquely determine a set of political preferences. If so we need look no further for justifications of bias and can concern ourselves solely with the question of how variation in the latter is related to variation in the former. (What difference will it make to our political biases if we are Catholic rather than Protestant; Christian rather than Jew; believer rather than atheist?) If we fail to establish at least the possibility of a unique determination, we must turn secondly to other internalist explanations. Only in the event of our being unable to establish *any* convincing rationale for political preferences need we resort at last to externalist explanations of the kind suggested by Bryan Wilson [1966, 1976], Peter Berger [1977] and E. R. Norman [1976, 1979].

In the remainder of this paper I intend to make a start on this program by raising some of the more obvious difficulties in the way of establishing a unique causal relation between religious belief and political bias.

III. THE NEXUS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND POLITICAL BIAS

Is it possible in principle to make the judgement: “right understanding of some particular religious belief involves a rational preference for some particular form of social or economic organization?” If we can answer this question in the affirmative, then the way is open for those who wish to demonstrate that their own political biases are derived from their religious beliefs. It does not guarantee the success of their enterprise, of course, for it is still necessary to show that their biases are compatible only with the religious beliefs they themselves hold, and with no other beliefs, religious or secular. But it makes the task worth beginning.

The fact-value distinction

Consider the following assumptions.

- i) Suppose, for the time being at any rate, that judgements about the way in which society actually behaves (“factual judgements”) can be distinguished, in principle at least, from judgements about the way in which it *ought* to behave (“normative judgements”) and evaluations of actual behaviour (“value judgements”). For simplicity of exposition only, suppose that “normative judgements” can be subsumed under “value judgements.”
- ii) Assume that the procedures for arriving at factual judgements are independent, in principle at least, of the procedures for arriving at value judgements, in the sense that agreement could be reached about some social “fact” (e.g., that the rate of price inflation is 11 per cent p.a.) by those who differ about the evaluation of that fact (e.g., that it ought or ought not to be allowed to persist).
- iii) Assume that the procedures for arriving at value judgements include the application (“theology”) of an authoritative teaching of revealed religion (“belief”), but are not exhausted by it. Hence agreement upon values may be possible among those who disagree upon theology. The possibility of disagreement upon values among those who agree upon theology is ruled out by definition of “theology” in this context. But believers in the same body of authoritative teaching may differ in theology, and so in values.

Suppose that individuals entertain various “goals” for society as a whole, where a “goal” is some state of society preferred to all other possible states which are alternative to it (e.g., inflation at 2 per cent p.a. is preferred to inflation at any other higher or lower rate). Goals may or may not be independent of each other, and if independent may or may not conflict. Choice of goals necessitates value judgements.

The rational pursuit of goals requires the appropriate matching of means to ends. This in turn requires a *factual* judgement to be made about the outcomes to be expected, respectively, from the use of each of the set of possible means; and a *value* judgement about the worth of each possible outcome. When the outcomes of all possible alternative means have been estimated and evaluated, the most “efficient” set of means may be selected; meaning by that the set of means affording the most highly valued (net) outcome.

An illustration

An illustration may help. Suppose enough individuals agree that energy self-sufficiency is a proper goal for Canada for it to become an object of national policy. Value judgements must have entered into the selection of that goal (e.g., “Canadians ought not to be dependent upon foreigners for energy”). Suppose there is a choice of three means of achieving that goal: expansion of either hydro-electric or nuclear power production, or reduction of domestic demand for energy. Factual judgements are needed in estimating the full social consequences of each of these three means, and further value judgements in making these outcomes commensurate thus permitting rational choice.

Now, if we suppose that society may be organized in a number of different ways, it is clear that any particular form of social organization may afford the most efficient means of pursuing some goals but not others. A military hierarchy might afford the most efficient means of achieving the goal of national security, for example, but not the goals of rising real incomes or political freedom. The more interdependent are all goals the less likely is this to be the case. In an extreme Hobbesian world where one goal (peace) is taken to be necessary for all other possible goals, that form of social organization which is most efficient for the pursuit of peace is *ipso facto* the most efficient means to all other ends. But if goals are believed to be to any extent independent, then except where one form of social organization is judged to be the most efficient means of pursuing *all* goals, the choice of any one form of social organization will impose a cost defined as the value forgone by pursuing some goals by means other than the most efficient. Rational choice of the form of social organization will thus require a further complex fact-value judgement of the kind described above. The net value of the benefits of pursuing some goals under one form of social organization, and the costs of pursuing others under that form, must be compared with the corresponding costs and benefits of pursuing those goals under all other possible forms of social organization.

It will be seen that value judgements must enter into at least two and possibly three stages of the process of rational choice of alternative forms of social organization. The selection of goals must itself involve some value judgement, even if here too there is a mixture of fact and value judgement. The assignment of means to ends requires the evaluation of expected outcomes. And except where *either* the attain-

ment of one goal is necessary for the attainment of all others *or* one form of social organization affords the most efficient means of pursuing all goals, the costs and benefits associated with each possible form of social organization must be evaluated and compared.

Value judgements and theology

Now, theology may, but need not, enter into the formation of value judgements (assumption iii above). The selection of full employment as a social goal, for example, might depend upon a particular understanding of the biblical account of Creation and Fall. Demand management as a means of achieving full employment might be preferred to import restrictions because of some theological understanding of the unity and interdependence of mankind (or, alternatively, because of a willingness to see economic efficiency as a corollary of the theological concept of “stewardship”). The market economy might be preferred to socialism (etc.) because although the latter is judged to afford the more efficient means of pursuing full employment, the value of this is outweighed by the sacrifice of political freedom believed to be associated with the former. And this comparative evaluation of “work” and “freedom” might be based upon some understanding of biblical, or patristic, or papal (etc.), teaching about the nature of God and Man. But all these judgements might also be arrived at (and often are) without conscious or explicit recourse to any religious belief or theological system.

It would seem from this that in order to be able to say that some particular religious belief *is* compatible with rational preference for some particular form of social organization, it is only necessary that the following conditions be met:

- (a) A set of social goals must be entertained;
- (b) One particular form of social organization must be judged superior to any other in the pursuit of this set; in that the net value of all outcomes, good and bad, expected from the employment of this means must exceed the net value of all outcomes expected from the employment of any other means.

If theology plays no part in the value judgement required by (a) and (b), then *any* possible form of social organization is equally compatible (or incompatible) with the specifically *religious* beliefs of an in-

dividual who takes such a view. His choice between the various possibilities is made in the light of values derived from sources other than what he regards as the authoritative teaching of a revealed religion.

If theology enters into the choice of ends, or the evaluation of alternative expected outcomes, or both, then rational preference for this particular form of social organization is compatible with his religious beliefs.

Theology as a filter

It is clear from this that in order to be able to say that some particular religious belief *is not* compatible with rational preference for some particular form of social organization, a third condition must be satisfied, in addition to those specified in (a) and (b) above:

(c) Theology must play a part in the determination of value judgements required for (a) and (b).

A person who regards theology as relevant to the value judgements required in the rational choice of social organizations may be in agreement with those who differ from him in belief or theology; and may be in disagreement with those who profess the same beliefs and accept the same theology. In the first case he may agree with those of different belief or theology because the values relevant to the choice and appraisal of social ends and means are common to more than one belief, or more than one theology. In the second case, he may disagree with those of the same belief because he differs from them in theology (Ultramontane Catholics might differ from Liberation Theology Catholics); or because he differs in the factual judgements required in the estimation of alternative possible outcomes; or both.

Theology as a determinant

It may be noted that the conditions which permit the negative judgement, “this particular religious belief is *not* compatible with rational preference for this particular form of social organization” leave open the question of whether theology is necessary for the value judgements entailed by it. Two alternatives exist:

- A. The value judgements resulting in the preference of some other form of social organization to the one in question could not have been made except by one professing the particular religious belief and accepting the same theology;
- B. Those same value judgements, though determined wholly or in part by theological considerations, could equally have been determined without reference to this particular theology, or indeed to any theology at all.

On the face of it, it might seem that alternative A is the “strong” case of a unique correspondance between a particular theology and preference for a particular social organization, whereas B is the “weak” case permitting the compatibility of political preference with more than one theological position. On examination, this distinction disappears. This is because judgements of fact, as well as judgements of *value*, are required for rational preference. Under case A, all who hold religious belief B1, accept theology T1 and agree upon the set of necessary factual judgements F1 will prefer social organization S1 to all other. But it is logically possible that some who hold different beliefs B2 and theology T2 could nevertheless prefer S1 because they make a different set of factual judgements F2. As an example, consider the following: F1 “Socialism results in more equality than capitalism”; B1, T1 “For theological reasons the benefits of equality when taken together with the disadvantages of socialism outweigh the advantages of capitalism”; F2 “Socialism results in less equality than capitalism”; B2, T2 “For theological reasons the benefits of inequality when taken together with the disadvantages of socialism outweigh the advantages of capitalism.” It is evident that both (F1, B1, T1) and (F2, B2, T2) are consistent with rational preference for S1.

Now if it were possible for there to be agreement on F, this case could be ruled out. Except in what seems to be the unlikely event of this agreement, however, it would seem that although it is possible to assert that a particular set of religious beliefs is or is not compatible with rational preference for a particular form of social organization, *it cannot be maintained that belief and theology can ever require such a preference*. Moreover, it may easily be the case in practice:

First: that those who agree on belief differ on theology, and who therefore, even if they agree on matters of fact, will differ in their social preference;

Secondly: that those who agree on belief and theology may differ in matters of fact, and therefore in their social preference;

Thirdly: that those who differ on belief or theology may also disagree on matters of fact in such a way as to agree in their social preferences.

A possible objection

At this point, it is appropriate to consider a possible objection to the analysis so far. People do not usually assert a compatibility (or incompatibility) between religious belief and *rational preference* for a particular social organization, but between the former and the particular social organization itself. They rather say, for example, as in the dictum quoted from William Temple at the beginning of this paper, that for the Christian, the choice is “socialism or heresy,” implying that right understanding of religious belief is incompatible with any other form of social organization. Aside from the counter that this strong assertion is virtually denied by the argument so far – as Temple himself realized by 1942, when he conceded that it is of the utmost importance that the church acting corporately should not commit itself to any particular policy [Temple, 1976, p. 40] – this way of speaking is difficult to justify. All that can be meant by saying that S1 is incompatible with B1 would seem to be that given the theological understanding T1 and the relevant factual judgements F1, the net value of the expected outcomes of S1 is exceeded by that of some other possibility S2. Suppose, therefore, one is treated to an assertion such as the following: “Both constitutional monarchy and republican socialism are compatible with Christianity but fascism is not.” The only way to make any sense of this is to translate as: “Given my theological understanding of Christianity and my judgement of the relevant facts, it is rational for me to prefer either constitutional monarchy or republican socialism to fascism, but not to prefer either of the first two to the other.”

IV. A RECAPITULATION

The tendency of my argument in the previous section has been to cast doubt upon the possibility of being able to say that a particular set of religious beliefs entails a particular set of political preferences or “biases.” I ought to conclude by reminding the reader of the more im-

portant assumptions and factual judgements on which my conclusions depend. First and foremost, of course, is the distinction between judgements of “fact” and judgements of “value.”

The fact-value disjunction is under attack from at least three different schools of thought. Marxists and others influenced by Hegelian metaphysics speak of the “dialectical” nature of thought and action, regard the distinction between fact and value as “static” and therefore unsatisfactory, and assert that all “facts” are “value-laden” and at least potentially “ideological.” Neo-Calvinists of the Dooyeweerdian school take the view that true knowledge—of any kind—is possible only to those who accept a “biblical” (and/or “Reformational”) faith, and hence that “positive economics” (etc.) is an illusion and must be replaced by “Christian economics” (etc.). And within the mainstream, English-speaking school of analytical philosophy, Hume’s Law (“ought” cannot be deduced from “is”—a primary source of the fact-value disjunction) is at least a matter of debate. It is easier for those who hold such views to disparage the kind of analysis presented here than to offer any coherent alternative. Until such emerges it seems reasonable to maintain—provisionally, of course—some kind of autonomy for scientific inquiry, not only into “Nature” conceived as distinct from the human investigator, but also into “Nature” conceived to include human societies and individuals. Though in one sense it may still be true that Theology is “Queen of the Sciences,” the onus of proof would seem to lie with those who claim that without Theology (etc.) no scientific knowledge is possible.

In the second place, the analysis of political judgements I have elaborated assumes as a matter of fact that the costs and benefits associated with alternative social organizations must be evaluated and compared. As I acknowledge, this will not be so either when the attainment of one goal is necessary for the attainment of all others (the Hobbesian case), or when one form of social organization is the most satisfactory means of pursuing all goals. In either of these cases, of course, there can be no disagreement among rational persons, whatever their religious or ethical beliefs, about political preference.

Finally, even when none of these objections to my argument apply, it would still be proper to assert a necessary connection between religious belief and political bias if it were possible in principle for there to be agreement about all the relevant facts. An argument might be constructed to rule this out if it could be shown that “scientific” or empirical knowledge was of its nature less certain, more tentative and

corrigible than “dogmatic” or religious knowledge. But to do so would take us too far afield and I will resist the temptation to try.

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Discussion

Edited by: Kenneth G. Elzinga

Anthony Waterman: When I prepared these remarks, I never supposed that I would actually have Philip Wogaman sitting on my immediate left side. And I hope he doesn't mind being used as a peg on which to hang them.

When Walter Block and Paul Heyne and I first got together nearly two years ago to plan this conference, one of the questions in our minds was whether or not the kind of explanation of political bias, thought to be observable among various ecclesiastical dignitaries, could in fact be explained, as E. R. Norman was proposing to explain, in terms of their sociology. In other words, could one say that theologians were taking a particular political stand merely because they were ecclesiastical bureaucrats, or members of a new class, or something of that kind? Or, as against what Norman seemed to be arguing, could there be a valid connection established between the religious beliefs they expressed and the political biases they exhibited?

What my paper was intended to do was to set out what you might call the logical structure of the question. How far is it possible in general, without reference to any particular religious belief, to establish some kind of necessary connection between religious belief and political bias?

My first point is that the idea of an option between alternative systems is quite modern and revolutionary; and therefore, that in an important sense, what is sometimes called "Christian social thought" is necessarily a post-Enlightenment and post-industrialization phenomenon. So, what I'm thinking of as Christian or, more generally, as religious social thought, is for reasons I explain in the first part of my paper, a novel thing in human history. This is something which belongs essentially to modern times, and to the history of the industrialized West. That's my first point, and you may well wish to debate that.

The second thing I want to underline is this. I have taken a particular stand here, for purposes of constructing my argument, which I'm

well aware is vulnerable to objection. I try to answer some of those objections in the last part of the paper. But it's quite important to realize that my argument rests crucially upon the assumption that, for purposes of this discussion at any rate, we can draw some kind of distinction between questions of fact and questions of value.

The third point I want to underline is the particular way in which I'm going to employ two terms, "internalist" and "externalist," which I have lifted from a different discourse from Imre Lakatos's—discussion of the Kuhn-Popper debate on certain important questions concerned with the history and philosophy of science.

It seems to me that the distinction between "internalist" and "externalist" explanations of scientific progress, which Lakatos and Feysabend and Kuhn discuss in that particular debate, are not irrelevant to the kinds of questions we want to discuss here. It seems to me that E. R. Norman, for example, is saying that an externalist explanation was sufficient to explain the behaviour of leftist, ecclesiastical bureaucrats, and therefore we need not take it seriously.

The last point I want to underline is what I thought was the most significant. I attempted in Part II of my paper to argue that although it is possible to assert that a particular set of religious beliefs is or is not compatible with rational preference for a particular form of social organization, it cannot be maintained that belief and theology can ever require such a preference.

Seymour Siegel: I want to say that the distinction between internal and external explanations is very relevant to our discussion. In theological discussion, the internal/external explanations are understood in the reverse way. That is, the internal explanation is something that a person who is participating fully in something gives, whereas an external one is just a spectator. And the participant in a faith community understands things differently while he's participating in them, than someone who is looking at it from the outside—the distinction made by Richard Niebuhr and other important theologians.

In understanding and discussing this question, we have to make a distinction between "faith," "religion," and "theology." Faith is understood, as Buber put it, as the central idea of a life system, I'm quoting him:

In distinction to a thought system which illuminates and elucidates the spheres of being from a central idea, a life system is the

real unit in which again and again, the spheres of existence or historical group build up around a supreme principle.

And the assertion is that no great, or even not so great, civilization or culture can function and live without being built around (in Buber's words), "a supreme principle." What the supreme principle of this civilization is becomes one of the most important questions you can ask.

Or consider the celebrated definition of Tillich that "faith is being ultimately concerned"; and that no human existence can continue to function without having some concern that is above all other concerns; and since "faith is being ultimately concerned," this means that either a collective or an individual cannot function without a faith. And that this faith does colour all preferences and all interpretations of existence and world views; and that therefore given the structure of individuals and societies, or civilizations (to use Buber's phrase), all explanations of religious preferences have to be (in terms of Professor Waterman) "internalist," because they are the expressions of these basic orientations, which are part of human existence and social existence.

Religion, which is a symbolic expression in an institutional form of this ultimate concern or faith, is partially influenced by the faith itself, and by external factors in the way it is symbolized; and therefore participates in both alternatives as they were presented to us by Dr. Waterman.

Theology, which is of course a rational or at least putatively rational explanation, both of the faith principle and of religion, is partially internal insofar as it expressed the original faith, and external insofar as the faith has to be expressed in terms which are known to the cultural situation of the time.

Therefore in our strategies that we may develop out of this conference, to set the theological agenda right (that is in the economic sphere), we will have to stress a campaign of education for people to speak about theology in economics, and the basic truth of economics. And that people who speak about economics and don't know what it's all about are just speaking about what they don't know. And therefore, it may be entertaining, but not the least bit useful.

In other words, what I'm saying is that everybody has some kind of faith, and every great civilization has some kind of faith; and that therefore, the internalist explanations are always right. The only ques-

tion is whether they are the total truth or just the partial truth. This depends on historical developments and the capacity of human beings, which is apparently limitless, to deceive themselves and to speak in a name, in their own, or self-interest when they say they are speaking in God's name or the Divine's interest.

Philip Wogaman: I'm reminded reading through many of the papers of a statement by John Courtney Murray that "genuine disagreement is a rare achievement." I would imagine that over the course of three days, we will arrive even closer at genuine disagreement than we have now. I cite this only to say that I'm not sure I understand Anthony Waterman's paper well enough to be sure that I disagree at every point where I think perhaps I do, and I appreciate many aspects of the paper.

I did want, however, to rescue the quotation from my book, *The Great Economic Debate*, and relate it to a couple of points which may or may not be fundamental to the thesis of the paper. First of all, my use of the term "bias" is in the context of my discussion of "presumption" in the world of judgement. It's my thesis that most of our thinking in ethical matters is structured by certain presumptions to which we accord the benefit of the doubt, and require the burden of proof to be placed against it.

I think that the term "bias" often is used colloquially to suggest an irrational view of things, or even racial bias, or something of that sort; but the use of the word "bias" here is not in that sense.

Now I have used the term bias in the passage that Anthony Waterman cited in his paper, particularly to suggest that religious views can significantly affect our thinking, but that their initial bias or presumption always ought to be checked against other realities (including the factual, or externalist dimension).

Christians and Buddhists of different kinds can agree on some things and disagree on some things. A Christian may agree with a Buddhist and disagree with a fellow Christian on another point, and so on. But that doesn't mean that a religious view is not functioning significantly to determine the ethical outcome. I make this point to rescue the thought that religious conceptions of society are very important, and that all of us probably operate with them consciously or unconsciously—and that we do well if we do it consciously.

Roger Shinn: I want to find out how much genuine disagreement there

is between Anthony Waterman and Seymour Siegel. Their language might appear to lead to a direct clash, but I'm not sure it does. Anthony Waterman doubts that a particular set of religious beliefs entails a particular set of political preferences; Seymour Siegel says faith *must* involve political preferences. The presence and then absence of the word "particular" may mean that there is not so big a disagreement as there may seem to be. But to put it in terms of a test question to each of you: to Anthony Waterman, you'll recall the time when the German confessing church came to the judgement, it had to say "no" to the Nazi system. It was a very particular path not shared by all German Christians, and in fact opposed by the party called German Christians. But the confessing church said, "Our religious faith entails opposition here." And I would wonder if you would rule that out, in your doubt that religious belief in that instance entailed political preferences.

And then to Seymour Siegel, I'd ask the reverse of it. How much room would you allow for a faithful Jew or Christian to differ from the social conclusions that you've come to in your paper? That is, are you in the position of saying, "One who comes to different positions, really is not being a faithful Jew or Christian?" Are you saying that that person might be as faithful as you or I, but understands the situation differently?

Anthony Waterman: I grant that it's logically possible that one set of religious beliefs can determine a particular political response, say to Hitler's Germany; and that another set of beliefs, religious or otherwise, can also determine the same response. There are others besides Christians who said "no" in Germany, who said "no" to Nazism, you see.

What I want to ask, is whether or not Christian theology has anything particular to say about this. I think that unless a unique correspondence can be established, then one is bound to be skeptical about the claims of the religious believers to say that their position is in fact actuated by religious belief, and not in fact unwittingly, perhaps, by other circumstances.

Seymour Siegel: I think the question, if I can recast Roger Shinn's*

*All conference participants invariably referred to each other by their first names. For ease of identification, however, surnames have been added—eds.

question, is one that puzzles people—both laymen and professional clerics. That is, “How is it possible for someone to profess the same tradition—to be a Jew, or Christian, or Moslem, or a Buddhist as you mentioned—and come to diametrically opposite conclusions on important issues?”

And the liberal response to this is that each view is right. And then the old response to the obvious question, “How can they both be right?” is “So, you’re right too.” (laughter)

Now that, I think, makes everything more or less irrelevant, because if everybody’s right, nobody’s right. I think it was Gilbert who said, “If everybody is somebody, no one is anybody.” (laughter)

But I think to a certain extent it isn’t wrong, too, because a lot of it has to do with interpretation of the main symbols of and teachings of the religious community. And a lot has to do with the assessment of the *facts*, both as they now exist and as they might unfold in the future.

So, to take one example, if people thought that the conquest of Vietnam on the part of the communists would lead to greater troubles for the world, then you have one view on the Vietnam war. Or if you think it would not lead to greater troubles, then you would have another view. Whereas you could both share the same value, even the same symbol and the same faith, but come to different conclusions on the basis of assessment—true or false assessments—of the facts.

Now I think what we have been preaching here, more or less, is that when it comes to economics that the preachments of a lot of people on economics suffer from the fact that the economic realities are neither assessed nor understood, nor properly predicted.

And then the other strategy, which is a very difficult one (which I call the “strategy of truth”) is to say to the person who disagrees with you, that you are not expressing your faith, you’re expressing some other interest. And that you better shape up and study, or pray or do something, so that you understand and commit yourself more fully to your faith principle.

Murdith McLean: I think Anthony Waterman is making far too high a requirement on the believer, and I’m going to speculate why. But first of all, I want to show why it’s too high a requirement. Surely, it’s simply a mistake to argue that in order to show that faith could entail some political conviction, or some political position, you must show that it alone should entail that position. There’s simply and clearly a

difference between saying, “religious position A entails political stance B,” and saying that “it entails it uniquely—that A alone entails B.” And when I read the paper through, I wondered why Anthony made that claim. Now, as a matter of fact I think the way the paper goes, not much rests on it.

I think that the reason Anthony is making that claim, is that he wants to discuss, at least in general terms, a larger question than whether faith entails a certain political position or commitment. He wants to explore the question as to whether the faith has something really specific to say. And by specific he means something that nobody else is saying.

Now I don’t think in order to find that out, we’ve got to say that a faith condition is going to entail any specific political stance. We would then have to explore a whole range of questions about what the faith commits us to. Not just a stand on this political issue, or this political party in this setting, but a whole bunch of things. I don’t think anyone will question the fact that a faith commitment entails a political commitment, just because it doesn’t entail it uniquely.

David Friedman: The comments that Murdith McLean made at the beginning were roughly the ones I wanted to start with, for I was also puzzled about why, in order to say that religious faith implied political views, you had to have political views that nothing else could imply. And looking at the paper, it seemed to me that the argument is not one of logical necessity, but somehow practical necessity. If I understand what the author is saying correctly, it is not that it couldn’t be that your religious faith implied a political conclusion which other people reached for other reasons, but only that if you observe other people reaching these conclusions who don’t have your religious faith, that makes you suspect that perhaps your claim that you reached it from the religious faith is wrong.

And from that standpoint, it would seem to me, the crucial question is whether the other people who reached the same conclusions have things other than the religious faith in common. That is, if we observe that a Christian who is also an American liberal intellectual reaches the same conclusions as an atheist who is an American liberal intellectual, that casts reasonable suspicion on his claim that it’s a Christian conclusion, although it might be.

On the other hand, if you observe that an American who is a liberal intellectual reached the same conclusion as a Buddhist who is an anar-

cho-capitalist, it would seem to me you have a fairly clear case of simply two different arguments that happen to lead to the same conclusion; and there's no reason to suspect either of the people in this regard.

Edmund Opitz: I suspect that the referent for the phrase “religious belief” has not been adequately pinned down. People may assume that John Doe’s religious beliefs are the creeds he repeats, sometimes thoughtlessly, every Sunday or at least periodically; and John Doe may think that those are his religious beliefs. But, in fact, are not his religious beliefs the assumptions or the premises upon which he habitually acts in given situations?

Ronald Preston: It seems to me that religious beliefs must in some way bear on political and economic issues, or they become unreal. The problem is that within the religious beliefs themselves, there is a plurality of articulation of their significance. And also, you cannot make any judgement about their bearing without making some judgement about the world itself at the time. You are involved in making some judgements for which you depend upon information, other people’s opinions, expertise, and your own life experience.

A very subtle situation arises at this point, because whilst part of the time you’re coming up against what one might properly call “bare facts,” there are, however, very few “bare facts,” and the weighting of the “facts” in your own mind is going to be affected by your religious belief. Therefore, we have this continually indeterminate situation with wide varieties of interpretation. And I don’t see that we’ll ever get out of it. I think one might make some judgements that some facts are more plausible than others. And often that’s what a lot of inter-disciplinary discussion is about. But I don’t think we’re ever going to do more than that.

Anthony Waterman: In order to make a political judgement, both a value commitment and a factual judgement have to be made. And insofar as those who share value commitments may differ on factual judgements, we can have the situation in which two people starting from the same beliefs can differ; or alternatively, as I tried to show in my paper, we can have a situation in which two people of widely differing value commitments can, because of correspondingly differing factual judgements, arrive at the same belief. Unless one can establish

a unique correspondence, then one hasn't said very much to that point about the cash value of religious commitment, as a determinant of a political position.

David Friedman: I noticed that everybody seems implicitly to be agreeing that religions are mostly about values, and while that may be a reasonable normative statement, it's not a true empirical statement. The Mormon religion, for example, includes some propositions about the early history of the New World. I think this is typical of religions, that they include positive propositions. In general it seems to me that a lot of this talk is distinguishing between, as it were, value systems and sets of positive propositions, and not recognizing that religions as we meet them in the real world are generally a mix of those two things.

Geoffrey Brennan: I think that David Friedman is absolutely right when he says that Christianity does involve a set of factual propositions which have the status of facts. But I'm not sure that's a very profitable intervention in one important sense, because I don't think that the facts that Christianity offers, together with the values (if we can in any sense compartmentalize those things), are sufficient, by common consent to generate necessarily any particular or specific political belief. The question that Roger Shinn was raising seems to me to be germane here. If we take the set of possible religious positions, however we understand those, including perhaps certain embodied facts or particular theological positions and certain particularized facts, then it seems clear that different understandings of either or both can result in different sorts of political positions.

The question that I think might reveal something useful is, "Is it true that the set of propositions that are involved in Christianity, although being congruent with possibly a range of particular positions, nevertheless excludes some?" It seems to me that we could argue that certain political positions are, at base, incompatible with Christianity, because those political positions contain some amalgam of values and facts which are logically inconsistent with those central to Christian understanding. If so, I think we can say something about the compatibility, or otherwise, between particular religious positions and particular political positions, without necessarily saying that Christianity logically implies a single political position. I mean, it's just a more modest exercise of delineating a range.

Kenneth Boulding: One of the interesting questions of this conference is whether there is such a thing as error in evaluations. The situation is that our evaluations may be just as unstable as our images of facts. Our valuations are also going to depend on our images of facts.

Let me give you an illustration. I once asked a group of church people to write down what they thought was the proportion of the national income going to labour. And their answers ranged all the way from 10 per cent to 90 per cent. And obviously if you thought 10 per cent was going to labour, you'd have rather a different political view than if you thought 90 per cent, I'm sure. Now, this fact is something that is reasonably in the public domain. The proportion is about 75–80 per cent. This is one of the many facts which are in the public domain that most people don't know. And yet this profoundly affects their evaluations. I don't think you can separate the images of fact from the images of value. I look on this process of learning as the process of the detection of error by testing, whether casual or organized, and which gradually reduces the proportion of error and increases the proportion of truth.

I'm not at all sure that the real world conforms to any simple logic, at least if Einstein's right, so that if we try to impose formal logic on the real world, we are apt to find ourselves in very real serious error. I have very little faith in it, really. However, I do have a certain amount of faith in identities or what you might call tautologies. I think all we really know are tautologies. And yet it is very important to find these out.

Murdith McLean: I'm going to attempt to impose a view as to what the central issue is in Anthony Waterman's paper, and try an attack on it. I think the central position is this. Anthony is suggesting to us that it is in principle impossible that a faith position by itself should entail a political commitment; because in any political commitment two components are involved, only one of which can be provided by a religious conviction. The two components are, namely, values of preference, or whatever you want to call them, and another part which we'll call "factual judgements."

And the reason why it's in principle impossible that religious convictions by themselves should lead to political convictions is that they cannot by themselves supply the matters of judgement about empirical matters—a point that Professor Shinn made in his paper as well.

I think if Anthony is right about that, then he's right in his con-

clusion. I mean, then he's got his paper's position. That is, if it's true that people who share a religious commitment but could, with all rationality continue to disagree about the facts, then it is, in principle, impossible that a religious position by itself should entail a political commitment.

But it's not bad to remind people that there are some facts that it's pretty hard to dispute. I know, in principle, it's possible we might come to doubt the spherical shape of the earth, and the general distribution of material in the solar system. And I know, in principle, that it is possible, but it's not likely; and at least those people right now who are making judgements about this matter are likely to agree. Let's at least settle for that.

Now I want to say in principle—and maybe we could come down to the practicalities of our present situation later on, because I know economics is in a tortured state—but, in principle, it seems to me possible anyway, that we might well come to several judgements that the facts in question are of a kind that rational people are more than likely to agree about. And where that's the case, political convictions will follow from religious convictions.

Anthony Waterman: What I mean by values are evaluations which have proceeded via religious belief from commitment to some set of supposed facts, which are generally described in Christian discourse, at least, as *revelation*. To be sure, ultimately, Christian values come from supposed facts about what God did or said. In that sense, I admit to the blurring of the distinction between fact and value.

And what I call “facts,” roughly speaking, correspond to at least a systematization of those observations which we can all make of what the eighteenth century and natural theologians called “nature.”

So, I'm pinning my colours here to the mast of the traditional distinction between revelation and nature, as sources of information relevant to this kind of discussion.

My other point is to thank Murdith McLean, not only for what he has just said, but for his help in constructing this paper at a much earlier stage. I do in fact concede his point, as he well knows, for I say in my paper, “If it were possible, in principle, for there to be agreement about all the relevant facts, then indeed it might be possible, in principle, for there to be the kind of special correspondence (which I am discussing) between religious faith and political belief.” So those, I would say, those who want to take issue with my scepticism, would be

those who think that it is possible, in principle, for there to be agreement about the relevant facts; those who want to side with the sceptics would be those who think that it is difficult, if not impossible, in principle, for there to be agreement about the relevant facts—facts as I have now defined them.

PART TWO

INTERNALIST EXPLANATIONS: THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Chapter 2

Theological Perspective on Economics

J. Philip Wogaman

I. INTRODUCTION

Does theology have any particular contribution to make to economic thought and policy-making? Generations of economists have thought not. Economists as diverse as Adam Smith and Karl Marx or Kenneth Galbraith and Milton Friedman have done their work as though theology were completely irrelevant. At the same time, of course, many theologians have managed to write theology as if economics didn't matter either. It is beyond the scope of this paper to struggle with the reasons why Western thought has been so fragmented in the past couple of centuries. But this fragmentation has made it difficult for all of us to relate our economic decisions to other aspects of life, and it has perpetuated the notion that theology pertains to a very specialized "religious" sphere of our existence.

Properly understood, theology can never be specialized in that sense. Theology is concerned about those things we value most—the objects of our worship. It is preeminently occupied, as H. R. Niebuhr observed, with our centre of value: the supreme good on the basis of which we evaluate all other things.¹ It is concerned with what we take to be ultimate in good, with the good that we consider to be self-evidently good. If this is so, then theology absolutely cannot be bypassed by those who wish to think responsibly about any human val-

ues. For theology contains the answers we must come to finally when asked why certain values are preferable to others and why we have designated some things as good and others as evil. Theology is inevitable, even in treating “problems,” for problems presuppose values and values presuppose their theological validation. Problems are defined by purposes or goals which, in turn, reflect values. There can be no such thing as pure pragmatism. Problem-solving practicality is measured by utility in achieving purposes and fulfilling values.²

Broadly speaking, economics refers to the production and distribution of scarce goods. The dynamics of production and distribution can be detailed in more or less value-free terms once the values to be produced are given and the purposes of distribution set forth. But without that value frame of reference in the background, economics is nearly meaningless. It is difficult enough to measure the accomplishments of an economic policy or system in achieving its stated value goals. There is only confusion when we try to measure economic performance in the absence of *any* value goals. Nor is it much help to treat the value goals as things we all agree upon. Attitudes vary even on such things as inflation, recession, full employment, increasing the gross national product (inflation is a problem to most of us, but it may be more a *solution* to some people with large mortgages or indexed incomes). Efforts to quantify units of “utility” generally flounder on the fact that utility means so many different things to different people. Paul Samuelson’s self-evident but highly misleading formula that “happiness equals material consumption over desire”³ seems to suggest that a net increase in material consumption increases overall happiness. Yet those who see material consumption in social as well as individual terms and those who advocate “small is beautiful” may have a very different perspective from those who measure their own fulfillment in terms of personal consumption.⁴

In any event, the theological frame of reference is ultimately very important – even decisive – in determining what matters to us in economic life. To accept this, we need not be believers in any one particular theological viewpoint. But everybody believes in something; everyone has some values which supersede and give point to other values; everyone has a centre of value, which is to say, a theological orientation. Sometimes that theological orientation is not the creedal tradition to which one formally subscribes; sometimes it is. But whatever one’s acknowledged religious views, the decisive question which serves to locate our *real* theology is, What do we value most?

II. THEOLOGICAL ENTRY POINTS

How are we to “apply” theology to economics? Often enough Christians have thought they could find specific biblical texts to apply directly to specific contemporary problems. The Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14–30) could be taken as a mandate for capitalistic enterprise and St. Paul’s “If any one will not work, let him not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10b) could be treated as a judgement against welfare programs. (Of course, one would then have to deal with the many biblical passages condemning love of wealth and failure to fulfil obligations to the poor.) Such specific texts may be important parts of the tradition: but applying them directly to contemporary problems can greatly distort our perspective. Some of the particular passages now quoted to settle contemporary issues were never intended to have that kind of use, even at the time of writing. And those passages that did speak to such problems in their own time may be misleading when applied too directly to current issues today. It is debatable, for instance, whether St. Paul actually supported the institution of slavery (some passages suggest that he did, or at least that he did not challenge it in his advice to slaves). But whether he did or not, it would greatly distort our understanding of how Christianity should be related to economics if we were to use such passages to justify slavery in our own time. Biblical writings are on different levels. Some convey the core meanings of the faith while others apply those meanings to the ancient situation.

Those who wish to apply the faith tradition to contemporary issues as profoundly as possible will struggle first to understand the core meanings and then reflect creatively on how those meanings illuminate contemporary issues.

To do this, we need to seek the theological “entry points” which help relate the core meanings of faith to the most important underlying economic issues. These entry points are refractions from the central light; they are ways of seeing the core theological truth when we allow contemporary issues to pose important questions for theological response. Such an approach to theological application is largely intuitive and creative, but that does not mean that it is just subjective. The faith tradition and factual world are objective reference points. But the faith tradition is profound—which means it challenges ever deepening levels of insight. And the factual world is almost infinitely complex—which means we should be always modest about the finality of our judgements.

Bearing this in mind, I wish to suggest six useful theological entry points into the meaning of economic life. These six points are not offered as a complete “theology of economics,” nor can this paper exhaust the meaning of even these points. Nevertheless, such entry points can help us work toward a theological perspective on the economic issues of our time.

Physical existence as God’s creation

Were theology to be committed to an altogether other-worldly conception of life, it could dispense readily enough with economics. At best, the material world would be completely neutral or a kind of necessary evil. There would be no point in pursuing its meaning on a theological plane. But the main stream of Christianity has persistently rejected an exclusively *spiritualistic* self-understanding, from the time of early Gnosticism to the present. Against spiritualism it has affirmed the doctrine of creation.⁵ The material world is good because God created it to reflect good purposes. The theme is struck forcefully in the Genesis accounts of creation, in a number of the great Psalms, in the Sermon on the Mount, and elsewhere in scripture. While the goodness of the created material world is affected by recognition of evil, the doctrine of creation commits theology to a basically positive attitude toward economic life and material well-being. Material life is not evil; it is a good to be embraced and enhanced and celebrated as God’s gift.

The priority of grace to works

Biblical faith is covenantal, through and through, which means that it understands human life to be in personal relationship with the source of all being. It is this personal relationship that confers ultimate meaning upon both individual and social existence. We matter because we matter to God; and we are brothers and sisters in a moral community because we are the family of God. Our relationship with God and our relationships with one another are moral in quality. They are in fact the essence of morality. Yet they are not moral because of our own moral action in the first instance; rather they are moral because of God’s gift. As expressed most profoundly in the parables of Jesus and the writings of St. Paul, God’s love is the “given” with which we start. It is not something we have to earn in order to receive: “for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the

just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:45) St. Paul uses the juridical metaphor to say that we are saved by grace and not by works of the law. We are affirmed by God even before we have done anything to deserve it. Indeed, Paul argues that none of us *do* deserve what we receive. Those who take pride in their moral accomplishments tend to be self-righteous, and self-righteousness is in fact the most insidious spiritual danger of all. When we are self-righteous we are unable to respond gratefully to the goodness of life as a gift and we are estranged from our brothers and sisters whom we judge morally inferior to ourselves.

While the pertinence of this to economics might not appear self-evident the relationship of “grace” to “works” is in fact an issue of watershed importance. If, in the ultimate moral perspective, justice is the proper rewarding of behaviour, then we have a clear paradigm for economic organization. People should get what they “deserve,” nothing more, nothing less. But if justice is patterned in accordance with the priority of grace, then economic goods should be distributed in such a way as to enhance human well-being and self-acceptance and communal fellow-feeling without asking first whether people have deserved what they receive. The pertinence of this issue to welfare policy is especially clear. If we think of poverty as a morally deserved condition, then we might be inclined to accept George Gilder’s judgement that a good welfare system should be “unattractive and even a bit demeaning”; and we might agree with his further observation that “in order to succeed, the poor need most of all the spur of their poverty.”⁶ But if we accept instead the theological notion that *none* of us are morally deserving and *all* of us are dependent upon God’s free gift of love, then we are more likely to see and treat poor people as less fortunate sisters and brothers. The latter view may not in itself be an economic policy, but it could scarcely escape affecting economic policy where it is believed.⁷

Physical well-being and relational wholeness

An important corollary of the foregoing points is that economics must be concerned about two things at once: the physical needs of people and the effect of economic organization upon relationships. Both are important. Physical deprivation obviously frustrates human fulfillment. Without adequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical care people suffer and die; and one does not have to be an economist or a

theologian to recognize that the purposes of human life are threatened. But economic life can also be structured in such a way that barriers are created between people, frustrating the higher ends of human community. Both are important, and each is, to some extent, independent of the other. The poorest members of a community may be well enough off economically that they are not suffering physically while, at the same time, they are so much poorer than others that it is nearly impossible to relate as brother and sister to the affluent. On the other hand, it is at least theoretically possible for everybody in the community to be deprived to the point of physical suffering while the bonds of community itself remain intact. So it is not even possible to establish a lexical ordering of priorities, with physical well-being *necessarily* first. A case can be made that without physical well-being nothing else is possible. But a case can also be made that the moral quality of life in community is worth considerable sacrifice in physical well-being. Of course, from a theological standpoint it is highly desirable to have *both* physical well-being and relational wholeness within the community.

Vocation

The doctrine of vocation is a particularly good theological entry point to the significance of work. The term means “calling,” of course; and the traditional implication of vocation was that it reflected one’s call from God. Post-Reformation Christianity generally understood this to mean that everyone has a particular calling from God. Stated most generally, the meaning is that we should be active in our grateful response to God’s gifts of life and love, and that our response should involve our dedication to the realization of God’s loving purposes. Hebrew faith and Christian faith are, alike, activist. The theme of peaceful rest is also biblical, but rest is always related to work in the portrayal of human fulfillment. We rest in order to work as much as we work in order to rest. It is the doctrine of vocation, indeed, that saves the Christian conception of grace from leading to merely passive conceptions of existence. We are not just passive receptacles of God’s goodness; we are invited, through grace, into creative activity. St. Paul is particularly careful not to push this to the opposite extreme of seeing “salvation” as something we accomplish through our own efforts. We do not have to earn or deserve God’s grace; but God’s grace remains unfulfilled in our lives without our active response.

The connection point between this and economics is obvious, in light of the importance of work for production and distribution. But the theological understanding of vocation is both narrower and broader than a purely economic conception of work. It is narrower in that some economic activities are so injurious to the life and well-being of the community that they could never be regarded as vocational in the theological sense. But it is also broader in that some vocational activity falls outside usual definitions of gainful employment. It is a good thing when, within the normal working of the economy, all people are challenged to contribute their best creative efforts to the betterment of all.

Stewardship

The doctrine of stewardship has traditionally spoken to the question of ownership and use of property. A more limited Protestant conception of stewardship has seen this as the giving of a certain portion of one's income, perhaps 10 per cent, to ecclesiastical institutions. But the doctrine of stewardship is more sweeping than that; it is recognition that everything belongs to God: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." (Psalm 24) All other property claims are relativized by that very basic one. An orderly society will, of course, define and protect the property rights of individuals and groups. But the theological perspective of stewardship does not permit us to treat those socially defined property rights as absolute. They are morally, if not legally, subordinated to the purposes of the Creator. Property is to be enjoyed; but understood as stewardship, it is to be used for loving purposes, not selfishness, and with an eye toward the future and not only the present. Stewardship does not permit the impertinent question, What has posterity ever done for me?⁸ For stewardship recognizes the linkage of all generations through the common source of all being, and it accepts responsibility to the ultimate design of things and not only to oneself and a narrow frame of loyalties.

Original sin

There is, finally, the theological recognition that human nature is corrupted by self-centredness. All people are presumed to be sinners. This does not mean that people are *exclusively* sinful; they are also capable

of generosity and love. But the tendency toward selfishness is painfully and persistently a part of our makeup. The most persuasive theological accounts of original sin do not attribute this to our created nature nor to moral weakness, as such, but rather to our despair accompanied by a frantic drive to find personal fulfillment.⁹ Loving requires a “letting go” in faith, and that is difficult until we find ourselves grasped by a reality larger than ourselves. In any event, the tendency toward self-centredness has important implications for economics. It suggests that no economic system predicated entirely upon human goodness is likely to be successful and that economics, as well as politics, needs to institutionalize protections against the destructive possibilities of self-centred behaviour. It also suggests that we do well not to separate the world between “good” people and “bad” people. Original sin means that all of us have this tendency and that none should be presumed to have a corner on goodness. Self-righteousness, besides exhibiting the subtlest forms of sin, is often the root of the most demonic social practices. Economically successful people need to be especially on guard lest they attribute their success to their own goodness while blaming poverty on the character deficiencies of poor people.

III. THEOLOGICAL DANGER SIGNALS

Even the brief foregoing theological characterizations serve to remind us of points where contemporary economic attitudes can be challenged. I wish to suggest three such points.

Materialistic idolatry

First, there is the persistent idolatry of materialism or of particular economic systems. The material realm becomes idolatry when it is treated as an end and not as means. Seen through the eyes of theology, there is a good deal of idolatry in all economic systems and in economic views expressed on all sides of the ideological spectrum. Inflated assessments of capitalism or socialism may contain much truth, but it is ludicrous to treat them as absolute truth. Humanity is not here to serve economics; rather the function of economics is to serve humanity, in accordance with God’s loving purposes. This is not to say that all economic systems or ideologies are not themselves ultimate objects of loyalty. Recognition of this should give us reason to be some-

what open concerning the outcome of the worldwide debate between contending economic ideologies.

Self-centredness in property concepts

The second point concerns property. A purely natural theory of property may have all the force of self-evident truth, yet be in serious tension with the theological conception of stewardship. The Lockean view of property has been particularly influential in Western economic thought over the past two or three centuries. According to Locke, property is constituted when we mix our labour with nature, withdrawing things from the state of nature by transforming them into useful objects.¹⁰ The self-evident claim of this view of property is contained in the observation that had somebody not made it it wouldn't exist. The *prima facie* claim of ownership rests upon the fact that one should not be forced to give up what one has made. Certainly nobody else has any kind of claim upon the object that would not exist were it not for the labour of another person. We may hope people will be generous with their possessions, but it is unjust to deprive them of property against their will.

Whatever may be said for this understanding of property, it is a thoroughly self-centred view. In its individualism it is neglectful of the grand design. Curiously, the underlying view of what constitutes property is also suggested by Marxism, but there is a more social form. The Marxist criticism of alienation or exploitation is very much dependent on the judgement that something one has created has been taken away.¹¹ But whether in Marxist or Lockean form, the view that one's labour constitutes property treats nature itself simply as a given. But nature isn't just given. It is not unlimited. Those who control it have a much better opportunity to create property in the sense of mixing their labour with it. And in any event a theological view of nature requires us to come to terms with the enduring source of nature's existence.

Inflated claims of moral motivation in social life

A third theological problem is suggested by inflated theological images of the motivations presupposed by free market activity or by socialism. Thus, George Gilder attributes capitalism ultimately to acts of outgoing, self-giving love.¹² The capitalist entrepreneur is commit-

ted to making something to fill the needs of others even before he or she is certain there will be a market for the product. The basic motivation is not self-seeking, but generosity. Similarly, Michael Novak writes of the corporation as sacramental in character and uses the biblical imagery of “suffering servant” to characterize the faithful corporation leaders who persist in their good works despite the ill-founded abuse of corporate critics.¹³ But how much truth is there, really, in such characterizations? Do businesspersons work fundamentally for the sake of others? Is there no hint of desire for reward to cloud their motives? Are they willing to do all, to give all, without any specific material incentives? No doubt, there are numbers of businesspeople whose motives include loving kindness and concern for others. But are there not also those who are profoundly corrupted by materialism? And which of us, indeed, is altogether free of self-seeking? Can businesspeople claim to be?

Similarly one must question the inflated conceptions of socialist morality that one sometimes hears—the new socialist man or woman of China or Cuba or wherever. For in such places, too, one may be infected by selfishness, in relation to the possession of power and prestige if not of wealth. For what it may be worth, my own journeyings to socialist countries have not revealed any startling new developments in human nature. It is a risky thing to assume that any people will, by virtue of their roles in systems and institutions, be wholly free of selfishness—whether those institutions are socialist or capitalist in character. A more modest expectation is that some institutions may help more than others in bringing out the best in people and in subordinating the destructive aspects of human sinfulness. A persuasive case can be mounted for both socialism and capitalism along these lines, but in neither instance would the case be dependent upon fundamental changes in human nature itself.

IV. ECONOMIC ALLOCATION

Most of the struggles over economic organization in recent times have centred around the relative claims of two competing approaches to the allocation of goods and services: the (more or less) free market and the (more or less) democratic government.¹⁴ Where the free market is dominant, the prices of goods and services are established by the market and the role of government in economics is limited to the protection of property and the maintenance of agreed rules of the game.

Where government is dominant, economic activity is planned by central authority, and the pricing function of the market is sharply reduced. Most societies make use of both mechanisms for allocation; but the possibilities and limitations of each need to be explored.

Free market allocation

A strong case can be made for the efficiency of the market mechanism where genuine competition exists.¹⁵ (George Gilder argues that even monopoly conditions do not basically frustrate the workings of market forces since even monopolies must compete against other alternatives for the spending of money.)¹⁶ The prices that people are willing to pay for goods and services in the open market provide us with the best possible barometer of relative values as the buyers perceive them. The market mechanism, especially under competitive conditions, maximizes material incentive to produce and deliver goods at the lowest possible cost, relative to other goods. Those whose costs are substantially above their competitors are either forced to change quickly or to go out of business. The market mechanism also provides considerable incentive and freedom for those who wish to pursue new inventions and the development of new product lines. It is therefore a spur to dynamic, productive economic behaviour.

There are, to be sure, certain moral drawbacks to the market system, which have long been noted by the critics of capitalism. The very great focus upon material incentives may lead to the enthronement of materialistic greed in a culture and to the subordination of vocation and stewardship to personal selfishness. The competitive character of economic life may lead to divisive individualism, particularly evident during times of economic crisis and unemployment. There may be too much exploitativeness of nature and fellow humanity. The system may be too vulnerable to the contrasting problems of inflation and recession. It may lead to too great inequalities.

Such points can be answered, with arguments that include the claim that the market mechanism helps subordinate greed to the common good, since the only way one can make money is by offering goods and services that people want. It may also be claimed that the dynamic forces of the market keep the social status structure relatively fluid, there always being room for new entrants to the market who have new, saleable ideas. The effect of the system upon the cultural values of a people may not easily be assessed. Certainly the free enterprise

system has appeared to spawn a good deal of plain, old-fashioned greed. Certainly it has also given rise to a good deal of creativity, and it has provided an arena for a considerable amount of voluntary generosity. No doubt the social and cultural consequences of free enterprise will continue to be debated by persons of opposite, though equally enthusiastic conviction.

Efficiency versus other social ends

The point where the market mechanism, per se, appears to create gravest difficulties is, ironically, the point of its greatest supposed strength. The very fact that the market rewards efficiency so admirably creates a conflict wherever market efficiency is at odds with social justice, or ecological responsibility, or other important moral purposes. An important aspect of the market's efficiency is its unflinching reward for those who can cut costs the most. Lower costs of production and marketing translate into lower prices, and lower prices normally translate into more sales. Conversely, those who cannot match the lower prices because their costs are too high must either find ways to cut their costs or, ultimately, be threatened with ruin. This is taking the market as it is defined by its strongest advocates.

The problem is that the market, thus defined, is largely blind to the *ways* in which enterprises manage to cut their costs. Firms are rewarded for cutting out waste and finding new, more efficient productive processes. But firms are also rewarded by the market for keeping wages as low as possible, avoiding unnecessary costs to improve employee working conditions, dumping wastes into rivers, and anything else that will lower the cost of doing business. Over the short run (which, for various reasons, may be the extent of a particular businessperson's interest) it may even prove advantageous to sell shoddy merchandise and misrepresent products sold. It is difficult for morally sensitive people to do moral things insofar as they must compete in the market against the less scrupulous. Many high-minded growers in Central California complained bitterly during the 1960s that their churches were turning against them to support the farm labour movement of Cesar Chavez. Their plea was that they were already doing the best they could in providing improved wages and living conditions for the migrant workers, and no union was needed. But that was exactly the point. Without some external force to regularize wages and working conditions throughout the whole industry these good Christian

growers were quite unable to do better by the workers. Any who raised their labour costs unilaterally quickly discovered that they were pricing themselves out of the market! The market mechanism enforces prices at the level established by those able to cut their costs to the lowest levels. Clearly mechanisms of intervention into the workings of the market must be contemplated by those who are unwilling to settle for such consequences.

Bias towards private goods

There is another problem with exclusive reliance upon the free market. The market system emphasizes individual, private decision-making. Consequently, its bias is toward those goods and services we consume privately. It may indeed be fairly efficient in translating the individual preferences of millions of people into productive allocations by a whole economy, without much intervention from the standpoint of society as a whole.¹⁷ But it is much less efficient in determining goods and services needed by society as a whole. The free market could theoretically provide for security needs (police and military and fire protection), education, transportation, parks, museums, and public works projects.¹⁸ But is that really the most efficient way to deal with such social needs? Is there not a need for mechanisms of social planning and allocation which permit the community as a whole to determine priorities and assemble the resources needed to accomplish social objectives? And are there not some kinds of consumption where it is better not to try to assess consumers precisely the costs of their consumption? And, given the great differences in wealth and income, should not some forms of economic decision-making for society be on the basis of one-person-one-vote rather than one-dollar-one-vote?

Governmental allocation

Such questions have led many people to conclude that the government should play a dominant role in economic planning and allocation. Substantial numbers of people worldwide have concluded in fact that government should own the whole economy and distribute through central planning institutions. Socialist writers tend to present this alternative as though it were clearly superior morally to the market mechanism — as, on the face of it, it may be. Socialism promises social justice and cooperation as direct objectives, not byproducts, of eco-

conomic activity. Some socialist writers, such as Ota Sik and Oskar Lange, have even suggested a prominent use of the market mechanism in a socialist economy—thus hoping to capitalize on the strengths of a market economy while avoiding its weaknesses.

But it needs to be said that governmental management of economic life is not a morally risk-free alternative to the free market. A very large number of governments around the world are authoritarian and oppressive. Such governments are not made less oppressive by control of economic life. Michael Harrington comments wisely that if the state owns the economy, it matters all the more who owns the state. If the state is not “owned” democratically, then its control of the economy will only fit it to be more oppressive. Even if the state is democratic it may, through corrupt or oppressive majorities, do evil things.

The democratic ideal

Still, democratic governmental institutions are uniquely the instruments of common purpose. They are able to regulate economic life for the common good, to maintain public institutions, and to provide protection of all citizens through programs of redistribution. While even a democratic government can make mistakes, its actions will be based upon a publicly argued-out conception of the kind of community the majority of the people want it to be. It provides a forum for serious debate of serious issues, with the prospect that the results of the debate can register in determining the character of the community. Through democratic decision-making people have an opportunity to participate more directly in the definition of their own on-going history. While market allocation may appear to place greater premium upon individual decision-making and may appear to maximize freedom of choice in one’s economic life, this freedom can be illusory if the net result of individual decisions is to create social conditions that undermine one’s intentions. Individuals may desire the freedom afforded by use of private automobiles, but if too many people opt for that same freedom before there is an adequate system of roads the result may simply be congestion and smog—which nobody would have chosen deliberately. Garrett Hardin neatly refers to the irony of this in his essay, “The Tragedy of the Commons.”¹⁹ Where a number of shepherders are using the same grazing land, he writes, it may be in the interest of each to increase the number of animals in his/her

flock. But if all the shepherders increase the size of their flocks, the result may be the over-grazing of the commons, thereby undermining its value to each one. Only when a common decision is made to regulate the number of sheep can a rational decision be made that is in the interest of all. The sum total of private decisions may *not* be the well-being of all. The decision-making process may, in some instances, need to be corporate, leading toward corporate ends. We may appear to be free to choose our own destiny in a market economy. But that freedom is only illusory to the extent that we are locked into a common destiny. Governmental decisions, taken in behalf of the whole community, may in such cases be the avenue to real freedom. Then it is a matter of whether or not we are free to share in corporate decision-making, and thereby to share in determining the overall character of community life.

Democratic decision-making and theological understanding

An impressive theological case can be made for the importance of democratic decision-making in economics. We live, after all, in community. Under God, we are a family—not just solitary individuals relating, one at a time, to God. Through democratic politics, we can share in the common stewardship of earth. Even those who find themselves voting with a minority on an important issue can affect outcomes; and in a true democracy they remain free to speak out and organize for change. Each person is formally equal to every other; no one is treated as a mere object. From a theological standpoint, each is seen to stand in equal relationship before God and to be able to contribute out of that transcendent source of meaning to the issues of the day. In democratic decision-making it is the power of one's mind and soul that is recognized—whereas in the marketplace it is one's wealth and saleable skills.

Critics of pure socialism note the residual dangers, however, in combining economic and political power under an all-powerful government. While such a government may theoretically be democratic, it may prove difficult to keep it that way. Arthur Okun remarks that “a market economy helps to safeguard political rights against encroachment by the state. Private ownership and decision-making circumscribe the power of the government . . . and hence its ability to infringe on the domain of rights. If,” he continues, “the government commanded all the productive resources of the society, it could suppress

dissent, enforce conformity, and snuff out democracy.”²⁰ It is theoretically possible for a state to be organized very democratically even though there existed no concentrations of private economic power independent of the state. Such a state would have to protect, by law and tradition, the right of each person to dissent and to organize for political action. It would also have to make provision for utterly neutral public channels of communication. Such protections and provisions do exist in all democratic societies. In a socialist democracy there might be more temptations to those in power to make their power permanent.

The debate between those who favour market allocation and those who support governmental allocation must remain somewhat inconclusive. We may lean more toward one than toward the other; but both have potential flaws as well as strengths.²¹ Those of us who are currently living in the capitalist (or mixed-economy) democracies face three broad issues which challenge us as we try to sort out our attitudes toward the relative claims of the marketplace and government.

Our attitude toward the economic role of government in a predominantly capitalistic society

The election of conservative governments in the United States and the United Kingdom in recent years has raised anew the question of the legitimacy of a substantial economic role of government. The Thatcher government in Britain has attempted to stem what it perceived to be a rising tide of socialism. The Reagan administration in the United States has attempted to break the momentum of fifty years of political economy based upon the assumptions of the New Deal. President Reagan may have spoken for both governments in this remark from his first economic address to the nation in February, 1981: “The taxing power of Government must be used to provide revenues for legitimate Government purposes. It must not be used to regulate the economy or bring about social change. We’ve tried that and surely must be able to see it doesn’t work.” There may be sufficient ambiguity in this remark to protect its meaning from harsher interpretations. But by any interpretation it is negative in its assessment of the economic role of government as practised over the past fifty years.

The failure of *laissez-faire*

Yet if we have learned anything over the past it is that unrestrained *laissez-faire* market economics is what does not work. At least it does not work to protect the weaker members of the community nor the common environmental inheritance of all. We may be in some danger of forgetting *why* the New Deal developed fifty years ago. The *laissez-faire* assumptions that guided economic policy before 1933 were impotent to prevent or deal with the greatest economic catastrophe in American history. The market simply could not correct itself. Even if *laissez-faire* economic policies had not brought a massive breakdown to the system they would have perpetuated vast disparities of income and wealth in American society. Such disparities are a profound threat to the health of society and democratic institutions. To the extent that taxation has helped redistribute American wealth and income and to place an economic floor beneath most people in the United States, it has clearly “worked” to bring about beneficent social change. Use of tax dollars to expand educational opportunity (including higher education), to improve recreational facilities, and to strengthen the arts has also contributed to useful social change. One does not have to defend all governmental programs of the past fifty years to observe that in the main and on the whole the country is better because of them. From a theological perspective, it seems clear that it is easier for more people to be what God has intended them to be as participants in the life of community because of active interventions by government. The fact that many such programs are weak or wasteful should lead to criticism and improvement — not to the abandonment of governmental responsibility.

I do not take these observations, in and of themselves, as arguments for socialism, even though I find the case for out-and-out socialism more persuasive than the case for out-and-out *laissez-faire* capitalism. There may well be a need for private centres of economic power. And whether or not there is such a need, there is no question but that we shall continue to have them for the foreseeable future. The real question is whether private centres of economic power will be kept subordinate to governmental power, which alone can uphold the order of justice. Opinions will continue to vary over what is the best mix of private and public sector responsibilities in the economy. But there should be no doubt that the private sector should be accountable to

society through law and government, just as there should be no doubt that government and law should be accountable to the people through free democratic processes. The people of a society should have the capacity, through responsible government, to define the nature of the community in which they live.

Needed international structures for economic accountability

Notwithstanding recent developments, most of the Western capitalist democracies are in fact mixed economies with well-established traditions of economic accountability to government. That is not true of international economics. The past two decades have witnessed startling increases in the scope and activity of multinational corporations; but they have not seen comparable development of transnational institutions to regulate and govern international economic activity. A considerable debate has developed in recent years over the role of multinational corporations, with much disagreement over their relative merits in economic development and social justice.²² Some see them as a positive and dynamic source of much-needed development in the less-developed countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, organizing production and markets, stimulating world trade and even redistributing wealth and income in the direction of the poorer countries by growth of investments and better jobs in those areas. Others perceive them as basically exploitative devices to increase control over the Third World by the industrialized countries and in fact to increase poverty as well. In either case there seems little doubt that they will remain an important factor in the years to come. The real issue may not be whether we will or will not have multinationals but whether they can be made more accountable. Presently their great power makes it difficult for relatively weak countries to control them, and in some instances they may escape local control by corrupting public officials. They are international in scope; the governmental agencies available to make them accountable are national or local.

A key question in the next few years is, therefore, whether we can evolve responsible international agencies and a corresponding body of international regulation to achieve the needed balance of public control and private initiative. In some fields, such as telecommunications and aviation, the character of economic activity has virtually mandated the development of international regulation, and much has been accomplished. In some other fields (notably petroleum) it has been

possible for a number of Third World countries to band together to improve their bargaining hand. But in most cases, there is simply a political-legal vacuum at the international level.

The Law of the Sea

The problem and the possibilities have been dramatized in recent years by two interesting developments. One is the Law of the Sea negotiations which commenced over a decade ago to bring some semblance of order into the anarchy of efforts to exploit the world's offshore fisheries and the mineral deposits in the deep seabeds.²³ The Law of the Sea negotiations took as their basis the conviction that the oceans are the "common heritage of mankind." They envisage a fully international ownership of that heritage, with an international "enterprise" to do some deep-seabed mining and a franchise system to regulate and tax the mining endeavours of private corporations. Proceeds from these international ventures and franchises would be used largely to assist in the development efforts of poorer countries. If successful, the Law of the Sea precedent could prepare the way for similar international control of Antarctica and the moon.

Breast-milk substitutes

The other development has been the adoption of a recommended set of international guidelines to govern the marketing of breast-milk substitutes (infant formula). In 1979, after several years of intense international controversy over the methods used by infant formula companies to increase sales in Third World countries, the World Health Organization and UNICEF began the development of a marketing code to correct abuses.²⁴ After two years of negotiations the code was in fact adopted overwhelmingly by the World Health Assembly in May 1981 (with only the United States voting against it). The code was adopted purely as a recommendation for national law and company policy, but its adoption by the international body gave it considerable moral weight, and it has become the basis for legislation in a number of countries. It is believed that this precedent could inspire similar efforts in governing the practices of transnational pharmaceutical companies.

Such efforts are very modest in scope in face of the enormous size and diversity of multinational corporations, but they may still be

pointing in the right direction. Many companies resist such regulation (the infant formula companies did so quite vigorously). But sensible international regulation may be a very welcome thing for those companies seeking a world in which it is possible to carry on business responsibly. Resistance to such regulation invites suspicion that businesses wish to escape moral accountability.

V. THE ATTITUDE TOWARD SOCIALISM

The third broad issue facing capitalist democracies in the closing decades of the twentieth century is their attitude toward socialism in other parts of the world—particularly the socialism emerging in several Third World countries. Socialist rhetoric is pervasive in the speeches and writings of many Third World intellectual leaders and in the announced programs of revolutionary movements. And the number of Third World countries officially committed to some form of socialism increases almost yearly. Some of these countries, such as Cuba, Angola and Mozambique, are more or less explicitly Marxist in their ideological commitments; others, such as Tanzania and Zambia, are attempting to develop their own indigenous forms of socialism. Still others, while greatly influenced by socialism, are yet difficult to define. Revolutionary movements in such countries as El Salvador and Guatemala are likely to develop socialist states if they succeed in capturing power.

Capitalism and democracy

People who are deeply committed to free enterprise or to mixed economy conceptions of political economy tend to view these developments with skepticism or downright hostility. At best, such developments may be viewed as economically foolish; at worst, they may be considered the root cause of creeping totalitarianism. Such writers as Michael Novak²⁵ and Richard John Neuhaus have even argued recently that capitalism may be a necessary condition for democracy. According to Neuhaus and his Institute on Religion and Democracy colleagues, “We note as a matter of historical fact that democratic governance exists only where the free market plays a large part in a society’s economy.”²⁶ This claim is a dubious one historically (even primitive tribes and nomadic peoples have been known to develop democratic societies, and subgroups within capitalist or mixed

economies combine highly socialistic life-styles with profoundly democratic approaches to internal government), although it must be acknowledged that there is not yet a really good illustration of a thoroughly socialist country that is, at the same time, thoroughly democratic. Czechoslovakia gave brief promise of this during the Dubcek reform period of 1968—before the crushing blow of Soviet invasion, and Chile embarked on a democratic Marxist venture before the regime of President Salvador Allende was replaced by coup d'état (possibly encouraged by the United States). Two or three Third World countries—one thinks of Zimbabwe and Nicaragua especially—may yet take that turn. But no thoroughly socialist country could today also be described as completely democratic. Most Marxists would of course argue that democracy in capitalist countries is itself a sham, a one-dimensional form lacking the substance of real self-rule. So there are both capitalists and Marxists who agree that a particular kind of economic system is absolutely essential to democracy, they just disagree as to which economic system!

But they may both be wrong. Reinhold Niebuhr wrestled with the relationship between bourgeois civilization and democracy in his classic work, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*. That book responded to challenges to democracy in the ideological movements of the 1930s and in World War II. Niebuhr was anxious to establish a theological basis for democracy independent of those movements and of the bourgeois culture which had provided the matrix for democracy during the preceding two centuries. “The democratic ideal is thus more valid than the libertarian and individualistic version of it which bourgeois civilization elaborated. Since the bourgeois version has been discredited by the events of contemporary history and since, in any event, bourgeois civilization is in process of disintegration, it becomes important to distinguish and save what is permanently valid from what is ephemeral in the democratic order.”²⁷ Whether or not Niebuhr correctly assessed the prospects for what he called bourgeois civilization, we need to take seriously his implication that the case for democracy transcends any particular economic system. Niebuhr himself offered a powerful theological statement of that case, based primarily on the assessment of human creativity and human sinfulness—the one making democracy possible, the other making it necessary.

The primacy of democracy

If, as I believe, the theological case for democratic social order surpasses in importance the case for any particular economic system, then it would seem important not to over-react to socialism as though it must be opposed to democracy. Some countries, such as Zimbabwe and Angola, are almost bound to be socialist. The real question is whether they will also be democratic. If I may personalize this a bit, the chief of state of the new nation of Zimbabwe happens to be a graduate of the theological institution with which I am associated. In a 1981 lecture at his alma mater, President Canaan Banana made clear his judgement that Zimbabwe must be socialist in its basic approach to economic questions.²⁸ At the same time that country has also preserved the traditions of parliamentary democracy. The issue in the mind of the government of Zimbabwe is evidently not whether socialism should or should not be tried, but rather whether the commitment to democracy should be maintained. Those who, like Novak and Neuhaus, seriously question the possibility of democracy apart from capitalism appear to have abandoned the hope of persuading the leadership of countries like Zimbabwe that democracy is also an important thing for socialists.

Perhaps what is needed in the world today is a healthier sense of economic pluralism. Neither socialism nor capitalism has yet provided humanity with conclusive evidence that it alone best serves the cause of economic justice and human well-being. Our basic commitments should be deeper than any economic system, and then we can be free to evaluate various economic practices and experiments more lucidly. We may then see that socialists have managed to solve some kinds of problems more successfully than capitalists and vice versa.

Above all, we need to be cautious in the use of military power and covert activities to curb socialism. It is, in fact, in the deeper interest of the capitalist democracies that there *be* successful experiments with democratic socialism in various parts of the world—for that would greatly enhance the attractiveness of democracy in the more oppressive socialist countries. The coup d'état in Chile regrettably conveyed exactly the opposite impression in Marxist circles. Marxists today are typically critical of Allende for maintaining his democratic commitments after assuming power, for this made him vulnerable to the military coup that in fact occurred. Had events been permitted to follow their course, Chile might or might not be a socialist country. But Marxists would not have been supplied with concrete evidence that

capitalists will not tolerate democracy when it conflicts with their economic interests.

VI. CONCLUSION

Theology has an important, even indispensable, role to play in contributing perspective to economic life. Theological clarity lends clarity to those ultimate values by which we measure all lesser goods, including the lesser goods with which economics deals. Because theology reminds us that we do not live by bread alone it helps us understand the importance of bread in sustaining the totality of our being. Because it saves us from making a god of any economic ideology, it helps us better to understand how economic systems serve or impede God's deeper purposes for humanity. And because it reminds us of the limits and moral ambiguities of our vision, it helps us to make our contributions to the economic debate of our time with greater humility.

NOTES

1. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960).
2. A pragmatic style is often contrasted with ideological thinking, but "practicality" generally presupposes acceptance of an ideological frame of reference. There is a sense in which we are all "ideologues," or even "true believers"; but much depends upon the ideologies we do accept and what we do believe to be true. Much also depends upon our openness to new truth and our acceptance of the humanity of persons with whom we disagree.
3. Paul A. Samuelson, *Economics*, Ninth Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 770.
4. E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (London: Blond and Briggs, 1973).
5. See esp. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/1 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1958).
6. George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 117-118.

7. Acceptance of this religious belief may also contribute to greater lucidity in viewing the actual facts of wealth and poverty. For wealth is sometimes based upon sheer accidents of birth and sometimes upon dishonesty and exploitation, as poverty is not infrequently the result of misfortune and oppression.
8. Robert L. Heilbroner, *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), pp. 169 ff.
9. See esp. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Scribner's, 1941). This is perhaps the best twentieth century account of the doctrine of original sin.
10. John Locke, *2nd Treatise on Civil Government* (1690), Chapter V.
11. See esp. Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1961).
12. Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty*, pp. 24–27.
13. Michael Novak, *Toward a Theology of the Corporation* (Washington, D.C.: The American Enterprise Institute, 1981), p. 33.
14. J. Philip Wogaman, *The Great Economic Debate* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977).
15. The maximum case for this is provided in the writings of Friedrich A. Von Hayek and Ludwig Von Mises. A sweeping contemporary expression of the case is provided by Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
16. Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty*, pp. 37–38.
17. See also Arthur M. Okun, *Equality and Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1975) for a good brief statement of the efficiency of the market by one who was committed to a mixed economy perspective.
18. See Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, for a maximum—some would say extreme—statement of the case for market allocation in what is now widely accepted as government's sphere of responsibility.
19. Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, CLXII (December 13, 1968), pp. 1243–48.
20. Okun, *Equality and Efficiency*, pp. 38–39.
21. See Wogaman, *The Great Economic Debate*, for more extended discussion.
22. An interesting contrast is provided by Richard J. Barnet and Ronald E. Muller, *Global Reach: The Power of the Multinational Corporations*

(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974) and Michael Novak, *Toward a Theology of the Corporation*.

23. *Soundings: Law of the Sea News and Comment*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (November, 1981-February, 1982).
24. World Health Organization, *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 1981).
25. Novak, *Toward a Theology of the Corporation* and *The Denigration of Capitalism* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1979).
26. Richard John Neuhaus, *Christianity and Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute on Religion and Democracy), pp. 6-7.
27. Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Scribner's, 1944) p. 5.
28. Canaan Sodindo Banana, "In Search of Human Justice" (unpublished lecture, Wesley Theological Seminary, October 22, 1981).

Comment

John W. Cooper

The variety of theologies of economics

J. Philip Wogaman's "Theological Perspective on Economics" is in my view one of the most significant but flawed recent contributions to a growing list of theologies of economics, a relatively rare species until the late 1970s. Today there are theologies of economics of all kinds—leftist and rightist, staid and chic, but most important of all, socialist and capitalist. Among those American theologians who write

from a “democratic capitalist” point of view, Wogaman mentions Michael Novak and Richard John Neuhaus (George Gilder is not a theologian, although his *Wealth and Poverty* is at least quasi-theological). One could add Robert Benne to this list. On the “democratic socialist” side of the theology-of-economics debate are such notable figures as John C. Bennett, Robert McAfee Brown, William Sloan Coffin, Jr., Robert Bellah, Harvey Cox, and M. Douglas Meeks. It is uncertain which group and which viewpoint is predominant among theologians. The anti-capitalist bias is quite apparent in many circles. The pro-socialism view is much less common and has greater credibility among professionals than among ordinary citizens.

Wogaman’s position in the spectrum:

Wogaman’s essay clearly places him among the more numerous “democratic socialist” theologians and in opposition to the relative handful of democratic capitalist theologians. That a fragmentation of professional theologians and ethicists into differing ideological camps is desirable in the first place is doubtful. But there it is. And Wogaman has added his voice to the chorus of American churchmen who argue that government command of the economy is preferable to a market-oriented approach.

The author begins on solid ground by rehearsing some basic themes of theological ethics, his main point being the importance of the economic sphere as a matrix of values, and therefore an appropriate subject matter for ethics and theology. Next, he sets up a dichotomy between the “free market” and “democratic government” as models for organizing society—a weighted phraseology. In fact, these terms signify the classic “markets-vs.-planning” debate. Wogaman breaks no new ground in his argument. Along the way, Wogaman uncovers some interesting relationships, but in the end he makes a rather conventional argument for the preferability of a state-run economy to a market economy. Does he have in mind some model socialist state which America could emulate? Well, no. There is “not yet a . . . thoroughly socialist country that is, at the same time, thoroughly democratic.” The annual Freedom House report, *Freedom in the World*, suggests an inverse relationship between socialism and democracy. Perhaps he dreams that America could be the first nation to have a socialist revolution that is truly “democratic.”

What is “democratic socialism”?

If Wogaman means by “democratic socialism” the current transformations in Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, for example, then his dream is in jeopardy. History is open-ended and anything can happen. But the news from these countries does not suggest the eschatological inbreaking of the new. It looks like the same old gradual social and political regimentation which Marxism brings in its train. If Wogaman means by “democratic socialism” the mixed economies of Western Europe and Israel, for example, then we might all be content as “democratic socialists.” But these lands enjoy essentially market-oriented economic arrangements using more or less government *regulation*, not, ordinarily, direct management. Furthermore, so does the United States, although the United States generally chooses to regulate its economy less. Therefore, America’s dreamed-of socialist horizon is somewhat illusive.

Destination Stockholm or Managua?

Wogaman’s case for socialism rests not only on the illusive *democratic* socialist state, but also on the failure of “*laissez-faire* capitalism.” This is a typical case of the comparison of ideals with realities. The caring, “revolutionary,” communal bonds of the socialist myth are infinitely more appealing than the mundane and unjust realities of nineteenth-century industrialism. A truer account would compare ideals with ideals and realities with realities. Where is there more freedom and more prosperity—in East or West Germany, North or South Korea, Tanzania or Kenya, Cuba or Costa Rica, Libya or Egypt?

The problem with *laissez-faire* capitalism, as Wogaman points out, is the lack of an unambiguous governmental mandate to regulate the economy for the common good. It was the accomplishment of the New Deal to establish mechanisms for maintaining private-sector prosperity while regulating economic behaviour and extracting the cost of a welfare apparatus. Democratic capitalists claim the New Deal, too. It is instructive that the extreme socialists of the time blamed Roosevelt for “saving capitalism.”

Do the New Deal reforms lead to a social market economy, as democratic capitalists argue, or are they a form of latent socialism which cannot continue to coexist with the for-profit sector? Clarity on

these matters could well erase the differences between many of the theological combatants in the capitalism-socialism debate. Wogaman notes that “there may well be a need for private centres of economic power.” What is important, he argues, is whether the private sector will be “subordinate to governmental power” and “accountable to society through law and government.” Wogaman and a democratic capitalist like Michael Novak would obviously concur on this point, if the terms were carefully defined. After all, Jacques Maritain, whom Novak praises, made the same case for corporate accountability while arguing *for* the legitimacy of private-sector enterprise as one component of a democratic pluralist society. Maritain’s *Reflections on America* is a classic in the literature of the emerging discipline of “democratic capitalist” theological reflection; he preferred the term “economic humanism.”

The “democratic capitalist” alternative

The kind of society imagined by Maritain and Novak may well be, in the final analysis, the fulfillment of the current theological longing for discernment in matters of economic justice. A summary outline of this “American vision”—as Novak calls it, without engaging in the sacralization of America—is required to counterpoise Wogaman’s democratic socialism. Novak’s complete expression of this vision is found in his *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*.

The democratic capitalist society is a pluralistic society, it is three-in-one: the political, economic, and moral-cultural sectors coexist in a relationship of *relative autonomy*. The democratic constitution of a nation defines a limited sphere of primary governmental concerns: national defense, maintenance of a strong currency, financing of social welfare services. The production and distribution of most kinds of goods and services is the province of the economic sector, which is relatively autonomous in relation to the political sector. Government may undertake certain forms of productive activity, such as building roads, or may even compete in the marketplace alongside private firms. Nevertheless, the spheres of operations for business and for government remain distinct, although they overlap at points.

One of the most important events in the history of economic philosophy has occurred in the last few decades, primarily in the U.S. and Great Britain. The welfare state, first of all, is now seen as a permanent feature of Western democratic societies and, secondly, it is

obvious that the welfare state is dependent upon transfers of surplus wealth created in the private sector. Every society hopes that it will remain prosperous enough to take care of its disabled and unfortunate few; every society must find a scheme for financing the ministrations of social insurance.

The third sector

A third and final sector, the moral-cultural sector, is the last of the “societies within a society.” It is the idea sector, consisting of the information professionals: clerics, teachers, experts, consultants, analysts of all kinds. And when the critical insights of so many intelligent people are collected and winnowed in the public media, they operate as a check-and-balance mechanism vis-à-vis the political and economic spheres. The moral-cultural elite may criticize the business elite for their avarice, and the government elite for corruption or some other weakness. The government may put checks on the actions of business, and frequently does, but businesses may also demand before the law that government refrain from abridging economic liberties, just as the idea sector demands and receives from the state the right of free speech.

Checks and balances

This three-in-one society, this democratic pluralism, is a vast system of checks and balances between the political, economic, and moral-cultural sectors. The complexity and adaptability of this kind of social organization make it preferable to a system in which the three sectors are controlled by a single elite, frequently accompanied by a one-party political system. When politicians make all decisions and control all aspects of human life, they establish totalitarian states, they become modern tyrants. The three sectors are collapsed into a system of revolutionary committees with a single politbureau controlling the committees. The apex of this pyramidal social organization is a single individual, the president or party chief. It is no accident that Stalin’s “dictatorship of the one” dominated the twentieth-century communist movement. Stalinism is the inevitable result of such a monolithic and cumbersome governing apparatus.

It seems clear that the democratic capitalist nations, including the social democracies of Western Europe, will continue to practice and

defend the pluralist way of ordering society: limited government, an affordable welfare state, a prosperous private sector, and a vigorous and responsible moral-cultural sector. The totalitarian nations will continue to advertise their model of political organization. Assuming there is no nuclear conflagration, we are likely to live in a turbulent and dangerous international order for some decades to come. There are great dramas being played out in the Third World as nations choose between the totalitarian and pluralistic models. It is in the best interest of the democratic pluralist nations to foster democratic pluralism in every nation on earth.

Attitudes to political alternatives

Wogaman urges us to be sympathetic towards experiments with democratic socialism in the Third World. And well we should. Some nations which call themselves socialist have thriving market economies and are likely to evolve further in the direction of democratic pluralism. We may acknowledge with Wogaman that socialists have had some successful experiments in governance, such as in the communist cities of Italy or the socialist government of France. But Wogaman urges even more sympathy than that. “Above all,” he states, “we need to be cautious in the use of military power and covert activities to curb socialism. It is, in fact, in the deeper interest of the capitalist democracies that there *be* successful experiments with democratic socialism in various parts of the world—for that would greatly enhance the attractiveness of democracy in the more oppressive socialist countries.” This sounds like making democracy attractive to oppressors by making it more authoritarian. Democratic socialism is *not* the answer to the world’s economic problems, and the “democratization” of the marketplace is *not* a desirable goal, except in some limited, exceptional cases. In the real world, “democratization” too frequently becomes a smoke screen for totalitarianism. Wogaman’s allocation economy *is* an alternative to our market economy, it is *not* a preferable alternative. And theological ethics does not unanimously point to the command economy as a vehicle for justice.

Wogaman does a service, however, by highlighting some important themes for consideration in any theology of economics. He calls these themes “six theological entry points”: creation, grace before works, relational wholeness, vocation, and stewardship. One could imagine a trinity of virtues in matters economic—stewardship (The Way of Co-creation), vocation (The Way Out of Falleness), charity (The Way of

Community). This trinity of economic virtues is parallel to the creation-fall-redemption motif.

An alternative theology of economics

By way of conclusion, we might compare another alternative theology of economics, one which can serve as a statement of general principles. The well-known Muslim theologian, Muhammad Abdul-Rauf has written an essay entitled *The Islamic Doctrine of Economics and Contemporary Economic Thought*. I have adapted his language to some degree and added the fourth point.

1. God's creation is the source of life and wealth.
2. Wealth is for human survival; it is potentially abundant but relatively inaccessible.
3. Honest work is a virtue and is worthy of respect.
4. Technology has creative and destructive potentialities which require social control.
5. All persons are equal and responsible before God and the law.
6. All persons have rights and liberties in personal and economic matters (including the rights to life, bodily dignity, lawful enterprise, ownership, labour organization, and equality of opportunity).
7. All persons have duties and responsibilities in the production and distribution of wealth (including the duties of work, stewardship of public and private wealth, charity and public assistance, and the dispersal of inheritance).

Abdul-Rauf's theology of economics is not Wogaman's, although there are many points of agreement between them. This set of principles is much more compatible with a free, democratic capitalist society. The mechanisms of the economy, its structure, and its practical effects are based on how one decides the matter of theological first principles. Thus, the debate currently going on among theologians has a deep and longstanding significance.

The mechanism of democratic capitalism

What are the practical mechanisms and economic policies of a democratic capitalist society? As I see it, the main outlines are as follows:

1. Incentives: real rewards are offered to all participants in an enterprise, harnessing self-interest for the common good.
2. Mixed economy: democratically-mandated monopolization of limited public concerns, but *contra* dominant public sector (provision for the health of the economy through the maintenance of a vibrant private sector).
3. Liberty: freedom of economic initiative in both labour and enterprise, with the right to proportional compensation, under social restraints (e.g. graduated income taxes).
4. Equality: equal opportunity and fair markets in both labour and enterprise (*contra* “equality of result” and *contra* monopolization of private markets).
5. Fraternity: programmatic provision for social welfare (within affordable limits and according to the principle of personal dignity and the ideal of economic self-sufficiency).
6. Balance of social forces: shared power among various sectors of society, each making indispensable contributions (e.g. business and labour, agriculture and industry).

This is the democratic capitalist alternative to Wogaman’s plan. Neither side of the theological debate should be ignored, both have valuable contributions to make. However, in the final analysis Christianity will be better served if the institutions of pluralism prevail over the tendencies toward collectivization.

NOTE

See also John W. Cooper, “Elements for a Christian Theology of Economics,” *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* (July 1982), “Self-Reliance and Solidarity: The Democratic Capitalist Model of Development,” in *The Effect of Technological Advance on the Future of the Nation State*, Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology, 1982, “Islamic Economic Justice,” *Harvard International Review* (December-January 1979), and “The Cuban Revolution and Liberation Theology,” *Christianity and Crisis* (July 21, 1980).

Comment

Walter Block

Both economics and theology, as well as the interdisciplinary field of economic theology (or theological economics) owe a great debt of gratitude to J. Philip Wogaman for his “Theological Perspective on Economics.”

The clarity of Dr. Wogaman’s exposition enables us to focus on agreements and disagreements without fear of misunderstanding. In the spirit of promoting dialogue I shall take up several points of disagreement, roughly in the order presented in his paper.

Small is beautiful

One of the beauties of the decentralized market economy is that we are each “free to choose”¹ whether to involve ourselves in large or small organizations. We can take “small is beautiful” to its logical end point and become economic hermits: this includes individual farms, shops and proprietorships, and in the extreme case, living alone on a remote farm or forest.

Under a centrally planned socialist economy, this range of individual choice simply does not exist. Arrangements, whether small or large, are mandated by the authorities. This is the case even in the more decentralized socialist economies such as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia: an *individual* may not sell “his” share of any enterprise, whether or not in conjunction with other like-minded individuals, and set up another, more in accordance with his vision of the “small is beautiful” philosophy.

Grace and works

Philip Wogaman states: “But if justice is patterned in accordance with the priority of grace, then economic goods should be distributed in such a way as to enhance human well-being and self-acceptance and

communal fellow-feeling without asking first whether people have deserved what they receive.”

One might indeed argue that: (1) if justice is equivalent to grace, and (2) grace is irrelevant to desert then (3) justice is irrelevant to desert and so, (4) economic goods should be distributed disregarding desert. (3) follows tautologically from (1) and (2); the conclusion follows inescapably from the mere definitions of the terms. (4) however, is an entirely different matter. It would appear to be a conclusion of a logical argument, but “economic goods” nowhere appear in the premises.

Perhaps we can make this point more clearly by substituting (5) for (4). According to (5), punishment for crimes should be determined disregarding desert. Now (5) has as little (or as much) to do with (1), (2) and (3) as does (4). (5) is thus as logically valid a conclusion to this argument as is (4). If economic goods should be distributed disregarding desert because of the dictates of justice, then so should punishment be determined regardless of the crime committed. Yet we know that a punishment unrelated to a crime is an obvious perversion of justice. We must therefore conclude that whatever the case for distributing economic goods without regard to desert, this case cannot be made on the basis of justice.

Moreover, we can and must challenge premise (1). This would appear to be a rather eccentric use of the term “justice.” One could, with equal merit, argue that justice is equivalent to love or to charity. Justice is, however, neither love, nor charity—nor grace. Justice is justice.

There are further difficulties with Wogaman’s position. Let us suppose, for argument’s sake, the validity of (1) and (2) (therefore of (3)) and (4). Even given this, it still needs to be shown that distributing economic goods without giving any consideration to desert, or to productivity, or to ability to produce that which consumers desire, will “enhance human well-being and self-acceptance and communal fellow-feeling.” Might not so arbitrary a distribution of income rather create resentment and ill-feeling? Might not the recipients of such ill-gotten gains feel guilty, and appropriately so, about receiving property they had no hand in producing? We must also ask, of a given policy which enhances well-being, self-acceptance and fellow-feeling, is it necessarily just? One can think of counter examples. The whipping, castrating or hanging of an innocent black man might well enhance the well-being, self-acceptance and communal fellow-feeling

of white bigots. Enhancing these human qualities is thus certainly no guarantee of justice.

Then there is also difficulty with the phrase “should be distributed in such a way as to. . . .” Who is to do the actual distributing? And will not any such attempt have to confront the fact that all economic goods are *owned*? There are not two completely separate phenomena: production and distribution. Rather, people produce, and their incomes are a result of the voluntary interactions of millions of people.² Social scientists can describe the ensuing pattern as a “distribution,” but this terminological procedure does not justify the imposition of an arbitrary *redistribution* on the economy.

A similar analysis can be applied to “see(ing) and treat(ing) poor people as less fortunate sisters and brothers.” Dr. Wogaman implies that if we do so, we will necessarily increase the scope of welfare. But do we really want to teach our sisters and brothers that their income levels should be unrelated to their economic productivity, and instead based “upon God’s free gift of love?” (Is income equality logically implied by “God’s free gift of love” to an undeserving humanity?) One fears that there may be no better way of increasing resentment and of sapping the desire to improve one’s lot in life than to tell people that since God gave them a free gift of love, other people owe them a living.

The cause of economic success

According to Dr. Wogaman, “Economically successful people need to be especially on guard lest they attribute their success to their own goodness while blaming poverty on the character deficiencies of poor people.” It is of course true that we are all imperfect human beings, at least on this side of the Garden of Eden. We must *all* be on our guard against self-righteousness.

But why single out economically successful people? We have all heard that “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven.” However, the proper interpretation of this statement is not that wealth consigns one to the depths, but just that it does not furnish a shorter or guaranteed path to heaven; that all of us, rich and poor, will be judged, on our final day, on matters other than economic productivity.³

Private property

After very accurately describing Locke's theory of the genesis of private property rights, Dr. Wogaman criticizes it on the grounds that it is "in serious tension with the theological conception of stewardship," and is "a thoroughly self-centred view. In its individualism it is neglectful of the grand design."

Wherein lies the incompatibility with stewardship and private property rights? Based on Dr. Wogaman's treatment of stewardship, it would appear that "the grand design" and "the purposes of the Creator" in this regard, are to maintain property in good repair, so that "posterity" may enjoy it too.

But where is the evidence that the "loving purposes" of presumably social ownership are better suited to this task than the "selfishness" of a private property system? On the contrary, the economic evidence available indicates precisely the opposite.

One indictment of communal land ownership is the Soviet system of farm collectivization.⁴ We may perhaps pass over the historic fact that it took the murder of some ten million kulaks to inaugurate this system. Instead, simply consider the sorrowful economic record of the enterprise. Nor is this an accident,⁵ as shown by the startling differentials in productivity levels between those attained on the vast collectivized and mechanized farms, and on the tiny plots of land surrounding their homes that individual farmers are allowed to own.⁶ The explanation for these startling divergences seems clear: the sheer incentive differences. On their private plots of land, the farmers are working for *themselves*, and for their loved ones; on the collectives, they work for bureaucrats representing faceless others. This is one reason why people the world over work from dawn to dusk on their own accounts—and leave expensive tractors out in the collectivized fields to rust.

Paradoxically enough, Dr. Wogaman cites one of the crucial concepts needed to make this point. I refer to his treatment of Garrett Hardin's "The Tragedy of the Commons," "Where a number of sheepherders are using the same grazing land, it may be in the interest of each to increase the number of animals in his/her flock. But if all the sheepherders increase the size of their flocks, the result may be the over-grazing of the commons, thereby undermining its value to each one. Only when a common decision is made to regulate the number of sheep can a rational decision be made that is in the interest of all."

But this is the tragedy of the *commons*; i.e., communal ownership and socialized ownership. The solution is thus to convert the commons into private ownership status, where the beneficence of private and individualistic “selfishness” can effectively be brought to bear.

The reason each shepherd over-grazes on the commons, is that while he receives the benefits of grazing, he pays none of the costs of over-utilization. He does not own the land, so he cannot lose, financially, from over-grazing. When the grass is eaten down in any one place, he just moves elsewhere. *Nor can he capture the benefits of a more rational program of optimal grazing.* For if he moves his herd away from grassland in danger of being over used, his lack of private property rights precludes him from seeing to it that no one else grazes there either! Moreover, if the grass grows back because of his non-indulgence, this gives him no more right to benefit from later use than anyone else.

Law of the Sea

As a result of his analysis of the commons, Dr. Wogaman urges as a substitute for private property “Governmental decisions, taken in behalf of the whole community. . . .” He then applies this conclusion to the oceans, Antarctica and even to the moon, calling for an international public ownership of these “common heritages of mankind.”

In other words, he is advocating the same type of system for these new frontiers as are responsible for ecological disasters and the failure of Russian agriculture. The seabed authority, moreover, would be based along much the same lines as the Third World-dominated U.N. General Assembly. If given the mandate to “. . . do some deep-seabed mining and (organize) a franchise system to regulate and tax the mining endeavours of private corporations,” this would mean that the economic development of the seas and oceans—perhaps the last best hope for the economic future of millions of poor people—would be left to the tender mercies of the rulers of the undeveloped countries in the Third World, who have so egregiously mismanaged their own economies.

Why should central economic planning work any better on the seas than it has on the land? To be sure, the workings of the marketplace might appear to be no better than chaos and “anarchy,” from the viewpoint which sees collectivized control as the only system with any semblance of order or rationality. But the free market system is the

one responsible for the magnificent standards of living the advanced industrialized Western nations have managed to wrest from the land. Where is the evidence that this cannot be applied to the seas?

The establishment of an international bureaucracy to interfere with the orderly development of the ocean's resources is what the philosophy of the "seas as the common heritage of mankind" translates into, in practice. This policy is not required by any theological argument presented by Dr. Wogaman, and would do immense harm to the world economy.

Business motivations

Dr. Wogaman is highly suspicious of the motivations of businessmen. But, determining people's motives is a complex and risky affair, for they usually range from one extreme to the other. Our author is quite correct, however, in resisting Gilder's description of selfless altruism as the ultimate motivating force behind all of business. He is also correct in allowing that "No doubt, there are numbers of businesspeople whose motives include loving kindness and concern for others."

I think Dr. Wogaman is on more shaky ground in his criticism of Michael Novak's characterization. Businessmen are subjected to a stream of abuse and invective, on a day-in/day-out basis, such that were it applied to almost any other profession, it would soon provoke a call for a halt on the part of men of good will. This denigration emanates from the pulpit, from the editorial office, from the classroom. So pervasive is this phenomenon that even children's cartoons are affected.⁷

And yet businessmen persevere in the face of this abuse. They may be in philosophical disarray; they may be guilty, in many cases, of not knowing where their own true long-run interests lie—of "selling rope to their hangman"; but they do go on producing.⁸

Dr. Wogaman is again correct in insisting that this type of nobility certainly does not apply to *all* businessmen. However, one might take exception to his characterization: "Is there no hint of desire for reward to *cloud* their motives?" (emphasis added). Why should a desire for reward "cloud" the motives of the "suffering servant" in Novak's account? Cannot a person be a suffering servant and also desire a reward? Is this not a most unrealistic standard to which Dr. Wogaman holds the businessmen? Are employee's motives "clouded" by a desire for their work to be financially rewarded? Is not the businessman, as well as the labourer "worthy of his hire?"

Dr. Wogaman charges that the market system's "very great focus upon material incentives may lead to the enthronement of materialistic greed" and that "the free enterprise system has appeared to spawn a good deal of plain, old-fashioned greed."⁹

However, the individualism spawned by the marketplace allows for very great variation in this phenomenon. Under free enterprise, the impoverished beatnik poet coexists with the wealthy rock star; the ascetic can live next to the materialist; the monastery dedicated to poverty may be located cheek-by-jowl with an opulent opera house, university or cathedral. In any case, some perspective might be useful here. Capitalism has indeed coexisted with greed, acquisitiveness and materialism; those who regard these as necessarily negative motivations may take comfort from the fact that the marketplace gives vent to these human feelings, and turns them to good account. For it is only by supplying the needs of others, that one can acquire material goods; it is only through voluntary trade that one can assuage one's greed.¹⁰

In contrast, where such human motivations appear under socialism, they are not readily sublimated into socially productive avenues. Nor is there any evidence that I know of (and Wogaman cites none) showing materialism and greed to be any less prevalent under socialism than under capitalism.¹¹

Low wage exploitation

Dr. Wogaman begins this section by acknowledging the benefits of the cost-reducing qualities of capitalism, but objecting to the fact that the "market . . . is largely blind to the ways in which enterprises manage to cut their costs."¹² To wit: "firms are . . . rewarded by the market for keeping wages as low as possible, avoiding unnecessary costs to improve employee working conditions." As an example, he uses the plight of well-intentioned Christian growers in Central California arrayed against the farm labour movement of Cesar Chavez.

In order to do justice to this example, we must first take a slight detour, and consider how wages¹³ are determined in a free market.

Suppose that a worker's marginal revenue product (MRP)¹⁴ is equal to \$2.00 per hour. What would the profit maximizing employer *like* to pay him? Let us assume that 1¢ per hour is the first offer.¹⁵ Now this is pretty cushy for the employer, if he can get away with it, for he can earn a pure profit of \$1.99 per hour on this worker (and presumably on every other one as well). However, this marvelous profit opportun-

ity will attract other employers (and those on the margin between employee status, self-employment and the employment of others). How will they horn in on this bonanza? By offering a higher wage, so as to attract the 1¢ per hour workers away from the first employer. We may assume that the second wage offer is at 2¢ per hour because the motivations of the other employers: they want to pay more than the first employer, because they must do so in order to attract away his workers, but not to pay so much as to threaten their own profits.

At 2¢ per hour, however, the situation that prevailed at the 1¢ level will obtain again: massive profits will be earned by those fortunate enough to employ a \$2 worker for 2¢; other will be still mightily attracted to make counter offers. The wage will be bid up to 5¢, 10¢, 50¢, \$1.25, \$1.75.¹⁶

Where will this process end? At no less than \$2.00 per hour (when due allowance is taken of all costs involved in searching for workers whose pay is below their marginal revenue productivity levels, of inducing them to come to the employers' place of business, of transporting them there, of feeding, clothing and sheltering them, if these costs are higher than those which would prevail at home).¹⁷ For at any lower wage, there would still be extra profits to be earned through upward bidding.¹⁸

This process is a very robust one indeed. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, the profit maximizing employer (in effect) abhors a worker paid significantly below his MRP level. Actually, he may not give a fig for the worker's plight, but he certainly *acts as if* he does, in the most demonstrative way possible: by going out, seeking after such a worker, *offering him a higher wage* and transporting him thousands of miles away, if need be. He "exploits" such a situation, and raises his own profits. In doing so, he increases the wage levels of the most downtrodden workers.

We are now ready to return to Dr. Wogaman's analysis of low wages, California growers and Cesar Chavez.

Yes, "firms are rewarded by the market for keeping wages as low as possible." But this process tends to insure wage levels commensurate with productivity; and if they were higher, unemployment would be the result.

Yes, thousands of well-meaning do-gooders have objected to what they were pleased to interpret as low wages and squalid working and housing conditions paid to Mexicans in the California orchards. (Moral outrage can be a heady and enjoyable feeling, and the Jane Fondas, the Tom Haydens, the Ed Asners and the other trendies have

partaken to the fullest.) But from the viewpoint of the workers themselves, these conditions are seen as a vast improvement over the alternatives open to them in Mexico. How else can we explain their willingness to come back to work in central California, year after year?

As to the plight of the “good Christian growers,” economically, they are in the same position as all other growers of whatever religious or moral persuasion: the marketplace forces them to pay wages commensurate with productivity. If they pay less, they will tend to lose their employees; if they pay more, they will tend to bankrupt themselves.

There are, however, two supererogatory actions that the particularly moral person could undertake to distinguish himself from all other growers: 1) he could increase his charitable contributions, but if he does so on the basis of combatting poverty, there are people on this globe in far worse conditions than the employees of the California growers; 2) he could be clear as to the economics of the situation, so that he will refrain from supporting those such as Cesar Chavez and his ilk, whose policies will *worsen* the plight of the farm workers.

Now let us consider the role of Cesar Chavez and his farm labour movement. The goal is to raise the wages of the farm workers. His main impediment to this end are the workers from Mexico—the wetbacks, or braceros—who are more than happy to take jobs at a fraction of the pay commanded by Chavez’s United Farm Workers’ Union. (These wages might be considered low by UFWU standards, but they are princely compared to opportunities available at home in Mexico.) They are a thorn in his side because if he can eliminate Mexican labour from competing with his own Mexican-American workers, Chavez can raise pay scales, to a certain degree, *without* creating unemployment within his union.

And what is the Chavez response? *To urge that immigration restrictions be tightened*, making it more difficult for the growers to “exploit” Mexican labour (i.e., making it more difficult for the Mexicans to flood fervently into the U.S. in the hope of being exploited by the California growers, who will raise their wages up toward their productivity levels). Chavez, in other words, is attempting to use a completely non-market sanction (the violence of the immigration authorities) to sacrifice the welfare of the truly downtrodden Mexican workers, to benefit himself and his more affluent Mexican-American UFWU. He is in effect a Robin Hood in reverse. He robs from the poor and gives to the (relatively) rich.

Public services

Dr. Wogaman objects to “exclusive reliance upon the free market” with regard to the provision of services such as “police and military and fire protection, education, transportation, parks, museums, and public works projects.” But his account is somewhat unsatisfactory.

First, he does not clearly distinguish between two separate schools of thought which both advocate the market system. One is the classical liberal school, or democratic capitalism, which advocates the free market-*limited government* philosophy. In this view, there *is* a role for government. And it is to function in precisely those areas that Dr. Wogaman himself mentions in the above quote. The other is the school of free market anarchism, which holds that the marketplace can be entrusted with *all* roles traditionally assigned to government, even including defense, security, provision of a law code, etc.

Secondly, he mislabels Milton Friedman as an advocate of free market anarchism. But as his book *Capitalism and Freedom* makes clear, Milton Friedman sees a strong, although limited role for government.¹⁹

It therefore follows, as far as Dr. Wogaman’s subsequent questions are concerned, that he, along with Milton Friedman (and Friedrich Hayek, and Ludwig von Mises and David Hume, and Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill) would *all* be in accord—at least insofar as government’s appropriate role is concerned. Yes, “. . . there (are) some kinds of consumption where it is better not to try to assess consumers precisely the costs of their consumption.” And yes, “some forms of economic decision-making for society (should) be on the basis of one-person/one-vote rather than one-dollar/one-vote.”

This role for government is, however, related to the provision of specific goods and services—those that exhibit certain technical properties, characteristic of so-called “public goods.” The argument does not encompass “generalized social planning” through political arrangements, as Wogaman seems to imply. Nor does the argument rest at all on considerations of income or wealth inequality. The classical liberal school assigns a *limited* role to government. And although there is a strong conviction in the superiority of democratic over other forms of political arrangements, democratic institutions are not taken as an unqualified ideal, as they seem to be for Wogaman. “Democratic capitalism”²⁰ acknowledges objections to “exclusive reliance on free

markets” but at the same time emphatically rejects “exclusive reliance on political arrangements.”

Democratic socialism

While democratic capitalism and Dr. Wogaman’s brand of democratic socialism have one thing in common—a belief in the superiority of the democratic political process over other forms of collective decision-making—the former allows this process far less scope than the latter, preferring the marketplace as the organizing tool for the provision of most economic goods and services.

This is why the democratic capitalist would be in profound disagreement with the sort of central economic planning through-the-political-process advocated in his paper. Let us consider some of the specifics.

“While even a democratic government can make mistakes, its actions will be based upon a publicly argued-out conception of the kind of community the majority of the people want it to be.” This might perhaps appropriately describe an eighteenth century New England town meeting of several dozen people, but when is the last time any nation-wide decision was based on “publicly argued-out conceptions?”²¹ The dwindling percentage of people who can even be bothered to vote is one bit of counter-evidence to this vision. Then, too, there is the point that *direct* democracy is now possible—given the revolution in computer technology, and the fact that nearly everyone now boasts of a telephone or television. Should we therefore disband parliaments and congresses and let the people “debate the serious issues” of legislation, and then vote on them? There is at least one good argument against this social-democratic vision—if inaugurated, and acted upon, most people would have very little time to work for a living.

It is crucial to consider Milton Friedman’s explanation of why the political process so often fails to work in the interests of the average person. At the core of his analysis is the fact that we are relatively more concentrated as producers than as consumers.²² We each consume literally thousands of different goods and services each year, but ourselves produce only one, or at most, a few items. Suppose a scheme is put forward in the legislature—a tariff protection, a licensing arrangement, or any other type of special subsidy to one particular industry—for example, toothbrushes. This scheme may not cost each in-

dividual more than a dollar or two per year, if only because of the limited role (in the financial sense) that toothbrushes commonly play in our lives. However, because of the sheer numbers of an entire national population, the total cost may be in the hundreds of millions. The benefits to the “toothbrush interests” may only be in the tens of millions, because of economic inefficiency, economic leakage, red tape, bureaucratic sloth, etc., *and yet the scheme may well obtain the approval of the constitutionally derived democratic process.* (Indeed, the cynic would claim that our legislatures are choked with enactments which do little else than raid the purses of the poor and middle class for the benefit of the well-to-do.) Why is this so?

The “toothbrush interests” eat, sleep, live and breathe toothbrushes. Their children are taught “toothbrush theory” from the very cradle. They know their entire fortunes may be predicated upon favourable legislative treatment. At any slight threat to these prerogatives, they are ready to mobilize — with every ounce of strength of their combined forces.²³

And what of their opponents? The typical consumer couldn’t care less. (And if, in the odd case, there were an eccentric consumer who cared, and cared deeply, about toothbrushes, how would he have time as well to combat the raids on the public purse of the widget industries, the steel interests, the auto protectionists, and other “robber barons” seeking after special government privileges?) He spends so little on toothbrushes in total, and the additional cost to him of the latest depredation will add so little; he certainly has not the time, inclination or ability to testify before a legislative committee, organize a protest or petition, or defend the public interest in any other meaningful way.²⁴

Is it any wonder that our democratic system — when allowed to operate as a replacement for the marketplace, rather than a support for it — has degenerated into a type of Hobbesian war of all against all — where the better organized special interest groups are all too often able to prevail? Is it really in the consumer interest that this system be extended to cover more and more of our economy? Surely the necessarily disorganized and unconcentrated consumer would be better served by *restricting* the political sphere as much as possible, and allowing competitive market forces to better protect his interests.

Another consideration: when government’s role is limited, it is at least theoretically possible for the direct representatives of the people — the elected officials — to make most of the decisions, and to stand or

fall on this basis. As the scope of the public sector expands, this task becomes more and more burdensome and complex. It is soon impossible for a mere handful of elected officials to run virtually an entire economy.²⁵ Technicians, scientists, economists, lawyers, social workers and other bureaucrats must be brought in—by the thousands—to make the actual day-to-day decisions.

But these people are almost completely insulated from the democratic process. And a welter of civil service regulations makes it virtually impossible to fire them, except for the most egregious of violations. Most of the actual decision-makers in a democratic socialist economy thus come to be unresponsive to the desires and needs of the populace.²⁶

Further, in the political process, the majority wins, and the losing minority often resents this. In the market, in contrast, each opinion can be satisfied. For example, with public education, whether or not sex education is taught in the schools, one group or another is outraged. If education were privatized, each faction would be free to patronize schools which catered to its wishes. Thus the private alternative, in eschewing the imposition of majority wishes on unwilling minorities, is less a threat to the spirit of co-operation and peaceful relations in society. The more we extend the role of the state, the more we risk tearing the social fabric.

Inequality

Scattered throughout this paper are several allusions to income and wealth disparities. We learn that “The poorest members of a community may be well enough off economically that they are not suffering physically while, at the same time, they are so much poorer than others that it is nearly impossible to relate as brother and sister to the affluent”; that free enterprise “. . . may lead to too great inequalities”; that “. . . *laissez-faire* economic policies . . . have perpetuated vast disparities of income and wealth in American society.”

I am tempted to begin my reply to these charges by saying that the inequality is not as great as Dr. Wogaman thinks it is. But I cannot, since Dr. Wogaman does not vouchsafe us any measurements,²⁷ and contents himself with the assertion that whatever it is, it is too great.

Instead, let us consider several factors which may convince Dr. Wogaman that the kind of inequality he sees in Western democracies is not quite as serious or objectionable as it might appear at first

blush. For example, it is well known that earnings vary with age: the income of the average 18-year-old cannot be expected to match that of an average 46-year-old. But this is a prime determinant of income inequality between the various American ethnic groups.

Consider the following:²⁸

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Median Age</i>	<i>Median Family Income as a % of National Average</i>
Jewish	46	172
Polish	40	115
Irish	37	102
Italian	36	112
German	36	107
Japanese	32	132
National Average	28	100
Chinese	27	112
Black	22	62
Indian	20	60
Puerto Rican	18	63
Mexican	18	76

While there is no perfect (negative) correlation between age and income, there can be no doubt that age is an important part of the explanation of why Jews, Poles and Japanese, for instance, are on average far richer than blacks, Indians and Puerto Ricans. Would Dr. Wogaman, or any other concerned person, really wish to set aside such “vast disparities” which spring from a source like this?

But age is not the only such explanatory variable. Others include geographical distribution (people who remain in economically disadvantaged but beautiful rural surroundings earn less than those who move to where new jobs open up; wages are higher in Alberta than Newfoundland; higher in California than Arkansas; “blacks in Mississippi earn less than half the income of blacks in New York state”);²⁹ cultural differences (attitudes, traditions and values about hard work and productivity); educational attainments; gender (the greater involvement in non-market activities on the part of married women explains virtually all of the male/female earnings differential).³⁰

There is also the point that “inequality of income” is usually interpreted so as to include only *money* income (or wealth). But surely,

what the economist calls psychic income is ever so much more important, encompassing as it does money, or physical property, as well as all other things which can create utility. We have already alluded to the choice of a home in a pleasant rural setting where there are very few well paying jobs or economic opportunities. There is also entry into such (psychically) enjoyable, but usually low paying professions as poet, sculptor, musician, artist, marathon runner or swimmer. Then there is the leisure/labour choice. Some people work 60 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, for 60 or more years. Others do as little as possible. As a result, their incomes and wealth are far lower. But why should people not bear the financial consequences of such decisions?

Perhaps the most important point is that forced equality of retrospective results (as opposed to equality of prospective opportunity) is incompatible with human freedom. Consider people such as Muhammad Ali, Pinchas Zuckerman, Woody Allen, and Dolly Parton. If economic freedom is allowed, people of such productive talents and abilities will necessarily end up with more money than their fellows.

This holds true even if we began with identically equal wealth and incomes for all. For no sooner than we begin, but one of these people will want to give an exhibition or a concert;³¹ other people will be deliriously happy to part with some of their money in order to attend. But on the assumption that the doings of these four people will be more heavily subscribed to than on average, allowing such voluntary interaction will create (horrors!) inequality. The choice is simple: if we want to maintain equality, we will have to deny people the freedom to interact with each other in this voluntary, peaceful and mutually beneficial way.

Another problem with Dr. Wogaman's analysis is that it fails to *compare* the amount of inequality achieved under democratic capitalism with that attained under other political economic systems. As disparate as are wealth and incomes (in the sense which includes the psychic as well as the monetary aspect) in a free enterprise system, it is even more so in a nation which relies on central planning and forced income transfers rather than free markets. And there is a reason for this. The marketplace is a "positive sum game." The only way to become fabulously wealthy is to enrich many other people as well. Henry Ford, for example, made millions by manufacturing an automobile the middle class could afford. In so doing, he enriched the lives (and wealth) of all those who, but for his efforts, would not have been able

to purchase an automobile. Henry Ford gained, but so did almost everyone else. In that sense, Ford gained only a proportion of the total benefits his actions generated.

In contrast, Stalin too was a fabulously wealthy man (even more so than Ford, even only in terms of his strictly economic powers). But his wealth did not come to him through a process which created riches for everyone else as well. Rather, it came to him as a result of massive and forced income transfers. This was a process, then, which enriched him, and impoverished others. Stalin and Ford both gained absolutely; but whereas Ford only gained a percentage of what his activities generated, Stalin gained *all* of what *his* activities generated (or more than all, since he destroyed net wealth in the process).

Socialism

Dr. Wogaman advocates socialism in numerous places without ever coming to grips with what this term really means.

The way I see it, there are two kinds of socialism: voluntary socialism, and coercive socialism.³² What do the two have in common? An allegiance to a certain kind of income distribution, some variant of the Marxian aphorism “From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.”

And what are the differences? As the names imply, voluntary socialism establishes this doctrine on a voluntary basis, and coercive socialism does it coercively.

The family, the kibbutz, the monastery, the urban or rural commune, the experimental utopias which flourished in the past century; they are all examples of voluntary socialism. They each live according to this socialistic axiom.

Let us consider the typical family, which consists of a working father, a stay-at-home mother, and several children. The father produces in accordance with his ability; he creates, we may assume, 100 per cent of the family’s entire money income. But he consumes based on his needs, which are, of course, far less than 100 per cent of total family income. The mother produces no money income, but not only does she consume based on her needs, she typically has the largest say in determining which needs of each other family members shall be respected. And the children, who earn no money at all, nevertheless usually are first accommodated, when it comes to parcelling out economic goods. (A similar economic pattern applies to all other above-

mentioned examples of voluntary communalism.) But entrance to, and exit from, such voluntary socialist institutions is completely free; one is not forced to join, nor is one compelled to remain.

In contrast, under coercive socialism, which ideally works in the same internal manner, *one must join the collective whether or not one wishes to; nor may one resign at one's own option!* This would appear to be the meaning of “central economic planning” or “democratic socialism” or “socialist democracy” or “economic decision-making for society on the basis of one-person/one-vote” or “social control over resources,” or “permitting the community as a whole to determine priorities and assemble the resources needed to accomplish social objectives.”

But perhaps not. Perhaps Dr. Wogaman is really an advocate of voluntary socialism (which, of course, is completely compatible with classical liberalism). So let me pose the following question to Dr. Wogaman, and to “the Socialists of All Parties” (to whom Hayek dedicated his book, *The Road to Serfdom*): are you now, or have you ever been, an advocate of *coercive* socialism? If you had your way, would you *force* recalcitrant people to join your One Big National Commune? Or would you leave them free to trade among themselves, unmolested on the property they own? If not, how can you reconcile your brand of socialism with an adherence to morality?

Breast milk substitutes

According to the Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFACT), several multinational corporations have been guilty of launching an aggressive advertising campaign, aimed at selling breast milk substitutes to Third World mothers. This had led to an outbreak of infant death, or “baby bottle disease,” because, while the product may be perfectly acceptable in Europe and North America, this does not hold for the Third World. The reasons:

1. the water supply there is usually polluted, so the infant formula is mixed with impure water, with deleterious effects;
2. severe poverty makes it difficult to buy the fuel necessary to boil and sterilize the water;
3. Third World mothers cannot afford to buy sufficient amounts of formula to replace their own milk; they must therefore dilute the

- formula well beyond the point called for in the written instructions;
4. they are often illiterate, and cannot read the instructions;
 5. they do not refrigerate the milk, also contrary to instructions, since very few own refrigerators; and
 6. by the time the mother realizes that infant formula leads to a sickly, malnourished baby, her own milk has dried up and she has no alternative to continued formula usage.

Although not spelled out in his paper, it is presumably for these or similar reasons that Dr. Wogaman approves of Third World or international (U.N.) efforts to better “govern the practices of transnational pharmaceutical companies.”

The implicit premise of the argument is that bad as these practices of the multinationals are, the effort of the various U.N. organizations would not be worse. But, when looked at in this way, such a claim is very difficult to sustain.

For it is conceded by INFACT and other opponents of the multinationals that there is nothing wrong with the baby formula *per se*. The difficulty concerns only the economic situation in the Third World with which the formula must interact: the poverty, the impure water, the illiteracy, the lack of refrigeration, etc.

But which organizations are responsible for this sad state of affairs in the first place? The collectivist economic planning of the Third World socialist governments (and the U.N.) is itself responsible for the poverty, the impure water, the illiteracy, the lack of refrigeration, etc., which are the root causes of the infant formula tragedy.³³ Asking the Third World governments, or the U.N., to take charge and improve matters, is thus like asking the arsonist to put out the fire.

Let us now consider a second argument against government control of pharmaceutical multinationals, again on the assumption that the scenario as given by INFACT is accurate.

We live in a sea of ignorance. On this side of the Garden of Eden, even with the best of intentions, men are likely to err. Their mistakes, moreover, are liable to be serious, upon occasion, even causing the deaths of numerous people. There is nothing that can be done to alter this unfortunate situation; it follows directly from man’s imperfection.

There is, however, one (admittedly imperfect) remedy: if we cannot eliminate this error, let us *at least* resolve to adopt a system which

automatically and quickly rewards people who are less liable to such mistakes, and discourages people who are more prone. As discussed above, under Democratic Socialism, the marketplace is far preferable in this regard than the regulatory bureaus which are very indirectly controlled through the political process. In order to further cement this insight, let us consider yet another multinational pharmaceutical tragedy which rivals even the milk substitute horror: the thalidomide case.

Thalidomide was produced by a private company, and approved for use by the West German regulatory bureau concerned with pharmaceuticals. Given this horrendous mistake, how have the two fared? Which one was more heavily discouraged: the private company, by the marketplace, or the regulatory bureau, through the political process?³⁴ Obviously, the former; the latter remained unscathed.

Having assumed the accuracy of the INFACT story, it is now time to challenge it. According to the infant formula protestors, manufacturers' advertising is responsible for the adoption of breast milk alternatives. Yet there is little statistical correlation between advertising efforts and infant formula use. "In the Philippines, there is intensive advertising and frequent gifts of milk samples to mothers who deliver in the hospital. And sure enough, only 69 per cent of economically advantaged mothers ever breast-feed. Yet Nigeria has similar advertising and milk-sample practices, and 100 per cent of such mothers breast-feed. With little advertising, only 32 per cent of rural Chilean mothers are still breast-feeding at 18 months; with intensive mass advertising 82 per cent of Nigerian rural mothers are. Hungary, which has no advertising, and Sweden, where advertising is limited by law to professional journals, have the lowest figures of all for breast-feeding at one month and beyond. Such statistics do not a correlation make."³⁵

Further, in a six-country study undertaken by the World Health Organization in 1981, only in Hungary (not usually considered a Third World country) and in Guatemala, is there any significant possibility that people might feel formula is preferable to breast milk.³⁶ In all nine countries, the overwhelming reason given for not breast feeding is "little or no milk" on the part of the mother; the second most typical is illness, either the mother's or the child's. Are such people to be cut off from breast milk substitutes?³⁷

Then there is the widely touted claim that "up to one million infant deaths per year are attributable to infant formula," made by James Grant, executive director of UNICEF.³⁸ However, as it turns out, the

“evidence” for this claim, reports *Newsweek*, is a “symbolic figure”; i.e., made up out of the whole cloth by an anti-infant formula activist.³⁹

As Dr. Wogaman points out, WHO and UNICEF developed “a marketing code to correct abuses,” which was adopted by the World Health Assembly, with only the U.S. voting against it. Since he does not give the reason behind this decision, we will supply it:

... But the United States cannot support the proposed Code because it would be, if enacted into national legislation, an unwarranted invasion of the freedom of men and women to engage in peaceful exchange of goods and services and a denial of the rights of consumers to make informed choices about products which appear to them to best meet their needs.

Freedom is important to Americans. Our political, economic, legal and social systems are based on the idea of maximizing individual freedom. We believe it is not an accident that our country has achieved its present degree of prosperity, for prosperity is the result of the labor, the investment, and the confidence of free men and women in a society founded upon the ideal of freedom.

Freedom, in the economic sphere, must admittedly be regulated to some extent. Laws against fraud and misrepresentation must be enforced, so that consumers can make informed choices about the products they buy. Products potentially dangerous to human health can be restricted or banned. But if a product can be lawfully sold in the marketplace, then it is essential that those who offer the product have the right to announce its availability to customers, and to describe its merits without misrepresentation. It is essential that the sellers have the freedom to promote their product through sales incentives. And it is essential that consumers have the opportunity to exercise free and informed choice in the selection of products and services.

The proposed Code does not claim that breastmilk substitutes are harmful to infant health. They are not, unless consumers make them harmful by ignoring the instructions and adding polluted water to the powder. But the Code would deny to sellers of this non-harmful product the freedom to advertise its merits, and to make voluntary contractual arrangements for its marketing. The United States believes that these proscriptions strike at the heart of an economic system built upon free choice and voluntary exchange in the marketplace. Believing as we do that such a system offers the best hope for the increased prosperity and well-being of mankind, and recognizing the privation and grief endured by so many millions of people

in countries which prohibit free choice and voluntary exchange, we are compelled to vote against the recommendation of this Code for adoption by member governments.⁴⁰

Based on this reasoning, analysis and evidence, Hickel asks:

What motivates the antiformula forces? If the concern is for Third World families, why haven't their efforts been directed toward convincing appropriate organizations of the need for an educational campaign to make both health care professionals and mothers more aware of the positive case for breast milk and of the proper use of formula when it is used? Why, instead, have they devoted themselves to reducing the choices open to mothers? Why have they not sounded the alarm about the health hazard of using natural supplemental foods that are mixed with often impure water, instead of singling out manufactured formula as a danger?

Why is there no concern about the costs to Third World governments — that is, to their citizens — of implementing the WHO code? And why is there no acknowledgement of the fact that the code may well foster interference with those mothers who are unable or simply do not wish to breast-feed and could use infant formula to enable their children to survive?⁴¹

Dr. Wogaman tells us that “Many companies resist such regulation (the infant formula companies did so quite vigorously).” But at least with regard to Nestle, one of the main participants, this is disputable. Childs points to “. . . the craven actions of Nestle, which, instead of taking the claims of the boycotters seriously, and moving to address them in a way which maximizes the positive, constructive use of its products in the Third World, has instead caved into a crazed list of ‘recommendations’ made by the WHO/UNICEF meeting last month.”⁴²

One last view of Dr. Wogaman on this episode is worthy of comment. According to our author, “The code was adopted purely as a recommendation for national law and company policy, but its adoption by the international body gave it considerable moral weight, . . .” Now this is the U.N. we are talking about, an organization which has distinguished itself by issuing hundreds of arbitrary, capricious and immoral resolutions. Surely we must therefore question whether its adoption of any particular code adds “considerable moral weight” — or the very opposite? Either that, or we must note that the term “moral” is being used here in a stipulative, not a reportive, sense.

Conclusion

The first half of “Theological Perspective on Economics” is devoted mainly to theology; the second, mainly to economics. The basic premise of this paper is that theology commits a religious person to a particular economic philosophy: as it happens, democratic socialism. Although this premise is never stated in these exact words, Dr. Wogaman does come close: “From a theological perspective, it seems clear that it is easier for more people to be what God has intended them to be as participants in the life of community because of active interventions by government; Theology has an important, even indispensable, role to play in contributing perspective to economic life.”

Dr. Wogaman makes a valiant attempt to put forth this thesis, but I think, ultimately, that he fails.⁴³ I do not believe that his theology is either a necessary nor sufficient condition for his economic opinions. One could agree almost entirely with his theological perspective and yet still take a *laissez-faire* position. Nor does Dr. Wogaman’s variant of Galbraithian economics need his theological viewpoint as a precondition; many social democrats are complete atheists. One is not guilty of internal self-contradiction for adopting Dr. Wogaman’s theology without his economics, or his economics without his theology.

Paradoxically, it was Dr. Wogaman himself, at the very beginning of his essay, who warned against the facile deduction of economic conclusions from theological premises. He showed that any attempt to directly apply theology to specific contemporary problems is fraught with danger: how to reconcile the Parable of the Talents and St. Paul’s “If anyone will not work let him not eat” with the numerous biblical passages condemning wealth. And does not Christianity justify “slavery in our own time,” based on some passages of St. Paul’s? Had Dr. Wogaman taken his own warning more seriously, he might not have so directly deduced his economics from his theology.

NOTES

1. The title of the book, and film series of the same name, by Milton and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980.
2. Says Robert Nozick "There is no more a distributing or distribution of shares than there is a distributing of mates in a society in which persons choose whom they shall marry." *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, New York: Basic Books, 1974, p. 150.
3. I owe this explanation to Father James Sadowsky, S.J.
4. For statistics on Soviet grain production, see Roger A. Clark, *Soviet Economic Facts: 1917-1970*, London: MacMillan, 1972, pp. 110-113; on imports, *The Economist*, *The World in Figures*, London: Economist Newspaper, Ltd., second edition, 1978, p. 28; "Russian Agriculture: the Good Earth Stubbornly Refuses to Deliver the Goods," *The Economist*, November 15, 1980, pp. 19-22; Carlo M. Cipolla, ed., *The Fontana Economic History of Europe*, vol. IV, The Emergence of Industrial Societies, Part II, Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co., 1973, Statistical Appendix, pp. 752, 753.
5. As one wag put it, there has been bad weather in the Soviet Union every year since 1971.
6. The 97 per cent of the collectivized farm land accounts for less than two-thirds of total farm produce; the 3 per cent of the land where the rights of private property still prevail accounts for over one-third of the produce. *The Economist*, November 15, 1980, op.cit., p. 21.
7. Cf. *The Christmas Chipmunks*, National Film Board of Canada.
8. For a novel which explores the theme of businessmen on strike, see Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, New York: New American Library, 1952.
9. I have yet to see a satisfactory definition of greed that would account for the loathsomeness with which this concept is applied. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary defines it as "inordinate or reprehensible acquisitiveness." But this is of little help. For this definition would appear to concede that mere acquisitiveness is not evil (thank goodness; without acquisitiveness, the human race would never have gotten past its hunting and gathering stage), but only when carried forth to an inordinate or reprehensible degree. The same treatment, however, could be accorded to almost any human characteristic. Faith, logic, love or charity would also presumably be evils, if carried forward to "an inordinate or reprehensible degree." But no one is ever moved to refer *derisively* to "a good deal of plain old-fashioned charity." So perhaps what is really being objected to is simple acquisitiveness—whether or not carried to "an inordinate degree."

Paul Heyne defines greed as “claiming for the self more than is due.” (See his “The Concept of Economic Justice in Religious Discussion,” in this volume.) As such, greed is practically a synonym for cheating, stealing, or fraud. But this is surely an eccentric definition.

10. Says Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interests . . .”
11. I cannot leave this section devoted to motivations without at least noticing a brief critique of the capitalist system offered by Dr. Wogaman. “The competitive character of economic life may lead to divisive individualism, particularly evident during times of economic crisis and unemployment The system may be too vulnerable to the contrasting problems of inflation and recession.” I am not sure what *divisive* individualism is, but there is a well-entrenched economic literature showing the link between government fiscal and macro-money mismanagement, on the one hand, and “economic crisis and unemployment” on the other. See in this regard: Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz, *The Great Contraction 1929–1933*, New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1965; Henry Hazlitt, *The Failure of the New Economics*, New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1973; Constantino Bresciani-Turroni, *The Economics of Inflation*, New York: Augustus Kelley, 1968; F. A. Hayek, *Prices and Production*, London: Routledge, 1931; F. A. Hayek, *Monetary Theory and the Trade Cycle*, New York: Kelley, 1966; *Studies in the Quantity Theory of Money*, ed. by Milton Friedman, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956; Murray Rothbard, *America’s Great Depression*, Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1975.

These readings will also serve as a useful antidote to Dr. Wogaman’s view that “The *laissez-faire* assumptions that guided economic policy before 1933 were impotent to prevent or deal with the greatest economic catastrophe in American history.”

12. The marketplace itself *is* blind to the ways in which entrepreneurs can act; but the advocates of classical liberalism never meant the market to operate in a vacuum. On the contrary, they have always insisted that it be embedded in a legal framework. As Dr. Wogaman himself states “Where the free market is dominant . . . the role of government in economics is limited to the protection of property and the maintenance of agreed rules of the game.” Thus, entrepreneurs cannot act as they want; they are bound by the “rules of the game.” Broadly stated, these rules mandate that no one should be allowed to initiate force or fraud upon innocent persons (people who have not themselves initiated force or fraud). Thus, given an appropriate legal code, firms would not be allowed to indiscriminately dump

wastes into rivers. In this regard, see Edwin G. Dolan, *TANSTAAFL: The Economic Strategy for Environmental Crisis*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1971.

Nor would entrepreneurs be allowed to do “*anything* else that will lower the costs of doing business” (emphasis added), as claimed by our author. This sounds as if Dr. Wogaman has murder or theft in mind; but clearly anything of this sort would be strictly forbidden, as it is now. This holds for product misrepresentation as well. For a treatment of the rules appropriate to a free society, see Bruno Leoni, *Freedom and the Law*, Los Angeles: Nash, 1972; F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, Chicago: Regnery, 1960; F. A. Hayek, “The Principles of a Liberal Social Order” in *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969.

These remarks apply, as well, to Dr. Wogaman’s statement that “The real question is whether private centres of economic power will be kept subordinate to governmental power, which alone can uphold the order of justice.” This is not the real question at all, since the democratic capitalist philosophy stipulates that economic power shall be subordinate to the “rules of the game.”

13. I refer, here, to total wages, which would include money wages plus the quality of working conditions, fringe benefits, etc., and all other elements which comprise the entire wage “package.”
14. Marginal Physical Product (MPP) is defined as the extra amount of physical product that will be created by one additional worker, with all other factors such as land, capital, other employees, held constant. Let us assume an MPP of 10 widgets per hour; this means that for every hour of labour, the employer will have 10 more widgets than if this worker had not been employed.

Marginal Revenue (MR) is defined as the additional revenue which will accrue to the widget manufacturer, for each extra widget he can sell. For simplicity’s sake, we assume he can gain 10¢ for each and every extra widget he can produce. Thus:

$$\text{MRP} = \text{MPP} \times \text{MR} = 20 \times 10\text{¢} = \$2.00 \text{ per hour}$$

15. The technical answer to this question is “minus infinity.” If the profit maximizer were true to his calling, he would prefer that the employee pay *him* an infinite amount of money for the privilege of being employed.

Needless to say, the identical analysis applies to the question asked from the other side of the bargaining table. What would the profit-maximizing employee like to be paid for his labours? Also an infinite amount of money.

16. It is extremely unlikely that a wage of 1¢ per hour could ever have been paid in a real world situation. The competitive process between employers would have made this impossible. We mention this contra-factual scenario only in order to highlight the underlying process which renders such a result impossible.
17. There is also the technical matter that productivity levels (and indeed, everything else in the marketplace) are continually changing. The \$2.00 MRP is likely to change long before this process would arrive at a wage of exactly \$2.00. MRP may rise, say, to \$2.25, whereupon the process of upward wage bidding must begin again. For an analysis which focuses on the continually changing character of the market process, see Israel Kirzner, *Competition and Entrepreneurship*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973. In addition, for the assumption that wage and MRP will come to exact equality, we must make the assumption that no monopsony power exists, or rather that if it does, it will not be supported by legislation.
18. What would happen if a union were to enter this happy pastoral economic idyll, and somehow raise wages to \$3.00 (without, of course, raising productivity levels)? Well, the employer would now be in a position of paying \$3.00 per hour for workers who add to his receipts at a rate of only \$2.00 per hour. He would lose \$1.00 every hour he was open for business, multiplied by the size of his payroll. Such a union would have killed the goose that lays the golden eggs, and created unemployment at \$3.00 per hour where employment at \$2.00 per hour had previously existed.
19. Perhaps Dr. Wogaman is confusing the little-known Milton Friedman with his more eminent son, David, who *is* an advocate of free market or philosophical anarchism. For an explanation of this position, see David Friedman *The Machinery of Freedom*, op.cit., part III; also Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, New York: Macmillan, 1973; William Woodridge, *Uncle Sam, Monopoly Man*, New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1970.
20. See Robert Benne, *The Ethic of Democratic Capitalism*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981; Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, New York: Basic Books, 1982.
21. In Canada, although every public opinion poll taken on the subject indicates that an overwhelming majority consistently favours the death penalty for first degree murder, Parliament has not only refused to enact this into law, it even refuses to consider it. In the U.S., a similar pattern emerges regarding school busing and prayer in the public schools. Can anyone imagine a similar disregard for consumer desires on the part of merchants and entrepreneurs, who fall over themselves to please their customers?

22. Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, p. 143. People who are familiar with Friedman's contribution will appreciate my debt to him in the following paragraphs.
23. As should be clear from this account, the classical liberal philosophy is by no means necessarily "pro business," at least not in the extreme short-sighted and short-run sense in which businessmen themselves all too often favour. It favours markets, but not specific businesses—a vital distinction.
24. The same applies to public interest groups such as Consumers Union, National Taxpayers Union, Good Housekeeping, Common Cause, and the various Naderite groups. Apart from their fatal adherence to democratic socialism as a means of promoting consumer interest (in the case of the latter two), the plain fact is that these "consumerist" organizations have but a small fraction of the power or wealth of those who are organized on the production side.
25. Even were this somehow possible, the elected official is *still* far less responsive to the political voters than is the entrepreneur to the dollar voters. Consider the fact that while an unhappy electorate may have to wait four or five years to "turn out the rascals," (this was of particular relevance in Canada in the summer of 1982), the unhappy consumer is able to register his dissatisfaction *immediately*: by simply refusing to purchase any more of the offending goods and services.

Then, too, there is the point that in the political arena, we can only vote on a package deal basis: we have no way of expressing approval of the government's handling of any one specific program. We may take this ability for granted in the economic arena, but there is no doubt that we can make very fine distinctions between goods and services provided by particular individuals. For further reading in this subject, see James M. Buchanan, *The Demand and Supply of Public Goods*, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968; James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962; James M. Buchanan, *Fiscal Theory and Political Economy*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960; James M. Buchanan and Robert D. Tollison, *Theory of Public Choice*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972; Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York: Harper, 1957.

26. See Friedrich A. Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944, for an insightful description of this phenomenon.
27. For several studies on income and wealth inequality, see Donald Armstrong, Peter H. Friesen, and Danny Miller, "The Measurement of Income Institutions in Canada: Some Problems and Some Tentative Data," *Canadian Public Policy*, vol. III, no. 4, 1977; Morton Paglin, "The

- Measurement and Trend of Inequality: A Basic Revision,” *American Economic Review*, September 1975; Morton Paglin, “Response and Reply,” *American Economic Review*, vol. 67, no. 3; Gian Singh Sahota, “Theories of Personal Income Distribution: A Survey,” *Journal of Economic Literature XVI*, March 1978; Donald Armstrong, “Executive Incomes, Myth and Reality,” *Chimo*, December 1979.
28. Source: Thomas Sowell, “The Presuppositions of Affirmative Action,” in *Discrimination, Affirmative Action, and Equal Opportunity*, ed. by Walter Block and Michael Walker, Vancouver: The Fraser Institute, 1982, pp. 42, 46.
 29. Sowell, *ibid.*, p. 44. Those familiar with Sowell’s work will see my great reliance on it here.
 30. See Walter Block, “Economic Intervention, Discrimination and Unforeseen Consequences,” *ibid.*, pp. 105–113.
 31. See Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, New York: Basic Books, 1974, pp. 160–164, for a discussion of “How Liberty Upsets (Income Distributional) Patterns.” Asks Nozick: “If D was a just (income) distribution, and people voluntarily moved from it to D₂, transferring parts of their shares they were given under D, (what was it for if not to do something with ?), isn’t D₂ also just?” (p. 161).
 32. This distinction is akin to that made by Benne between “hard” and “soft” utopianism. In the soft utopian scenario, “The Kingdom of God would come through the long march of persuasive love through institutional life.” Continues Benne: “Other types of utopianism are not so soft. When Christians grew self-righteous in their assessment of their own virtue and overly confident in their vision of the good society, they did not hesitate to impose that virtue and vision on society. They even used violent means to achieve what they knew was right and good. This is ‘hard’ utopianism. . . . What makes this viewpoint ‘hard’ is that it is willing to use coercive power to press its vision onto a reluctant society.” Robert Benne, *The Ethic of Democratic Capitalism*, p. 42.
 33. To be sure, one cannot claim that there are no other causes for Third World poverty besides government mismanagement. There are overpopulation and lack of resources—although rich and relatively free market Hong Kong is subject to these difficulties. For a thorough critique of Third World central planning, see: P. T. Bauer, *Dissent on Development*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971; Peter T. Bauer and Basil Yamey, *The Economics of Under-developed Countries*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957; P. T. Bauer, *West African Trade*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1954; Bauer and Yamey, “Competition and Prices: a Study of Groundnut Buying in Nigeria,” *Economica*, February

- 1952; P. T. Bauer, "The Economics of Marketing Reform," *Journal of Political Economy*, June 1954; P. T. Bauer, *The Public Industry*, London, 1948; P. T. Bauer and F. W. Paish, "The Reduction of Fluctuations in the Incomes of Primary Producers," *Economic Journal*, December 1952; P. N. Rosenstein-Rodan, "Problems of Industrialization," in *The Economics of Underdevelopment*, ed. by A. N. Agarwala and S. P. Singh, London: Oxford University Press, 1969; P. T. Bauer, "Ecclesiastical Economics is Envy Exalted," *This World*, Winter 1982, no. 1, pp. 56-69. For a defense of the view that the multinational corporations have acted so as to *alleviate* these problems, see Robert C. Brown, "U.S. International Firms Create Jobs, Goods, Profits, Tax Revenues," *Tax Review*, vol. XXXVI, no. 10, October 1975.
34. A similar point can be made for the Vischyssoise soup company, which quickly went out of business after causing several deaths due to poisoning, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, (under whose guidance all such companies must operate) which is still doing business at the same old stand quite nicely thank you.
 35. James Hickel, "Infant Formula: WHO Mixes It Up," *Reason*, December 1981, p. 42.
 36. Source: *Contemporary Patterns of Breast Feeding*, New York: World Health Organization, 1981, Table A.
 37. According to INFAC, "the Nestle boycott 'must continue until the companies make direct and enforceable commitments to halting all formula promotion.'" See Roy A. Childs, "The Nestle boycott: the unsettled issues," *The Libertarian Review*, vol. 8, no. 10, December 1979, p. 8. But without advertising, sickly mothers and mothers unable to breast-feed may never come to know of this life-saving alternative.
 38. Reported in the *New York Times*. See Hickel, *op. cit.*, p. 43. The problem with an "up to" claim is that it is true even if zero, one, two or three deaths occurred as a result. If John ate one pickle, it is *true* that John ate "up to" 1,000,000 pickles. This is demagoguery. (I owe this point to John Chant.)
 39. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 45. This principled and ringing statement was from a May 13, 1981 U.S. government draft. Unfortunately, only a watered-down version was officially released.
 41. *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 45.
 42. Childs, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
 43. For two other attempts, see Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, *op. cit.*, especially p. 39; Robert Benne, *The Ethic of Democratic Capitalism*, *op. cit.*

TABLE A
Reasons given for not breast-feeding (percentage distribution of answers)*

Country	Group ^a	Child		Mother					Medical advice			
		Number re- sponding	%	in hospital, ill	does not suck, "dislikes"	no milk insuffi- cient milk	breast and nipple problems	ill	emotional problems, beliefs	work "too busy"	does not want to	
Chile	A	25	16	12	28	16	12	4	0	0	4	8
	C	27	15	11	52	7	15	0	0	0	0	0
	R	21	43	14	29	10	5	0	0	0	0	0
Guatemala	A	69	6	6	43	9	4	13	0	13	0	7
	C	59	20	10	37	3	2	2	0	3	0	22
India	A	37	8	0	59	0	16	0	0	16	0	2
	B	37	3	3	51	0	38	0	0	0	0	5
Philippines	A	190	8	4	37	13	6	3	15	6	0	7
	C	131	5	8	50	12	6	8	8	2	0	2
	R	51	0	12	39	18	8	12	4	8	0	0
Hungary	all	251	0	0	45	0	14	0	0	0	0	41
Sweden	all	47	17	6	23	23	11	13	0	6	0	0

* "Child in hospital or ill" includes some infants hospitalized because of prematurity. No explanation is available for the high proportion of "other" reasons in the returns from Hungary.

^a See footnote to Table 1

A = economically advantaged
 B = urban middle income
 C = urban poor
 R = rural

Reply

J. Philip Wogaman

Mindful of P. T. Barnum's dictum that one should not fear criticism as long as one's name is spelled correctly, I am grateful for the attention given my work by both Walter Block and John W. Cooper. The former has examined my paper, "Theological Perspective on Economics," in voluminous detail, and the latter has sought to deal with its essential theme, though with greater parsimony of words. I am likewise grateful to the editors of this volume for offering the opportunity to reply to these friendly critics, although I hasten to assure the reader that I shall not go at this by attempting to reply to every single point.

The primacy of theological commitments

The paper's main commitments are theological, and economic ideologies and policies are therefore subordinated to deeper-level value commitments. Neither critic appears to question that ordering of relationships, although Block questions whether I have drawn the right conclusions from my own theological premises. He is particularly troubled by the way in which I relate the theological doctrine of "grace" to the concept of justice. It is clear that my way of relating the two terms to each other is foreign to him, and I suspect it would take a considerably longer essay to elaborate the connection to his satisfaction (if not to his agreement). He appears to find it especially difficult to think of justice in any way other than that of apportioning benefits (or punishments) in accordance with deserving—in what I have elsewhere called a compensatory view of justice. Clearly that is a part of the meaning of justice, and it is the part that large numbers of people think of when they think of "justice." But I believe there is a deeper way of grounding our understanding of justice, namely by speaking of it as the ordering of society in such a way as to protect everybody's opportunity to participate fully as a member of the community. Supporting this conception there are two important assumptions: first that every human being matters very much and second that we realize our full worth as human beings in society. Both of these assumptions have powerful theological undergirding in the Hebrew-Christian affirmation that we all have our being in and from God. Because God cares

for each of us, we are important as individuals — and no individual can be disregarded nor oppressed without violating the relationship we all have with our creator. But God's love for each of us also constitutes the meaning of community: ultimately, humanity is God's family and all questions of human relationship are, finally, family questions. People who are used to thinking of human nature as a purely individual matter and of human freedom as the highest norm must stretch a bit to grasp this understanding of human nature and human value, and I suspect that is the root of Block's difficulty with my paper. I do not wish to put words in his mouth or pen, but I suspect his view of human nature rather sees each of us as individuals, finally responsible for our own value-creation, whose relationships with and within society are based upon exchange for mutual benefit at best and personal self-interest at least. That more individualistic understanding of humanity does not comprehend how profoundly we belong to one another and how inextricable our humanity is from that of our sisters and brothers.

Justice as grace

My point is that to be treated justly is to be treated as a brother or sister. Rewards and punishments (which concern Block very much) may be a very important part of the ordering of the good society, just as they are in the confines of the typical ordinary human family. But the ordering of the family is ultimately predicated upon that more organic sense of oneness than it is upon a nice calculation of how much reward or punishment has been earned. The reader will note the section of my paper devoted to the importance of sin. The reality of sin means that a proper or just ordering of society must indeed come to terms with the need for positive and negative incentives — rewards and punishments. But these things are for the sake of the deeper reality.

Block correctly perceives that the implication of this understanding of God's caring love (or grace) would be, *ceteris paribus*, that economic goods would be available to all regardless of their contribution. But in the real world things are not that simple — *ceteris* rarely is *paribus*! There is enough selfishness and indolence to make it necessary to use incentives to assure the production of an adequate supply of goods, and it is necessary to counter anti-social tendencies in many people by having a criminal law code. The direct implication of grace must be supplemented by institutions and practices that correct for

what a theologian might call the “fallen” aspect of human nature. But one does not begin to understand what justice is all about unless one first sees the ultimate context in God’s intended community of love. Justice is first of all the ordering of society so that all can participate in that community.

The doctrine of grace is a reminder of yet another important point, however, namely that it is easy for us to overestimate what we have personally earned and to underestimate the degree to which we are the beneficiaries of unearned gifts from others (and ultimately from God). That point is underscored in the parables and sayings of Jesus, where the sharpest criticism is reserved for those who are most self-righteous about their own accomplishments and how much they have earned all the good things they have. In that perspective, the self-righteous attitude of many prosperous people toward the poor people of the world is positively wicked! At the very least, we should all acknowledge that most poor people have had few opportunities to compete successfully in a competitive economy. Those who do make it in Horatio Alger fashion should not assume that if they could do it everybody can—for there are many reasons why that is often not the case. But in any event, the deeper theological perspective is that human beings are not ultimately competitors. Ultimately they are brothers and sisters.

Socialism—a correction of the record

I must comment on a curious error in both of my critics’ responses to my paper. Both treat my paper as a socialist writing. I do indeed believe that socialism, particularly democratic socialism, needs to be taken seriously. I do indeed believe that its criticisms of existing economic systems need to be listened to thoughtfully. I do indeed think it possible that humanity may one day turn to this way of organizing economic life. But my paper stops very far short of advocating this alternative, and I clearly and specifically do not consider Christian theology to lead *necessarily* to democratic socialism. A careful re-reading of my paper should make it clear that the paper is not a defence of democratic socialism.

It may, however, be instructive to ask why Block and Cooper were predisposed to interpret the paper in that way. I am prepared to offer a theory: I think it may be because both critics have so negative a view of the economic role of government that anything that contemplates a

positive, even necessary place for government in economic life appears socialistic. As I read them, that is more true of Block than Cooper. The latter does speak positively of the New Deal, and my differences with him may come down to the details of *how much* government is desirable rather than *whether* government has an important economic role to play. In the case of Block, however, I rather have the impression that he is suspicious of all government. Where Cooper joins me in rejecting extreme forms of *laissez-faire* capitalism, I believe Block embraces those forms. If everything to the left of *laissez-faire* is socialism then I am, of course, socialist! But if we mean by socialism the government's ownership of all the means of production, then I have issued a number of cautions about that throughout my paper and, in the final analysis, I just don't believe we yet know enough to make a choice between some form of mixed economy capitalism and some form of democratic socialism.

Democratic governance

But the real point I sought to make in the paper about the economic role of government is that we *must* have democratic government, and democratic government must be strong enough to regulate economic life for the sake of the common good. Block is much more skeptical than I about the possibilities of democratic government. He is so eager to avoid the coercive aspects of all government that he (in my opinion) overlooks the even more coercive realities of life without government. The genius of democratic government is its making the coercive aspects of life accountable to a civilized process of decision-making in which the right of every citizen to participate is respected and protected. Without that, society disintegrates into the brutish conflict of "each against all" which characterizes the Hobbesian society and, like Hobbes, we are reduced to yearning for a single strong authority that can at least bring order. Hobbes, too, was skeptical about democracy. But I suspect that most people, if faced with only the alternatives of strong authoritarian rule or the anarchistic tendencies of a purely libertarian state, would join Hobbes in preferring the former to the latter. But I believe—as do most North Americans—that democratic society can provide a vastly superior third possibility that avoids the unacceptable aspects of either of the Hobbesian extremes.

Applied to the economic sphere, I have argued that the market, left

entirely alone, simply will not suffice in creating and undergirding the just society. It must be supplemented by and regulated by democratic government. The sum total of private economic decisions may (and I think, will) yield unsatisfactory results for society as a whole if not corrected by government. Those who do not believe in public highways and schools and parks and welfare programs may not be impressed by that argument, but such people have already gone far too far in the direction of individualism, and their model of the good society may be very remote from the one advanced here. I am prepared to concede the utility of the market system as a device for allocating many of the goods and services we all need, and I find it interesting that even many socialists are willing to concede that up to a certain point. But whether we finally opt for some form of democratic socialism or some form of mixed economy capitalism, economic life must ultimately be accountable to the will of the people as expressed through democratic government.

Discussion

Edited by: Kenneth G. Elzinga

John Cooper: I have two main points to make about Phil Wogaman's paper: one on economics, and one on theology. Because I suspect that many of the points he makes on economics will be debated, I've placed a little more emphasis on theology.

I've tried to make the simple point in my comment that there are about as many varieties of theologies of economics as there are people trying to construct them. Phil puts himself, I think, in a large group of democratic socialist theologians. Another identifiable group would be

the democratic capitalists, like Michael Novak, Richard John Neuhaus, and Robert Benne.

Now, if Wogaman's democratic socialism suggests in our minds and in his mind the kind of reality we see in Western Europe—mixed economies which call themselves “socialist,” but which in fact are based on substantial private sectors and various schemes for the transference of wealth, or even production from the private sector to the public sector—then as I said in my comment, we could all be democratic socialists.

On the other hand, if Phil is saying something more than that, that there should be a revolutionary socialist transformation, as is the case, for example with some radical groups in Canada, then that is another thing altogether. The worst case, I take it, in the world today of coercive socialism, indeed religious socialism, is what we see in Iran. And examples of totalitarian socialism abound.

On the economy, although Phil doesn't use these terms, the basic issue he wishes to discuss is “markets versus planning.” Or, I would say, “markets versus government allocation of production and distribution.”

Finally, then, turning to the theological side of the theology of economics, I would suggest that Phil Wogaman's paper does us a great service in talking about questions like stewardship, grace versus works, and so forth—issues we may all want to explore in greater detail. But I would make only one comment in this regard. I think there are three economic virtues, if you will, which parallel the traditional theological triad of creation, fall and redemption. These can be paralleled with three economic virtues: stewardship, vocation and charity. Perhaps this last theme, the notion of redemption or charity in Christianity is something we might find at this conference to be quite an issue.

Does the whole question of the relationship between justice and love suggest to us a progressive social ethic, to use Reinhold Niebuhr's term? *I think it does. I think a progressive social ethic is crucial to a Christian theology of economics. Otherwise, how would we ever be able to agree that the abolition of slavery, for example, or the emergence of the labour movement, or the development of legal structures which make possible collective bargaining, were steps of progress? Perhaps we don't agree, but I would suggest that a Christian theology of economics includes as well this redemptive notion. And I'd like to redeem that particular theme from Phil's paper.*

Walter Block: I find that I'm in virtually full agreement with the goals and the ends that are expressed in Phil's paper. And I find that I'm in virtually full disagreement with the means by which he proposes to attain these goals. I think that if he agreed with me that my means were correct, he would agree with me fully as to what the policy prescriptions are. And I also think that if I agreed with his implicit views of what the best means are, and what the explanatory theories are, I would fully agree with his policy prescriptions. So I think that while there might be some slight differences in goals between us, the differences in goals between us are not very much. They're not really worth talking about. Whereas the differences in means are quite substantial.

Let me go over some of the high points—for example, stewardship. I think that we have a rational means of making sure that we don't have wastage, or pollution, or what have you. I happen to believe that a system where there is a clear definition of private property rights is a much, much preferable means to this end than a system where property rights are very vague and amorphous.

One instance I might give is the difference between how we as a society have treated cows and buffalo. As far as I'm concerned, cows and buffalo look alike. They are probably part of the same genus or species. Yet the private property right systems with which we human beings dealt with these animals are as different as night and day. With the buffalo, in the 1800s, there were no clearly demarcated private property rights. You shot one and you owned it; and if you didn't shoot one, you couldn't have it. You had no incentive to preserve them on the range. The range was open and was communally owned. If you didn't shoot a particular buffalo, it got away, and you had no claim to it later.

As a result, thousands—millions of them—were shot; and buffalo practically became an extinct species. And I claim, it's not because of greed or anything else like that. We treat cows very differently—solely I would contend, because of the private property rights arrangements that we have with regard to them; namely, cows are fully privately owned. If you don't shoot it, it stays there the next day, and you can milk it or farm it for later sale.

With regard to business motivation, it's my feeling that while some businessmen are motivated by greed, by the lust for the buck or what have you, others are motivated by altruistic purposes. And people's motives are as varied as they are. They're very heterogeneous. But I

don't see any great difficulty with greed as a motivating force; because I think that Adam Smith really put his finger on this—that the marketplace has an ability to turn private greed into public good. Said Adam Smith, "It's not out of benevolence that the butcher, and the baker, and the candlestick maker provide us with the goods that they do. It's rather out of an attempt to maximize profits, or to increase revenues, or what have you." And in that, they act as if by an invisible hand, to promote an end that wasn't theirs, namely the reasonable allocation of goods for the satisfaction of human desires, which I take to be the goal that Phil Wogaman and I both favour.

Let's consider the question of democratic socialism, or voting for things. Now as I tried to express in my paper, I don't think this is an issue between the democratic capitalists and the democratic socialists, because both do agree that we ought to have a democratic political system for certain things. So, it's not a difference *per se*. The difference concerns what things ought to be amenable to democratic political voting, and what things ought to be amenable to the market or dollar voting.

And here, the classical liberals in the nineteenth century sense would say that government ought to be limited. The government ought to have some very important functions, but nevertheless limited functions. The usual things are defense, or contracts, or law, legislation, roads, things like that—the command points of the economy. But, much else ought to be left to the individual market participants.

As consumers, we consume literally hundreds, if not thousands, if not tens of thousands of items. As producers, we produce one, two, three at most. Thus, when it comes to a tariff, or a bailout, or a subsidy, or some scheme by which a few people can benefit at the expense of many, the producers are much better organized. So again we have the point that while Phil and I might agree as to the goals, we have very different means as a way of reaching them.

Another point is one that Hayek makes in his *Road to Serfdom*: when you have political voting for many, many things (pretty much for running the entire economy), the tasks become insurmountable. It becomes impossible for a parliament, or a senate, or a house of representatives to run the whole economy. They must of necessity call in reams of bureaucrats and so-called experts; and thus it isn't really that democratic. We have rule by expert, not rule by democratic vote.

In conclusion, let me sum up by saying that I cannot see my way to agreeing with Phil's view that he is deducing the economics from the

theology. I think that there is no logical implication of the one to the other. I think a person of his theological views could be an advocate of classical liberalism, in the nineteenth century sense, or an advocate of social democracy, as Phil is.

And on the other hand, I think that an alternative theological vision, or even an atheistic one, could reach either of these two political propositions. So, I don't think that the theology is necessary, nor sufficient, for the political views. And I think that the political views are unsatisfactory in various ways — not again, let me emphasize, because of the goals, or the aims, or the purposes which I see as the highest and most benevolent, but rather of the means. I don't think they'll reach the ends that Phil wants them to.

Philip Wogaman: First, dealing with Cooper's response, I can't very well be both Galbraithian and democratic socialist in a thorough sense, I think. And I want to say flatly that this paper is not a democratic socialist paper. I will simply read again what I said toward the end of the paper:

Perhaps what is needed in the world today is a healthier sense of economic pluralism. Neither socialism nor capitalism has yet provided humanity with conclusive evidence that it alone best serves the cause of economic justice and human well being. Our basic commitments should be deeper than any economic system, and then we can be free to evaluate various economic practices and experiments more lucidly. We may see that socialists have managed to solve some kinds of problems more successfully than capitalists; and vice versa.

I think that paragraph summarizes points that are made throughout the paper. I don't want that to be understood as a fundamental rejection of democratic socialism, either. But I've tried with some nuance and, I hope, balance to first deal with the theological perspective and then come down to some remarks about the issue of market economics, which is the subject matter of this conference, and apropos of that make some comments about both the socialist broad alternative, and the capitalist broad alternative.

In my book, *The Great Economic Debate*, I've attempted to do that with a longer discussion, examining several fundamental positions, and finding at the conclusion of that study that both democratic socialism and mixed economy capitalism can be weighed and balanced

by persons of faith, without anybody attempting a definitive conclusion, at least at this point in history.

I have problems with pure *laissez-faire* capitalism, and I gather you do too. Perhaps our differences then, Walter, are not as fundamental as you suggest (at least at certain points), but come down to the question: What works best in different kinds of arenas? I have remarked in the paper that I think there will be some divergence of opinion at various points. Some might say there ought to be more of a planning function in basic economic allocation. Others would say there ought more to be a market function. My quarrel would be with those who would say, “only the market.” And I guess I would have a quarrel too with those who would say, “only planning.”

I do want to be clear that my paper is not read through the lens of a democratic socialist. It is socialist only in the sense of those who characterize F.D.R. as being a dangerous communist or a socialist. There are people whose views of socialism are so undifferentiated, that anything to the left of Adam Smith is, by definition, socialist. But I think we need to do our thinking with a little more refinement about that.

Now, regarding the question of the uniqueness of theology, and does theology have anything particular to say. That’s going to be a theme that’s going to run through our discussions, I feel. We got into it in the last hour. We’re into it in this hour. We will return to it.

My own judgement of that is sort of “yes” and “no” to it. I suspect my reason for arriving at a particular economic judgement, insofar as it is basically a theological reason, would have to do with (in my mind), what is the ultimate meaning of this practice, or this institution? I might agree with any range of other people that a particular practice or institution is desirable. But at least I find myself, in talking with humanist friends who agree with me on certain issues of ethics, that the character of that agreement is a little bit different.

Ultimately, I believe that every human being is valued boundlessly by God. Now an out-and-out atheist who treats the human adventure as being a transitory thing, may still take the view that we should treat all human lives as of supreme importance. And yet I suspect there is something of a difference of quality in the ways in which we relate to human beings, and policies that affect individual human beings.

To me it is a decisively important question whether we view all humanity as being essentially a family. Now, I know people who don’t take that view; and who take the view that there are some people who are literally expendable, and whose lives and views do not really

matter. Well, at the same time there are non-Christians who would take the view that all humanity is one moral community. But that is a very important watershed issue. It may not tell us what is the correct economic policy. It does tell us that we can disregard the economic distress of any human being. It seems to me, it also would tell us (and this goes a bit beyond the paper) that economic policy should be seen first through the plight of those who are least well served by a particular economy. That is, the decisive question, or certainly a crucial one, facing us in economic analysis must always be: What is the effect of this upon the most underprivileged members of the community?

The issues of vocation and stewardship have been cited already. The question of the priority of grace to works has a number of interesting points to it. We're going to get to that in a couple of the other papers. To me, one very important implication of a Christian understanding of grace is that we ought to avoid self-righteousness. An awful lot of the discussion of poverty, especially, is predicated upon the self-righteousness of people who consider poverty to be the fault of the poor, as in some cases it may be and in other cases not. But self-righteousness as a general attitude would be precluded.

I would want to emphasize the doctrine of original sin as being very important. By the way, that doctrine is my reason, ultimately, for not wanting to accept classical Marxism. I think classical Marxism has a utopian understanding of human nature at its root, which to me is inconsistent finally with Christian faith.

Milton Friedman: When I read the paper by Philip Wogaman, what it reminded me of was a comment by a nineteenth century American humorist, Josh Billings, when he said, "The trouble with this world ain't ignorance. It's what we know that ain't so." The problem I find with this paper is that what are stated to be unquestionable and unexceptionable facts, simply are not. I call your attention, to begin with, to this statement: "If we have learned anything over the past, it is that unrestrained, *laissez-faire* market economics is what does not work." Now, the closest approach we have had to unrestrained market economics was in the nineteenth century in North America, U.S. and Canada. It would be very hard for anybody who compared the experience of the North American continent of the nineteenth century, with that of other parts of the globe, then or any other time, and especially for people who were concerned with the conditions of the most disadvantaged, to say on that experience that unrestrained market capital-

ism did not work. It was during that period that millions of the most disadvantaged people in the world were able to come to this country, and find a new home, and build a life for themselves and their children. Most of us here are beneficiaries of that period of the closest approach to unrestrained market competition.

The Mexicans, the Haitians, the Cubans, who are trying to come to this country, would be far better off today and would have a far better future in my opinion, if we had something more nearly approximating what existed in the nineteenth century in the form of governmental organization.

Let me go on to another specific comment: “The *laissez-faire* assumptions regarding economic policy before 1933 were impotent to prevent or deal with the greatest economic catastrophe in American history.” I would like to recommend to Mr. Wogaman, a book that Anna Schwartz and I wrote on the monetary history of the United States, which I think demonstrates rather conclusively that the Great Depression was produced not by unrestrained, *laissez-faire* economics, but by government intervention in monetary arrangements. It was the federal reserve system, and not the market system that produced that collapse.

That may be wrong. But it is not a remark that is made without examining the evidence. As to the particular remark here, I challenge Mr. Wogaman to find any appreciable body of evidence which will support his view.

I continue: “Even if *laissez-faire* economic policies had not brought a massive breakdown of the system, they would have perpetuated vast disparities of income and wealth in the American society”—wholly undocumented and the facts are quite the contrary. Again, the nineteenth and the twentieth century is a period when economic disparities of income and wealth were being *narrowed*. The widest disparities in income and wealth are in the collectivist societies. The difference between the economic position and condition of the top people in the Soviet Union and bottom people is far wider than it is in Western capitalist countries.

The comments I’ve just been making are about what everybody would call fact. Maybe I’m wrong. But these are statements about the *facts* of what produced the Great Depression: The *facts* of what the experience of unrestrained, or nearly unrestrained market capitalism was in the nineteenth century; the *facts* of what’s happened to the distribution of income and wealth—things we can research and investigate.

You go on to say, “The competitive character of economic life may lead to divisive individualism.” Now this is a very common misconception about the word “competition.” Because the word competition in economics, as we use it, has a very different meaning from its ordinary meaning of rivalry. Economic competition is not rivalry. In a case of perfect competition: one wheat farmer doesn’t feel that he’s competing with his neighbouring wheat farmer. There’s an impersonal market in which both are operating. And again, the great virtue of a competitive market is that it eliminates the kind of personal rivalry which becomes dominant in the politically organized society.

Now I spoke too long, so I only want to make one point which is rather of a more humorous character. I believe your footnote 18, in which you refer to my book, *Capitalism and Freedom*, refers to the wrong Friedman and the wrong book. I believe the right reference there should have been to David’s book, *The Machinery of Freedom*, because by the standards of David and some of his friends, I am far from stating an extreme view. On the contrary, I am an extreme interventionist. (laughter) I hope your reference to the wrong book does not mean that you haven’t read either of them. (laughter)

Philip Wogaman: It doesn’t. Now I haven’t read his; I have read yours.

Arthur Shenfield: As Milton Friedman has pointed out, in all human history there has never been so powerful an uplifting force for the poor taken as a group, taken as a class, as through the free market economy. However, and I’m sure Milton will agree with this, although from the point of view of the poor as a group or a class, nothing in all human history has surpassed this, any particular individual poor man may well not be protected by the free market.

Any individual poor man may suffer from unforeseen or unforeseeable calamity. And the champions of the free market have never claimed, therefore, that it is necessarily an uplifting force for every, single individual poor man. But something, very, very vital follows from this. It follows that the measures that ought to be taken to deal with the poverty of any particular poor man should primarily be private charity, because private charity is more likely to see to the individual needs of individual poor men. And secondly, that insofar as we bring the state into the picture, everything we do should be designed so as to interfere with the free market, minimally.

So that, even if we say charity, Christian charity is not enough, and we need the state to do something because there will be some individual poor men, who will suffer from some calamity, everything we do should be so designed as not to interfere, except minimally, with the marvelous uplifting force which the free market is for the group as a whole.

And that's the reason, for example, why Milton has proposed the negative income tax, which doesn't necessarily mean that he's right on that. But if we keep our eyes on that, anything we do devise should be and would be of that character.

Geoffrey Brennan: Several people have attempted to justify the free market system in terms of the results it generates. In contrast, I want to pose a question about the ethics, or the theology if you like, of the use of political power. And then to consider the use of political power potentially to secure ends that we might regard as being good. I think it would be very difficult not to acknowledge an obligation to or concern or compassion for the needy and the poor. That seems to me to be unexceptionable. I don't know whether people here would dispute that. But it seems to me that it is one of a number of obligations which Christians have.

But it is only one of a number of obligations. There are others that we might freely acknowledge that Christians have—to say prayers, or go to church, or a large number of other things. Yet typically, the ecclesiastical establishment is reluctant to legislate these particular obligations. And I think that there is underlying this a recognition that the use of political power to legislate obligations of various sorts is illegitimate.

Now, if that's true, unless one is prepared to draw a distinction between the obligation to be compassionate, and the obligation to say one's prayers, or to read the Bible, or whatever else it happens to be, I don't see how one can develop a completely coherent argument for political intervention to insist that the obligation to compassion be undertaken, without an appeal to rights.

The Marxist and Lockean positions are in some sense basically coherent in a way that the argument from obligation is not. And I think most of us would recognize that obligations don't imply rights. It's certainly right to say, or correct to say, that the Good Samaritan and indeed for that matter, the priest or the Levite, have an obligation to help the man who falls amongst thieves. I think it's a much more prob-

lematic thing to say that the man who fell among thieves has a right to be helped. So it just seems to me that all this discussion about justice, rights, entitlements, deserts, doesn't come to the heart of the question, which is: What is a legitimate use of political power, if all that is at stake is an obligation? In other words, is there any case to be made on the basis of Christian understanding for a genuine liberal policy for anything other than a theocracy?

David Friedman: I wanted to talk on three different points, and I want to start with a point where I agree with Mr. Wogaman. And that is, it does seem to me that the religious position undercuts one of the moral arguments in favour of capitalism. That is, I think that some, especially the more extreme supporters of capitalism (myself among them), are inclined to support it partly because they feel it is somehow unjust to take away from a producer what he has produced. This is essentially the Lockean argument. And it does seem to me that if you take the position that God really created everything, including us, that seriously undercuts the moral force of that kind of an argument.

There are two points where I would want to disagree. The first is the initial comment that economics has to involve theology because after all, how can you talk about problem solving without values to tell you what are or are not problems. That, it seems to me, is wholly wrong. Physics does not require theology, although it is true that one of the reasons we wish to study physics is in order that we can get to the moon, or blow up our enemies, or save people's lives in some way, or whatever. And similarly, it seems to me that the only sense in which economics is about problem solving, is that it is about understanding how people solve the problems they happen to have, without making any judgement about whether they are correct in wanting the things they want.

The third point is, I suppose, in some part theological, and that is that it seems to me his deduction from grace is wrong. And it's wrong in the following sense. As I understand the Christian position, what God did was not to go to one man and say, "I will make you give an unearned gift to someone else." Rather God, of His own free will as it were, gave of His own an unearned gift.

It would seem to me that the implication, if you believe you should pattern man's acts after God, is charity, not welfare. They are two wholly different things. The welfare state involves using force as a result of a political decision to redistribute, whereas charity involves

my saying, “Here is something which I could choose to spend on myself and which I choose to give someone else.”

Walter Block: In my commentary, I pose a question for us to consider. And that is, I try to define socialism in two different ways. One I call “coercive socialism,” and one I call “voluntary socialism.” What they have in common is an allegiance to the Marxian kind of income distribution device, which would be “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” That’s what I say defines socialism. And I add that under that rubric the distribution could be done on a voluntary basis, or on a coercive basis. Examples of voluntarism would be a commune, or a kibbutz, or a monastery, or even the average Canadian family. In most families, consisting of say a father and a mother and a child, the father produces according to his ability and gets according to his needs, which is a lot less than the total family income, which is his ability; and the child and mother usually get in accordance with their need, not in accordance with their ability to produce.

So, on the one hand we have this Marxian income distribution device done on a voluntary basis, within a family, or a kibbutz, or a commune, or a monastery, or what have you. On the other hand, we have what I call coercive socialism, which would seek to instill this discipline upon people whether they wanted to join it or not, whether they were willing or not.

I think to talk about socialism versus capitalism is inexact, and will really get us nowhere. I think that a similar distinction, by the way, has to be made on the capitalist side. Do you believe in a free market system where the income is distributed according to entitlements, namely property rights, and voluntary agreements, capitalist acts between consenting adults? Or, do you believe in, let’s call it, corporate state capitalism, where the income distribution is marked by a large share of government largess—namely, socialism for the right, or taking money from the poor and giving it to General Motors, or something like that? The way I see it the real choice is between voluntary socialism and classical liberal capitalism on the one hand, versus both corporate state capitalism and central socialism on the other.

Walter Berns: I’d like to ask Anthony Waterman a few questions about the Law of the Sea negotiations; and the thrust of my question is whether your position there with respect to the Law of the Sea rests on an economic or a theological judgement? The United States has been much criticized, of course, because of all the nations in the

world, it alone voted against the Law of the Sea treaty. I happen to agree with that decision on the part of the United States. And it indicates to me that the United States is right to have voted against this.

In part, I would make a defense of the United States by saying that it was relatively easy for Canada, for example, to vote for it because under the treaty, Canadian minerals will be amply protected in terms of their price and so forth. They will not be undersold by anything that's dredged from the bottom of the sea. I could also say that if the Prime Minister of Canada wants to be the leader of the Third World, one way of accomplishing that is to drive his country into the position where, economically, it qualifies for that status, (laughter) and he seems to be well on the way to that goal.*

But to get back to the principal point: Is it a theological judgement that "the common heritage of mankind" means that everyone in the world has a property right to an underwater mineral, or (since it is a Lockean phrase) does it mean that no one has property in it until he adds his labour to it and makes it his own by appropriating it?

My judgement is that economically, if one wants to help the people of the disadvantaged countries, the Law of the Sea treaty is not the way to do it. Because I am told (and have reason to believe) that in fact, if this treaty is adopted, there will be no minerals scraped from the bottom of the sea. There will be a monstrous bureaucracy located in Jamaica; and of course the people in the U.N. are all for this. (Having served my country in the U.N. on one occasion, I understand what these people are after.) They would rather be in Jamaica in this new plush setting, supported by the United States incidentally, than go back to some of their wretched capitals (just as they'd rather be in New York than go back to their wretched capitals).

So, to get back to the first question: Is it an economic judgement that makes you in favour of the Law of the Sea treaty? Does it flow from your notion that these minerals down there are given by God, and all mankind has a property right in them? Or, is it simply an economic judgement?

Anthony Waterman: I want to make a doctrinal history point. Three people now have mentioned John Locke. Now they may all be, in fact, correct in saying that what confers property rights is the mixture of one's labour with the gift of nature. But they mustn't claim Locke's

*Pierre Trudeau was the Prime Minister of Canada in 1982.—eds.

authority for that, at all. That's a theory of the way in which, in the state of nature, appropriation takes place.

What Locke actually said, as Locke begins his argument in the second treatise, is the classical Christian view that creation is God's gift to the whole of the human race; and those who want to invoke Locke have got to start there.

Roger Shinn: I keep trying to find out where some of our apparent arguments and agreements are real, and where they are just verbal. And in the earlier session, I concentrated on a seeming argument. This time I'm going to concentrate on what might be a seeming agreement.

John Cooper made a valiant effort to sketch out a common ground that we might all share. I don't think it quite works, but I'd like to know more, not just from John, but from everybody here. He said, "If democratic socialism includes Western Europe and Israel, we could all be democratic socialists." And he said, "Democratic capitalists claim the New Deal." He said, "The welfare state is now seen as a permanent feature of Western democratic societies." Now, if this is true, then we still have a lot of disagreements, but they're all negotiable, relatively minor. However, I suspect as I read the papers and listen to the discussion that there's a more dogmatic edge to the argument than that sketched out by John Cooper. I'm not asking for him to answer on this, but let me keep listening for the next couple of days.

Aaron Levine: I think the issue that we're dealing with is "Will the market system produce the highest level of morality that we adopt as our goal?" If we take an ideal model of the free enterprise system, it does force ethical conduct on market participants.

But the market's morality is one based on fear of detection. If a person is fearful, knowing that perfect knowledge permeates the marketplace, he's not going to introduce shoddiness in his goods or charge a higher price than someone else. He won't do it, because he knows that he will be punished. The market system will punish him. But what about a higher morality system that's not based on fear of detection? Is it possible for a free enterprise system, if we don't allow any type of intervention at all, to promote a higher morality?

Where do we have a morality that is based on a higher level than simply detection, human detection? That is, a divine morality based on absolute norms? That's one problem, I think, with the market system that can be perfected.

Another problem with unbridled capitalism is the income distribution pattern that develops. The market system is very cruel and cold. Someone could have an esoteric skill that took him many many years to cultivate, for example, in space technology, and then there is a precipitous drop in demand for that service. And this person is left helpless. The question is, what will a system of voluntarism produce for this type of person that is hurt when changes in supply and demand occur in a very sudden manner?

Of course, in the long run, things work out as people realize they should not train for space technology; but in terms of the short-term effects it could be traumatic. Of course there is a day of reckoning for the dishonest. But what about all the people that are harmed in the short term?

Richard Baeppler: I think that my brotherhood of theologians, broadly speaking, has probably not done too fine a job in offering prescriptions for solutions to social/economic problems in society. I think they've done a better job at producing critiques. As we all know, it's easier to spot things that are problematical or wrong, rather than to produce constructive solutions—even assuming you have the expertise to do so.

I'm fascinated by the passionate proposals concerning the way in which the free market system does produce, not only abundance, but also the charitable impulses, presumably, which have bettered the lot of mankind. And I am attracted by that argument, and think that it needs to be made over and over again. But, as a theologian, I would be very interested in learning whether or not within the community of experts in the free market system, there is also a spirit of self-criticism, whether or not the sort of common goals I think we mostly share—broadly humanistic and religious—are criteria by which the free market people can also criticize their own work.

From a theological standpoint this has got to be done because the doctrine of original sin means, among other things, that we have an enormous capacity of self-deception, and of rationalization.

I would like to learn, perhaps not immediately, but in the course of the discussions, from the free market experts here, whether or not the functioning of the free market does, or does not, lead to enormous concentrations of wealth, and therefore of power. And if it does, then the Christian perspective, which is put by Lord Acton about power corrupting, absolute power corrupting absolutely, (which I believe is a statement of the doctrine of original sin), has got to be dealt with.

Philip Wogaman: I don't think the discussion here is representative of the broader discussions of economics, much less theology, in North America or the world today. And in some respects, issues that are raised are a function of who's there to raise them. But having said that, let me cite two or three issues that I think may be fairly important.

First the issues which Professor Friedman, the elder, has raised concerning the track record of *laissez-faire* capitalism. I am not surprised by the reaction which he's given to that, having read with profit much of his work.

I think the historical memory of much of this country would be a little bit more paradoxical than his remarks here were. First of all, there's memory of very great suffering attached to the nineteenth century, which would suggest that not everything was working perfectly in the economic system. Secondly, that more was happening than *laissez-faire* capitalism in the nineteenth century. We were exploring a vast new continent rich in resources; and that's an important variable in all economics. What is there to be worked with? Well, we could pursue that matter further, but that's a point where I am not yet personally persuaded.

The matter of the farm workers, the illustration which Professor Friedman, the younger, posed is interesting. I wonder whether you, and others, would be satisfied with the actual operation of the market system in farm labour, as it worked prior to the unionization movement?

David Friedman: Yes.

Philip Wogaman: If so, then let me say, having experienced the human suffering, at first hand and pastorally, I simply cannot buy that.

Also the question of the character of rights, which I believe Geoff Brennan made, is fundamental. Are we dealing here with using the state to enforce a particular morality, in the manner of what some of us would consider the track record of some religious groups today, and maybe some of us? I think what many of us Protestants did, or our forebearers did in imposing prohibition upon the United States, would be a good illustration of using the state to promote a particular morality, in a misguided way. It seems to me that a right is an understanding of a claim that human beings have against the community, which the community recognizes and is willing to enforce.

Now religious perspectives can contribute to an understanding of what rights ought to be defined in the pursuit of the kind of community that we want to have. And I believe all of us have to contribute to that enterprise. What is the character of the community that we want? Theology, when it deals with economics, always must be asking that question. What kind of community do we want the economy to undergird? Now, I will, with that, rest what may be a very imperfect case here, and we'll enter into many more discussions later.

Chapter 3

The Christian Century on Religion and Society

Edmund A. Opitz

I. INTRODUCTION: THE ROLE OF IDEAS

It is my persuasion that the strongest social force in any society is public opinion or public sentiment. David Hume, in one of his essays, wonders at “The easiness with which the many are governed by the few.” Hume continues, “When we inquire by what means this wonder is effected, we shall find that, as force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion.”

Abraham Lincoln raised the same question in one of his debates with Stephen Douglas. He observed that “In this and like communities, public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed; consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed.” This is another way of saying that ideas rule the world. Force is governed by ideas. The ways in which force is organized and used is decided by the beliefs of those who constitute the consensus.

The clergy is one group in our society among several other groups, which exerts a continuing influence on public opinion, or public sentiment. The clergy does not now exercise so powerful a hold over the American mind as was the case during the colonial period, or even a hundred years ago. The church was then a shaping force by the in-

direct influence it exerted over society, government, and the economy. As Tocqueville observed: “In the United States religion exercises but little direct influence upon the laws and upon the details of public opinion; but it directs the customs of the community, and by regulating every day life it regulates the state.” Organized religion today applies direct pressure on officials in the form of the lobbying efforts of the several denominations, as well as by interdenominational agencies such as The National Council of Churches and The World Council of Churches. Ad hoc groups such as Clergy and Laity Concerned take out ads in the *Times* and also employ charades such as sit-ins and pray-ins.

II. *THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY: THE HISTORICAL BACKDROP*

The printed word has long been a powerful shaper of opinion within Protestantism, and our task in this paper is to assess the influence of the weekly journal, *The Christian Century*, founded in 1908 and still widely read by clergy and laity alike. I began to read *The Christian Century* during my school years, was a subscriber for more than twenty years, and continued as a reader after that. The Fundamentalists had their own magazines, and I suspect that the typical graduate of a bible college, or the sect type of preacher would not be appealed to by *The Century*. The typical clergyman attracted to *The Christian Century* would likely be a well-schooled graduate of a good college, who later received his theological degree from one of the better seminaries, before being called to preach in a church belonging to one of the so-called mainline denominations, or as a college chaplain and/or professor of religion. *The Century* supplied indispensable intellectual and religious nourishment week after week for tens of thousands of such ministers.

Sometime during the 1950s the Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton, New Jersey, polled clergymen to determine what magazines and journals they read. Of the ministers polled 74 per cent said they read *The Christian Century* regularly; 43 per cent subscribed. This compares with 48 per cent who read *Christianity and Crisis* and 54 per cent who read *The Christian Herald*, a family magazine with little intellectual content.

When clergymen were asked to list the publications which they “rely on most heavily for guidance in social, political, and economic

problems,” *The Christian Century* headed the list with 14 per cent, *Time* was second with 10 per cent; then came *Reader’s Digest* with 8 per cent, *Newsweek* with 4 per cent, *New York Times* with 3 per cent, *U.S. News and World Report* with 2 per cent. In other words, of all publications, religious and secular, read by ministers, *The Christian Century* is far and away the most influential reading matter for clergymen who are trying to make up their minds about social, political, and economic problems.

Liberalism vs. Fundamentalism

The religious outlook of *The Christian Century* might be roughly labelled “Liberal.” Liberalism in this context is contrasted with Fundamentalism. There are shades of difference within Fundamentalism, but Fundamentalists typically believe in an infallible Bible, committing themselves to a literal acceptance of the Genesis account of Creation, the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, man’s redemption achieved by Christ’s atoning death on the Cross, and so on. The Liberal in theology seeks to apply the same canons of critical scholarship to the biblical record as to other literatures, and concludes that the Bible, as we know it, is largely the work of later editors piecing together older manuscripts. Thus he finds two accounts of Creation in Genesis and puts a poetic, rather than a literal or scientific interpretation, on each. The historical books of the Bible must be validated by the same tests applied to other works of history. And so on throughout the Old and New Testaments. Liberal theologians also try to come to terms with developments in the several sciences, especially as relating to the size of the universe, the age of the earth, the place of life, and biological evolution. The serious study of the other world religions convinces many scholars that non-Christian faiths also give evidence of the workings out of the Divine Purpose to enoble character and produce sanctity. The evidence that God is not without witnesses in non-Western cultures laid the groundwork for the ecumenical developments of the twentieth century.

The Fundamentalist is secure in his belief that he has the key to salvation, that there is but one path to God, as revealed in his Bible. The Liberal has no such assurance. The Liberal theologian and minister no longer has a monopoly product to offer, and his job is consequently that much more difficult. Squaring biblical insights with modern knowledge and applying spiritual truths to contemporary issues, per-

sonal and social, is uphill work. The Liberal was fortified in his struggle by the weekly ventilation of these difficulties on a high philosophical plane in *The Century*.

Early history of *The Christian Century*

The Christian Century was launched in 1908 with Charles Clayton Morrison as editor, a post he held with distinction for the better part of the next half century. Morrison was reared in the old time religion of the nineteenth century, from which he gained the piety that endured a lifetime. But contact with modern knowledge broke the old shell, as he relates in an autobiographical fragment. Wrestling with the disturbing idea of biological evolution he read *The Ascent of Man* by Henry Drummond, a book which portrayed scientific evolution as God's way of working in the world. The result, as Morrison put it, was "a new faith, deeper and firmer, as it was richer, for having found God in his work and world without losing him from his word." This is a good enough statement of the confident Liberal theology of many other early twentieth century theologians. Neo-orthodoxy was yet to come, and come it did from the Continent, with a mighty surge, in the decade after World War I; it is still a force in both Europe and America. Fundamentalism persisted, and a sophisticated development of it led to the emergence of those who called themselves Evangelicals, organizing their churches into the National Association of Evangelicals. An Evangelical voice, *Christianity Today*, was launched in 1956, brilliantly edited by the redoubtable theologian, Carl F. H. Henry.

A fourth R emerged in the 1930s, Humanism. The traditional three R's were Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism, but modern secularism produced a document in 1933, *The Humanist Manifesto*, and organized a religion without God. A generation later a few wayward theologians intercepted a revelation and proclaimed "God is dead!" These and other vagaries, in church and in society, came under Morrison's scrutiny, and were suitably analysed and criticized by the able contributors to *The Century*.

The legacy of the Enlightenment

It is a matter of some interest that in the same year, 1908, that *The Christian Century* began publishing, The Federal Council of Churches was established. The two enterprises were ideologically connected,

sharing basic outlooks and similar goals. And neither *The Century* nor The Federal Council would be explicable, appearing when they did, without some understanding of the social movements that agitated churchmen, as well as their secular counterparts, during the preceding sixty years. These movements, in turn, are rooted in the new mood that seized Europe during the late eighteenth century. Somewhere around this period—The Enlightenment—the Kingdom of God came down to earth with a thud; the dimension of transcendence receded from the consciousness of Western man, as confidence in his own powers increased. Science and technology enhanced man’s understanding of the way the physical universe works, and this new knowledge gave man power over nature, enabling him to use natural forces to serve his own ends. The democratic revolutions of the time deposed the kings and assured that man’s new found knowledge and power would redound to the benefit of the people. Later, with Darwin, the transcendent idea disappeared altogether. Now, not only was man’s body merely one item in nature’s catalogue, but so was his mind; “his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the end result of accidental collocations of atoms”—as Bertrand Russell was to say some years later. There may be a God, or there may not be a God; it matters not. The several sciences give us sound knowledge and unassailable truths about the only world that matters, the world we are living in now. And science further promises unimaginable progress—mankind onward and upward forever. If there is a realm beyond nature, science can tell us nothing about it; it is the unknowable and, by the same token, it is the unnecessary.

The church’s response

How shall the churches respond to this radically new climate of opinion and the expectations generated by it? Here is an institution teaching that God created all things, especially man, whose soul is precious in God’s sight. But man is estranged from his Maker, and in his aloneness and lostness needs personal salvation—uniquely available through the church—in order to “get right with God.” To save his soul man was to conduct himself in accordance with the will of God as set forth in the Bible, be redeemed by faith, refine and elevate his character by persistence in good works, and aim at that alternation of consciousness from self-will to God’s will defined by the Greek word *metanoia*. But all this is foolishness, in the light of the new *Weltanschauung*,

which discounts or denies the dimension of transcendence.

Was there anything in the church's program salvageable, once the idea of the holy vanished? Yes, there was the church's concern for justice and mercy; its humanitarian solicitude for the poor and lowly; its preaching of love for the neighbour, the person in need. Society might be restructured and the Kingdom of God realized on earth, if the church gave guidance to the newly released social forces. No longer can salvation be regarded as an individual matter only, a question of "winning souls for Christ." Salvation must be social. Moral exhortations are not enough—as witness our desparate condition now after nineteen centuries of preaching and good works designed to convict men of their sins and appeal to the better sides of human nature. The object of moral obligation must be social progress, and the engine of social change is the democratically controlled political process.

The Christian Socialist movement

It is not surprising, therefore, that in 1848 a movement called Christian Socialism should be launched by two able Church of England clerics, Charles Kingsley and F. D. Maurice. These were deeply spiritual men and they infused socialism with a religious passion. It was the aim of Christian Socialism to vindicate for "the Kingdom of Christ" its "true authority over the realms of industry and trade." No one who believes that God is the Lord of all life—as the church had always taught—could possibly object to these stated goals. It is the means employed to achieve these goals that is objectionable, or at least questionable, for Kingsley and Maurice viewed "socialism (in) its true character as the great Christian revolution of the nineteenth century." A couple of decades later a popular slogan in English clerical circles was: "Christianity is the religion of which socialism is the practice."

The Communist Manifesto also appeared in 1848, and in it Marx has a sneering reference to Christian Socialism: "As the parson has ever gone hand in hand with the landlord, so has Clerical Socialism with Feudal Socialism. Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a Socialist tinge. . . Christian Socialism is but the Holy water with which the priest consecrates the heartburnings of the aristocrat."

The Social Gospel movement

The same constellation of ideas and social forces which produced Christian Socialism in England resulted in a counterpart movement in this country, the Social Gospel. A sympathetic historian of this movement, C. H. Hopkins, declared that the Social Gospel “was called into being by the impact of modern industrial society and scientific thought upon the Protestantism of the United States during the half century following the Civil War.” One of the movement’s later leaders, Dean Shailer Matthews, of Chicago Divinity School, defined the Social Gospel as “the application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions . . . as well as to individuals.” “The social expectations of the Social Gospel leaders were not untypical of the age,” wrote Dean Liston Pope of Yale Divinity School. “The organization of the Methodist Federation for Social Service in 1907 reflected these purposes and gave institutional forms to efforts for their realization.” And C. H. Hopkins, in *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism*, wrote, “The climax of official recognition of Social Christianity was attained in the organization of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America in 1908. The significance was two-fold. Not only was the Social Gospel acknowledged in an impressive manner by this most representative body in American Protestant history but social action itself was one of the important factors that brought the Federal Council into being.”

In 1912 the Federal Council published its social platform in a little volume entitled *Social Creed of the Churches*, largely written by Harry F. Ward. An anecdote related many years later by Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam unwittingly revealed how deeply enmeshed was ecclesiastical social action with the mainstream progressive ideology in the secular realm. Bishop Oxnam tells about a discussion he had with the then Governor Thomas Dewey of New York. “Bishop,” said the Governor to me, “you churchmen are awfully good when you stick to your own field of theology and things spiritual. But when you dabble in economic and political matters, you are quite wide of the mark.” “That may be so Governor,” I replied, “but I notice that your Republican Party has adopted into its platform every point we made in 1912 in the *Social Creed of the Churches*.”

In England, during the 1930s, there flourished an organization called simply The Christian Left, under the leadership of John Mac-

Murray and others. The Christian Left believed in “the religious mission of the working class to achieve socialism.” This group sponsored an influential book, a symposium entitled *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, edited by Lewis, Polanyi, and Kitchin, which advanced communism as the heir to the Christian tradition.

Niebuhr and the Fellowship of Socialist Christians

In 1932 in America a group whose prime mover was Reinhold Niebuhr launched the Fellowship of Socialist Christians. The name is significant. They disliked the term “Christian Socialism,” reads their statement, because this label makes “Christian” the adjective and “Socialism” the noun. Their desire was to restore the word “Christian” to a substantive, indicating their primary loyalty to their religious faith. “Socialist” is now reduced to a modifier to denote its role as a means to an end. But it is amusing to note that when this same group—Reinhold Niebuhr, John C. Bennett, Liston Pope and others—launched Christian Action in 1950, they once again reduced “Christian” to adjectival status. Niebuhr, by this time, had quit the Socialist Party, declaring that the remedy of total Socialism would be worse than the liberal errors it sought to correct. He embraced instead a pragmatic, piecemeal, New Dealish approach to political change and hoped to move the newly formed National Council of Churches in the same direction.

The World Council of Churches, launched at Amsterdam in 1948, was two years old when the Federal Council of Churches and several kindred organizations united to form The National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. This was a multi-purpose organization, but its Department of Church and Economic Life was so deeply committed to propagandize and lobby for further socialization of the American nation that Christian Action disbanded in 1956, its services no longer required.

Summary

Let me try to restate the point I have been sketching in broad outline: The great social drift discernible in nation after nation during the past hundred and fifty years or so has resulted in the collectivist organization of society, with governments playing a more active role to control and regulate the economic and social activities of the citizens. The

most dynamic movement within this drift is Marxian Communism. The total Communist package holds little appeal for citizens of those nations which have come under the influence of the Classical and Christian heritage of individual worth, the higher law, free political institutions, and our birthright of individual liberty. Such people are repelled by the totalitarian nature of Communism, its philosophical materialism, its phoney utopianism, its "ends justify the means" excuse for terrorism and torture. But there are many able and dedicated people who dismiss these repellent features of Communism as mere superstructure, having no intrinsic connection with Marxist economic analysis and the Marxist recipe for organizing business and industry. Reinhold Niebuhr has drawn the distinction: "Whatever the defects of Marxism as a philosophy and as a religion, and even as a political strategy, its analysis of the technical aspects of the problem of justice have not been successfully challenged, and every event in contemporary history seems to multiply the proofs of its validity. . . . The program of the Marxian will not create the millenium for which he hopes. It merely will provide the only possible property system compatible with the necessities of a technical age." (*Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, page 184)

Many of those in mid-twentieth century America who accept Niebuhr's truncated Marxism would call themselves Liberals. I cite Reinhold Niebuhr once again: "Liberalism connotes a desire to use all the instruments and authority of the political state for the attainment of justice. This means the welfare state, the politics of the New Deal, and the Kennedy Administration's current integration program. . . ." (*The New Leader*, 7/22/63)

Referring to the principal thesis of the New Deal, Niebuhr describes it as the idea "that it is within the power and competence of the state to direct the political and economic life of a technical society for the purpose of assuring the general welfare and guaranteeing at least minimal securities of the people most exposed to the hazards of the complex machinery of a technical age." (*The New Leader*, 12/56, page 11)

III. NIEBUHR IN *THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY*

I am putting Niebuhr's views on record because his theology of society so powerfully swayed the minds of a generation of opinion moulders in church circles and beyond. Niebuhr was far and away the most influential American theologian of his time, and the most prolific. His

Gifford Lectures for 1939, published in two volumes as *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, are brilliant. He wrote regularly for *The Christian Century*, and published in numerous secular periodicals as well. His books dealing with religion and society were widely read by churchmen and non-churchmen alike. During the 1940s there was a semi-serious coterie of intellectuals who referred to themselves as “Atheists for Niebuhr.”

Niebuhr directly influenced his students at Union Theological Seminary, and by participating in a variety of social activist organizations he created Niebuhrians among professors of religion in colleges and seminaries, as well as among thought leaders in the pulpit, in denominational agencies, and in councils of churches.

Niebuhr on Marxian economics

Niebuhr dismissed Marxist metaphysics and politics, but embraced Marxist economics, which he declared had never been successfully challenged. This astonishing confession is analagous to a contemporary physicist in our age of Einstein declaring that Newtonian Mechanics had never been successfully challenged! While Niebuhr was writing the words quoted above, the monumental work entitled *Socialism* by Ludwig von Mises became available in English. As far as Niebuhr and *The Century* was concerned, Mises did not exist. There’s no evidence that Niebuhr allowed himself any exposure to such contemporary economists as Frank R. Knight of Chicago, or Frank Fetter and Edwin Kemmerer of Princeton, or Fred Fairchild of Yale, or Lionel Robbins of London. Devastating critiques of *Socialism* appeared around the turn of the century by Max Hirsch of Australia and Robert Flint of England. Alfred Marshall of Cambridge launched a school of Marshallian economics. In Austria, a younger contemporary of Marx, Carl Menger, founded the Austrian School of marginal utility analysis; and his associate, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk demolished Marx’s exploitation theory in a book published the year after Marx died. In England there was Stanley Jevons; David Ricardo before him; and Adam Smith, the fountainhead. Adam Smith wrote his masterpiece in opposition to mercantilism, the planned economy of the period, referring to his own philosophy of the free economy as “the liberal plan of equality, liberty and justice.”

None of this affected the thought of those who sought to advance the collectivist organization of society under Christian auspices by

means of the Social Gospel through such agencies as the Federal and National Councils of Churches, and various periodicals. Niebuhr was a seminal figure in this movement, so let us examine the message he projected through the pages of *The Century*.

Niebuhr on the political demands of discipleship

In *The Christian Century* of August 8, 1924, Niebuhr contrasted European and American reform, lamenting that our churches lack the “willingness or capacity to think honestly and kindly upon the implications of the Christian gospel for the reconstruction of human society, which has become such a marked characteristic of the British churches.” He continues:

American idealism is narrowly individualistic, partly because of the very protestantism which produced it and which is older than the wealth of America. Puritanism is constitutionally individualistic. It was no accident that it came to power in England in the very days when the middle classes began to challenge the aristocracy. Their motto was ‘liberty’ and they had a passion for the individual. Religiously this passion produced the high type of personal morality which has since been associated with puritanism. Economically it expressed itself in the immoral doctrine of *laissez faire*. Curiously, or perhaps naturally, this type of protestantism has ever since associated a very sensitive personal conscience with a complete indifference to the problems of social life. It has placed very definite and sometimes very irksome restraint upon personal conduct but has insisted that the social processes shall be without restraint. In the intricacies of the soul it felt at home and spoke with authority but the complexities of economics were beyond it so it was pleased to regard the economic life as a mystery in which ‘by the providence of God each man seeking his own could serve the common weal.’

In an earlier issue (April 17, 1924) Niebuhr observed that “Among Western nations, England alone gives promise of developing a political party which approximates the Christian ideal in both aim and method. The British Labour Party is both radical and democratic. It is the first party to elevate men to power who were suspicious of economic factors in the last war.” He “wonders what kind of a Christian political party could be created if the church took the social invitations

of its gospel seriously and became the trusted champion of every cause which seeks to free man from the forces which enslave his life and debase his world.”

“Is not the doctrine of progress little more than a dogma?” he writes in the issue of December 13, 1928. “Is it not true that history is a sorry tale of new imperialisms displacing old ones; of man’s inhumanity to man, checked in one area or relationship expressing itself in new and more terrible forms in other areas and relationships? Is it not a monstrous egotism and foolish blindness which we betray when we imagine that this civilization in which commercialism has corrupted every ideal value is in any sense superior to the middle ages, or that the status of the industrial worker differs greatly from that of the feudal slave?”

Niebuhr on the Social Gospel in America

Writing in 1930 (*The Christian Century*, 7/23/30) Niebuhr discusses contemporary German theology and then reflects ruefully on the Social Gospel in America.

Another consideration must occupy the American thinker on religious and ethical themes as he surveys German theology. ‘The social gospel’ he may be convinced, forms the heart of American Christianity. It represents no merely theological speculation, it is not the religion of mere assent to traditional confessions; it represents a conception of Christianity, which has grown out of the very life of American Christianity, out of its needs, out of its whole history, out of its struggle to understand its Bible in a new world and in the face of new world problems. And yet, the social gospel which in Walter Rauschenbush and Washington Gladden had its anchorage in an inclusive phase, whose center was God in Jesus Christ and which in them was mated with a piety that did not ignore the peculiar needs of a man’s standing and solitariness before the final facts of life—this gospel has today often cut adrift from all God-centered religion. It seems at times to be a program of action only, lacking the support of the faith, of the complete philosophy or theology.

Niebuhr on communism

Niebuhr was never really taken in by communism, nor did he ever regard Russia as a workers' paradise. In *The Century* for September 30, 1930, he declared that Russia had "destroyed wealth without abolishing poverty. . . . The passion of Russia today is not so much socialization as industrialization." He sees a nation

enduring the privations caused by its economy partly through an iron discipline which makes disaffection dangerous and partly through a boundless enthusiasm among the people which transmutes the necessities of the situation into voluntarily accepted sacrifices. 'What,' said one of our young Communist guides, 'do I care if I haven't a good pair of shoes to wear, if it helps my country to buy more machines?' A nation cast loose from its moorings and free of all the cultural, religious and moral traditions which once disciplined its life has, after several years of chaos and a few more years of indecision, suddenly found the channel into which it is willing to pour its vitality.

Returning to this theme (10/15/30) Niebuhr speaks of "The tremendous energy which the new Russia is unfolding is, in one of its aspects at least, not the product of communism at all, but simply the vigor of an emancipated people who are standing upright for the first time in the dignity of a new freedom. It is the same kind of vigor which American free men unfolded on our shores after they had escaped the various tyrannies of Europe."

I note, in passing, that Niebuhr does not mention the kulaks, who were being liquidated during this period—some 5 million of them.

Niebuhr and the 1932 socialist campaign

Niebuhr involved himself in the 1932 socialist campaign to put Norman Thomas in the White House, as Chairman of the Organization Committee of Five Thousand, which he hoped would change its name as it grew to twenty, fifty, or a hundred thousand. He addressed an impassioned plea to the readers of *The Century* (8/3/32) not "to be neutral in this crisis."

Some months earlier (11/4/32), Norman Thomas had contributed a long article to *The Century* examining "the problem of Christianity

and the churches in relation to the social order.” It appears to Thomas that “If a man does accept in any sincerity a faith in Jesus and Jesus’ God, whether he calls himself orthodox or modernist, it is impossible to see how he can be at peace with the present social order whose god is profit and whose largest social loyalty is the inadequate and divisive loyalty of nationalism.” Thomas believes that “our present social order is a denial of Christianity,” and that the churches might still redeem themselves “by inspiring clergy and laity to seek a human meaning for their vision of the kingdom of heaven on earth.”

Niebuhr’s plea that we might “have the social imagination to bring the economic intricacies of our common life under the control of reason and conscience” (3/25/31) went unheeded. Thomas received just under 885,000 votes in 1932 to Roosevelt’s nearly 23 million. But twenty years later Norman Thomas would take satisfaction in pointing out that both major parties had constructed their platforms with planks appropriated from the Socialist Party. Thus, no matter which major candidate won, socialism couldn’t lose!

IV. JOHN BENNETT IN *THE CENTURY*

Another frequent contributor to *The Century* was John C. Bennett, long associated with Union Theological Seminary, as professor and later as its president. Writing in the issue of February 8, 1939, Dr. Bennett says: “A few years ago I was an active member of the Socialist Party and of various Christian Socialist groups. I still believe that the private ownership of the means of production is without moral justification, and that only by changing capitalism beyond recognition will it be possible to distribute the goods which the machine is capable of producing for the benefit of all classes. But, today, I am as much concerned to avoid totalitarianism in all forms, and the danger of civil war, as I am to end capitalism.”

Three years later (2/19/42) he urges the churches to accept two revolutionary demands; the first is for a world political organization,

The second kind of revolutionary demand that the church can prepare the mind of the nation to meet is the demand for economic justice, not only between nations but also within each nation, and most of all within America. It is difficult to disentangle the political, the ideological and the economic causes of this War, but it is safe to say that the failure to deal successfully with the problems of the world depression did much to discourage men’s faith in

political democracy and gave support to both Communist and Fascist ideologies. The truth in the idea of ‘the wave of the future’ is that the future does set for us a new and drastic choice, the choice between totalitarian and democratic planning of economic life for the benefit of all people. No people who have discovered that they can use the instruments of government to provide economic security for themselves are going to be the sport of unregulated markets or privately owned monopolies. If democracy means that, then they will choose totalitarianism.

In 1948 at the formative meeting of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Bennett chaired the commission which proclaimed that “The Christian church should reject the ideologies of both communism and *laissez-faire* capitalism, and should seek to draw men away from the false assumption that these extremes are the only alternatives.” Dr. Bennett’s commission condemns a “capitalism” that no defender of the free market economy has ever endorsed. The thing condemned is an economic order that enthrones greed, rewards the powerful, condemns the masses to periodic unemployment, produces inequalities, and holds out the vain promise “that justice will follow as a by-product of free enterprise.”

In 1944 F. A. Hayek produced a stunning little book entitled *Road to Serfdom*. Its main thesis was that central economic planning, even with the best of intentions, leads away from the free society and gives the state inordinate power over the day-to-day life of the citizens. Inspired in large part by Hayek, Paul Hutchinson, associate editor of *The Century* wrote a fine little book in 1946 entitled *The New Leviathan*. At Amsterdam in 1948 Emil Brunner gave an impassioned speech warning the delegates against our “crazy faith in the state.” The warning went unheeded.

V. EMIL BRUNNER IN *THE CENTURY*

Writing in *The Century* several years later (7/11/51), Brunner drew some important distinctions. “We today have come to understand again that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not a program of world betterment and social reform. Modern times have coined the phrase ‘social salvation.’ There is immense confusion in that phrase. . . . Our time has forced us to consider again to whom the gospel is really addressed—the individual human being, the individual soul. It has also made us realize that the real theme of the gospel is eternal salvation, eternal life in Christ—not ‘social salvation.’”

“The word that goes with ‘social’—an abstract term—is not ‘salvation,’ but ‘improvement,’ ‘reform’ and so on. That too is important—a word about it farther on—but it is certainly not the theme of the gospel.”

“That must be said today, because not only the world in general but the church too is infected by the spirit of collectivism. Many Christians, preachers and theologians among them, are caught by the spirit of abstraction and think that social salvation is after all ‘more’ than ‘mere individual salvation.’” Brunner changed few minds.

VI. THE CHURCH AND POLITICS

The decades under review in this survey reveal the infatuation of highly placed churchmen with political power; their failure to grasp the meaning of the free society and their efforts to enlist the church in programs hostile to it; their ambiguity toward communism.

Insinuations about communists among the clergy were met by vehement denials, as for instance a sweeping denial, widely publicized by Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam. This occasioned a *Century* article by Reinhold Niebuhr (8/19/53) entitled “Communism and the Clergy.” Referring to Oxnam, Niebuhr wrote, “Such a statement causes difficulties, because there are in fact communist sympathizers and fellow travelers in the Church. I wonder whether Bishop Oxnam ought not to have admitted this more freely. . . .”

Niebuhr goes on to assert that “it must be affirmed that there have never been many explicit Stalinists in the churches. . . . Nevertheless, there are a few and we ought to admit it.” How does this seemingly incongruous union between Stalinism and Christianity occur, we ask, and Niebuhr answers, “The pathetic clerical Stalinism could not have developed except against the background of a very considerable Marxist dogmatism in the ‘liberal’ wing of Protestant Churches.”

From time to time *The Century* sought to lay the spectre of communism in ecclesiastical circles. For instance, it declared correctly (11/15/61) that “If some Christians were temporarily deceived into believing that theoretical communism and Christianity sought the same earthly goals, the deception was brief and the deceived few.” But the question is why *any* were deceived, and why the few were treated so deferentially.

The Hromadka case

Take the case of the Czech theologian, Joseph L. Hromadka. Hromadka taught at Princeton Theological Seminary during the 1940s, then returned to his native land and became an outspoken apologist for the communist regime of that country. He was a delegate to the Evanston meeting of the World Council in 1954, where his presence caused some tension. It was broken when he began his speech with these words: "I come from the other side of the iron curtain, but not from the other side of the Church." Hromadka continued in the good graces of American churchmen and was addressed in generous terms by *Century* editor, Theodore Gill, (12/23/59) who speaks of "... those of us who knew your passionately conscientious commitment to Marxist analyses and prescriptions and who knew you well enough never to question your Christian integrity in these commitments." The same generous tolerance is rarely if ever extended to those who approach political and economic questions from the standpoint of Classical Liberalism and the free market economy.

The Cuba case

A second case in point is *The Century's* early response to the 1959 Castro take-over of Cuba. About a year after the Castro coup *The Century* carried an article entitled "Cuba in Revolution" by the veteran, leftist journalist, Carleton Beals. The editorial lead reads: "Cuba's regime is showing great restraint in dealing with Batista criminals. Let the U.S. beware of turning that restraint into violence!" Beals does not deny that hundreds of people have been disposed of before firing squads, but in extenuation of this horror he refers to the United States "where the legal processes have become so complicated and devious that a poor man is lucky if he secures justice." Furthermore, concludes Beals, if Castro falters in his executions "then the Cuban people, at present showing such remarkable restraint, will act, and their action will not be pretty." The politicalized religious mind, responding to such sentiments as these, has lost whatever title it may have had to speak to or for the conscience of our time.

Every issue of *The Century* contains material of general religious interest and of high quality; but when the editors of the journal, or writers for it, address political and economic issues they speak with virtually one voice—against the free economy and for government

controls. As John Bennett puts it: “The leadership and many strategic centers such as theological seminaries and church boards and periodicals in most of the denominations are committed to the position that Christianity demands drastic changes in the structure of social life. The policies of the Federal Council of Churches are based on this assumption.” Speaking from within this group, one churchman declares that we few are called upon to “witness to the convictions of an advanced minority . . . without being chained to any majority or consensus; . . . (for we have) a broader perspective than the average layman can hope to have.” The executive secretary of Christian Action observed that “All of us are in a position, and all of us can get ourselves into a better position, to advance our common convictions through the religious institutions to which we have direct access.”

The response

Such sentiments as these, and the programs designed to carry them out, have generated opposition among clergy and laity alike. The objections are several. Socialism, the planned economy, the welfare state — however one labels the “drastic changes” Dr. Bennett has in mind — have been subjected to devastating analysis and criticism; the planned economy is rejected by many honest and able scholars as bad politics, unsound economics, and dubious morality. But even if socialism — such as the program championed by the late Norman Thomas — were one hundred per cent sound, it would further be argued that the Church should not commit itself to a specific program of political and economic action. Let the churchman who finds socialism persuasive seek to advance it in his own way, as an individual, not as the self-appointed spokesman for the Church. When a Norman Thomas collects money from true believers to crusade for socialism everything is open and above board, however misguided we may deem his cause. But it smacks of dishonesty for an ecclesiastical official to use money dropped into the collection plate by parishioners for purposes they would oppose if they knew, and then to allow the press and public to falsely believe that he is speaking for X million American Protestants. This impropriety is compounded by the pretense that the only objections to such conduct come from the lunatic fringe.

The counter-attack

Here, for example, is an article entitled "The Attack on the Churches," by James W. Wine, of the National Council of Churches (7/6/60). Wine declares that "our position as churchmen should be one which encourages free and honest appraisal of all that we do." But how can we expect honest appraisal from those who engage "in a deliberate effort to distort the truth for self-serving purposes, to release pent-up hostilities. . . ." He speaks of "a severe, almost continuous and sometimes sinister attack on Protestant churches and clergymen," conveying the impression that there are no measured, thoughtful treatments of the proper relation of the churches to social issues. In the eyes of Wine, the attacks are the work of "professional detractors," a term he repeats eight times in the course of his 2,100 word article. Our opponents are "Purveyors of half-truths, perverters of fact, willing tools of any person or group that will pick up the tab for their activities." They are opportunists; one is "a well known apostle of discord."

"The untutored egotist merely wants what he wants," writes Aldous Huxley. "Give him a religious education, and it becomes obvious to him, it becomes axiomatic, that whatever *he* wants is what God wants, that *his* cause is the cause of whatever he may happen to regard as the True Church and that any compromise is a metaphysical Munich, an appeasement of Radical Evil."

An article entitled "The Myth of the 'American Way'" appeared in *The Century* for March 13, 1963. The writer alleges that there are "those who attempt continually and methodically to identify the Christian religion with the economic ideology of Adam Smith, and to call the product of this spurious wedding the "'American Way' And the theme has been developed in detail in three recently published books; *God, Gold and Government*, by Howard Kershner; *The Powers That Be*, by Edmund A. Opitz; and *The Kingdom Without God* by Edmund A. Opitz, Gerald Heard and others."

The author of the article refers to these three books as "recently published." They appeared in 1957, 1956, and 1956 respectively, six and seven years before *The Century* article, which leads one to suspect that the allegations about them are based on hearsay. Is the hearsay based on anything substantial enough to justify the charge? I think not. The thesis of the two books with which my name is associated has been summarized in my 1961 pamphlet, "Problems of Church and Society," which speaks directly to the point at issue:

It is the aim of many Protestant churchmen to put the Church officially on record as sponsor for the movement which, in this country, has produced the welfare state. To the extent that any Church puts most of its eggs into a collectivist basket, it absolutizes the relative and temporary. It impairs the primary responsibility of high religion, which is to recall men to a proper sense of their creaturehood and destiny that they may order their souls aright. Civilization is a happy byproduct of spiritual activity but cannot be its direct goal, and because the Kingdom of God is beyond history, the true Church must expect to forever confront political and social institutions in an atmosphere of encounter and tension. "If the Church marries the spirit of this age," wrote Dean Inge, "she will be a widow in the next."

The author of *The Century* article is the director of the Religion and Labor Council of America. He speaks, therefore, from within the broadly collectivist tradition; and his fire is directed at those within the conservative-libertarian tradition. But is not this a case of seeing the speck in another's eye and ignoring the plank in one's own? The author's thesis doubles back on itself when we reflect on the implications of the fact that there is nothing in America remotely resembling a Religion and *Management* Council to counter his own organization. A Fellowship of Socialist Christians was founded here in 1930; but who would think of starting a Fellowship of Capitalist Christians? We have heard the terms "Christian Socialism" and "Religious Socialism" so much that they have ceased to grate on our nerves, as they should. In earlier days the members of these groups were accurately skewered by one of England's greatest churchmen as "black-coated advocates of spoliation." No one has ever had the effrontery to draft such a slogan as "Christianity is the religion of which capitalism is the practice!" It is the Left, and not the Right, which for a century and more has sought to promote the social revolution by putting religion and the churches behind it.

VII. THE MARKET AND CHRISTIANITY

There are theologians who occupy strategic positions in seminaries, in councils of churches, in editorial offices, in influential pulpits, and in denominational structures, who have repeatedly and officially placed "The Church" on record as favouring drastic changes in the thing they think "Capitalism" to be. If these theologians who opt for socialism

have had any contact with the great names in economics, from Smith to Mises, they give no evidence of it. Nor do they seem to be aware of the political tradition associated with *The Federalist*. They speak with authority in their own field, and they assume that this expertise lends authenticity to their opinions in a different field. Every intellectual is in danger of being ambushed by this temptation, including economists. Economists pull as many boners in theology as theologians do in economics! But little harm is done when an economist commits a *faux pas* in theology; we pick him up, dust him off and send him on his way. But a theologian's mistaken economics has unfortunate consequences, for he is able to enlist a powerful institution and a mystique in support of his errors. The Truth will have its way eventually, but what people believe to be true is the immediate spur to their actions. Economic and political error, given theological support, has immense consequences in a society.

Does the free market make profit a god?

It is the mistaken opinion of the theologians we have quoted that the free market economy, or capitalism, “denies Christianity and makes profit its god.” In their view, capitalism means that “social processes operate without restraint and that markets go unregulated.” They tell us that “private ownership of the means of production is immoral.” “Privately owned monopolies” reduce industrial workers to a status comparable to that of feudal slaves. The “immoral doctrine of *laissez-faire*” leads to a “narrow individualism” which puts “economic processes beyond the control of reason and conscience.” We have the technical capacity to produce abundance for all, but only government ownership will release the machine's potential.

The wilful ignorance embodied in the preceding paragraph is monumental, and the smugness imposes a formidable barrier to any effort at clarification. It is common knowledge that the anti-capitalistic ideologues of twentieth century totalitarianisms exalt the state into Hobbes' “mortal god.” They do not acknowledge a Law above the laws; they deny the idea of an order of majesty overarching the state; they have no place in their theory for the moral law, right and wrong being whatever the party decrees them to be. It is a theoretical necessity for collectivists of every hue to deny transcendence in order to enthrone an *ersatz* religion which is secular and political.

The theological neutrality of the market

The free economy makes no theological statement one way or another; it's absurd to say that it denies Christianity. Some economists may be atheists, but their atheism has nothing to do with their economics. However, the free economy, or capitalism, is involved with religion and it is significant that capitalism emerged in the culture whose world-view derives from Christianity. Among the relevant ingredients of the *Weltanschauung* of Christendom are the elements of a free society. There is the belief that man partakes of the divine creativity, which means that he has free will, plus a sacredness at the core of his being which translates politically as his inherent rights. Government, then, is structured so as to protect the private domain of each person and provide each with equal security for the peaceful exercise of his prerogatives. This created being is placed in a world where everything, himself included, is unfinished. The material world is good because God made it, and man is challenged to work in it towards its, and his own, completion, using his reason to figure out what he must do and his conscience to determine what he ought to do; working, as Francis Bacon put it, "for the glory of God and the improvement of man's estate."

If profit is a dirty word, what shall we say of loss? When the scarce factors of production—land, labour and capital—are misallocated or used wastefully and inefficiently, people and planet are poorer; there is loss. The appearance of profit simply means that the scarce factors of production are being intelligently combined so as to satisfy urgent human wants in the order of their urgency, as the people themselves decide.

Theologians are not the only ones who talk nonsense about "the profit motive," as if approval of the profit motive is equivalent to endorsing the shallow view that the goal of life is to make money; but theologians have less excuse than others because they have, presumably, been exposed to Max Weber's book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. This work appeared in Germany around the turn of the century and has been available in English since 1930. A few sentences are worth quoting at this point: "The impulse to acquisition, pursuit of gain, of money, of the greatest possible amount of money, has in itself nothing to do with capitalism. This impulse exists and has existed among waiters, physicians, coachmen, artists, prostitutes, dishonest officials, soldiers, nobles, crusaders, gamblers, and beggars. . . . It should be taught in the kindergarten of cultural history that this

naive idea of capitalism must be given up once and for all. Unlimited greed for gain is not the least identical with capitalism, and is still less its spirit.” (*The Protestant Ethic*, page 17)

Market institutions and economic freedom

John Bennett is exercised by the thought that capitalistic society resembles a free for all where anything goes, even “privately owned monopolies.” A moment’s thought should convince any rational person that such could not be the case. Nobel Prize winner, Milton Friedman, puts the matter thus: “Economic progress is not possible anywhere in the world, or at any time, unless there is some relatively stable structure of law and rules and regulations, some security of person and property.” (Speech at Texas A & M 3/25/80) Capitalism did, in fact, come into being in the West among a people schooled for centuries in the practice of the traditional moral code; don’t murder, don’t assault, don’t steal, don’t covet, keep your word, deal justly, fulfill your contracts. These are the main ingredients in Adam Smith’s “liberal plan of equality, liberty and justice.” (*Wealth of Nations*, page 628) Smith is not here discussing economic processes; he is discussing the framework of rules which make the free economic order possible. Operating within these rules, free people with a diversity of talents and skills contribute their respective specialties, and the multiple exchanges that ensue “as if guided by an invisible hand,” give each person a return commensurate with his contribution, as that contribution is judged by his peers. It is hardly the fault of the economy if the value framework on which it depends decays; the blame lies elsewhere, with the institutions of society charged with maintaining religious and moral values.

The point is important enough to warrant the inclusion of some words by another Nobel Prize winner, F. A. Hayek: “The classical argument for freedom in economic affairs rests on the tacit postulate that the rule of law should govern policy in this as in all other spheres. We cannot understand the nature of the opposition of men like Adam Smith or John Stuart Mill to government “intervention” unless we see it against this background. Their position was therefore often misunderstood by those who were not familiar with that basic conception; and confusion arose in England and America as soon as the conception of the rule of law ceased to be assumed by every reader. Freedom of economic activity had meant freedom under the law, not the absence of all government action. The “interference” or “intervention”

of government which those writers oppose as a matter of principle therefore meant only the infringement of that private sphere which the general rules of law were intended to protect. (*The Constitution of Liberty*, page 200)

VIII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Churchmen in every age are tempted to adopt the protective coloration of their time; as intellectuals they are swayed by whatever currents of opinion exert the strongest pull. The gravitational tug of environmental determinism exerts a powerful attraction today on men of all creeds or none; this is the belief of Marxists and non-Marxists alike that it is possible to construct an improved society out of unimproved people.

The writer of Proverbs was confident that it was from the heart of man that the issues of life proceeded; a good society could come only from a people who had learned to order their lives aright. If there is disorder in the soul, that is, in people's faulty thinking and erroneous beliefs, in their misplaced loyalties and misguided affections, there would be friction and conflict in the relations of persons to one another in society. So religion traditionally focused on the inward and the spiritual, on the mind and conscience, as a way of elevating character and thus improving the tone of society.

But in the modern world it is assumed that man is mainly a product of environmental forces, that his character is made for him not by him. It is only necessary, then, to correct the external structures by which people are moulded and the result will be correct behaviour. Transform society and it matters little if men remain unregenerate! This is the modern heresy.

Influential segments of the church have been deeply influenced by this set of ideas, though not necessarily converted wholly to them. The result is the Christian Socialist movement, walking in lock step with its secular counterparts. *The Christian Century* is one of the agencies generated by this movement and, in turn, *The Century* has powerfully shaped the thinking of two generations of churchmen to regard support of the welfare state as a religious imperative.

Comment

James M. Wall

My role is to speak as editor of *The Christian Century* magazine in response to Edmund Opitz's paper. I should say first that it is a honour to participate and I am happy to acknowledge that this meeting takes seriously the contribution *The Christian Century* has made to American thought over the past hundred years. In reading Dr. Opitz's paper, I am moved first to express appreciation to him for the gracious manner in which he places the magazine at the forefront of publications that address themselves to thoughtful citizens, particularly those of the Protestant persuasion and especially those who profess to examine issues from a theological and intellectual viewpoint.

The Opitz straw man: Niebuhr and *The Christian Century*

In attempting to respond to this paper, I have run into some problems as it is apparent to me that Dr. Opitz is setting up a straw man which he plans to link to the magazine's editorial policy. As he summarizes it, "The great social drift discernible in nation after nation during the past hundred and fifty years or so has resulted in the collectivist organization of society, with governments playing a more active role to control and regulate the economic and social activities of the citizens. The most dynamic movement within this drift is Marxian Communism."

Collectivism, then, is the evil centre of his plot. And he quickly identifies theologian and social activist Reinhold Niebuhr as the carrier of this evil into the intellectual circles of American life during the period 1920–1960. The problem these two assumptions pose for me, in the first place, is that they are both wrong. I do not think he makes the case that societies have drifted into collectivism, and certainly, with a Ronald Reagan in the White House, and his potential democratic challengers scrambling to be more conservative than one another, I don't find collectivism taking over in the United States. Reinhold Nie-

buhr's Marxist phase, which he outlived and built upon to develop his brilliant understanding of Christian realism, is hardly sufficient historical data to label Niebuhr as the carrier of Marxism.

But in the second place, neither of these assumptions need detailed refutation by me in this response for I do not think Dr. Opitz has succeeded in linking his definitions of collectivism with Niebuhr as the evil bearer of bad news with *The Christian Century* magazine. To accomplish this, he would have to prove that Niebuhr was a pervasive and constant influence in the pages of the magazine. He does not do this, and indeed, makes no specific effort to do so. He merely wants us to assume that Niebuhr and the *Century* are identical: "Niebuhr was a seminal figure in this (collectivist organization of society) movement, so let us examine the messages he projected through the pages of the *Century*." He then cites pieces that Niebuhr wrote for the magazine in 1924, 1928 and 1930.

As Opitz points out, Niebuhr was an active supporter of Norman Thomas's socialist campaign for the presidency in 1932, and in a piece published in August, 1932 before the fall election, he wrote in the *Century* that the magazine's readers should "not be neutral in this crisis."

Morrison and the *Century*

Unfortunately, for Opitz's thesis, as one contributor among many to the pages of the magazine, Niebuhr's contributions are not nearly as significant in ascertaining how the publication stood on "religion and society" as were the writings in the editorial columns, especially those of its editor, Charles Clayton Morrison. It was Morrison, the Disciples of Christ minister, who took the magazine in 1908 and shaped it as a major influence on American thought from that year until his retirement in 1947. To ascertain how *The Christian Century* thought on most any subject through those years, one must look not to Niebuhr, but to Charles Clayton Morrison. And it is no small matter that the two men had a public falling-out over the issue of Morrison's near pacifism in 1940. It was at that time that Niebuhr, by now pushing hard for Christian realism, wanted the United States to take an active role against facism in Germany and Italy. Morrison, a strong peace activist, was writing editorials urging that the U.S. stay out of the war up until Pearl Harbor Day. Indeed, the first editorial he published after war was declared was called, "an unnecessary necessity."

But to return for the moment to Opitz's argument that Niebuhr plus Thomas plus *The Christian Century* equals three peas in a pod, let me cite Donald B. Meyer's 1961 book, "The Protestant Search for Political Realism, 1919–41." Meyer makes frequent references to the *Century* in tracing the interaction between religion and politics in that period, calling its editors "the keenest and most persistent of political observers."¹ Morrison's *Century* was too much concerned with culture-religion, that is, the identification with what is best for the nation, to have pursued the ideology involved in a hopeless third-party effort.

Speaking, for example, of Calvin Coolidge's inaugural in March, 1924, the *Century* commented:

[It had been] as near being a national sacrament as any political event in the remembrance of our generation . . . [There was] something almost high-priestly in the way he lifted the whole nation up to God in an eloquent and understanding commitment of himself and the state to high sovereignty. No statesman in our history has uttered words of moral interpretation which surpass those with which the President closed his inaugural address.²

This is no radical collectivist publication speaking. It is rather, a magazine editor expressing emotional commitment to the high ideals of the culture of the United States, which Morrison saw lifted to a high level in the Coolidge address. Of course, Morrison's real concerns were high ideals and a commitment to a society that cared for all its people, including those who could not care for themselves.

Morrison's politics and editorial policy

It was in the 1928 presidential election that Morrison's strongest convictions came into play. There were two issues that were to plague him in that campaign, Catholicism and prohibition; he opposed what he felt was the danger of Roman Catholic "control" of society and he was opposed to alcohol. It was natural therefore that he gave his specific endorsement in the 1928 election, to the Republican candidate, Herbert Hoover, over the Catholic-wet Democratic choice of Al Smith. Those two issues, plus his constant concern with peace and disarmament, dominated Morrison, and the *Century*, during the period 1920–1940. What he felt about, and what we know about, issues of economic structure in American society must be gleaned more from the attitude of his writings than from many direct editorial comments.

Morrison was no radical and he was certainly no Marxist. Nor was he, to use Opitz's term, a "collectivist." He was rather, a culture-Christian. Morrison's opposition to Catholicism revealed a conviction that this country would be better off if every one would be like "us," which is to say, Protestant, white, Anglo-Saxon.

To Morrison, and to the liberal church leaders of his day, "democracy meant a state of being even more than a process; it referred to a type of character more than to a pattern of outward relationships. It meant a type of man. Politics was not seen as in its nature a realm of power, nor political democracy as a particular arrangement or distribution of power."³

It was this commitment to democracy as a "state of being" rather than a "process" that made it possible for Morrison to endorse Hoover again over Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932. The magazine saw in Hoover someone who would preserve the ideals of middle America, which is to say, the mainline liberal communities with Protestant churches as the bearers of the virtue and morals of the community. Even so, Morrison and the *Century* editorial stance were not enthusiastic about a Hooverism that did not plan carefully enough to insure adequate care for all people. In keeping with the principles of the social gospel—the conviction that the Christian faith required concern for society's inequities—Morrison felt deeply that the free enterprise system did not concern itself enough with the care of the needy and the larger community.

Bennett and the *Century*

In his examination of the *Century's* social views, Opitz turns from Niebuhr to John C. Bennett, another frequent contributor to the magazine, but again, not a major voice in the shaping of *Century* editorial policy. It is important, in this connection, to make the point that *The Christian Century* has enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the field of mainline serious journalism, and as such, has served more as a forum for major thinkers in Protestantism than as a single-minded advocacy publication for one narrow perspective. Morrison's pet causes—peace and disarmament being major—did get a strong emphasis, but the intellectual ferment within mainline Protestantism found in *Century* pages an opportunity to be heard.

Opitz cites Bennett's role in the formation meeting of the World Council of Churches in 1948, where he chaired a commission that

issued a statement rejecting the “ideologies of both communism and *laissez-faire* capitalism,” and objecting to the “false assumption that these extremes are the only alternatives.” This is finally the mature position of Niebuhr’s realism as well. He has observed various forms of political ideologies and he concludes that none are worthy of baptism as the official religious answer. Both Niebuhr and Bennett, and the evidence is clear that the *Century*’s Morrison agreed, preferred democracy over any other form of government. They never felt that any economic system was superior enough to replace the system we have in the U.S. and Canada. But in no instance did they feel that these systems deserved to be called superior for “religious” reasons.

Is the *Century* pro-communist?

This leads me to take strong exception to various comments that Opitz makes toward the end of his paper. For example, he charges that during the “decades under review”, his survey has revealed “the infatuation of highly placed churchmen with political power; their failure to grasp the meaning of the free society and their efforts to enlist the church in programs hostile to it; their ambiguity toward communism.” He has not successfully proven that these highly placed churchmen do not grasp the meaning of a free society, unless he is proposing that their “ambiguity” toward communism, whatever that is supposed to mean, is in itself a rejection of “freedom.” And since this paper is supposed to focus on *The Christian Century*—and not on Bennett and Niebuhr—I quite simply assert that no magazine edited by Charles Clayton Morrison, who endorsed Herbert Hoover in both his elections, could be termed “ambiguous” toward communism and unable to grasp the meaning of a “free society.” On the contrary, it would be easier to accuse Morrison’s culture-Christianity of being too enamoured of American culture, and too willing to accept a national status quo.

Opitz appears to resort to some vague charges that at one time we called “red-baiting.” He wonders why “any [Christians] were deceived [regarding communism] and why the few [who did] were treated so deferentially.” He is referring to a *Century* editorial of 1961 that said some Christians were temporarily persuaded that communism and Christianity shared the same goals, but that the deception was “brief.” The implication here is that if *anyone* fails to absolutely condemn all forms or expressions of communism, he is guilty and deserves severe

condemnation. There is no room, in Opitz's world-view, for anyone living in a communist country to profess belief in Christ, nor should people living in a "free" society fail to condemn such people.

Opitz makes an unsubstantiated observation that "when the editors of the [*Century*], or writers for it, address political and economic issues they speak with virtually one voice—against the free economy and for government controls." What can this possibly mean? Has Opitz determined that what is wrong with society is that we don't have enough free economy and too much government control, and therefore unless people agree with him absolutely, they are to be condemned? Even if this dubious extreme position were granted for the sake of argument, Opitz fails to indicate just how it is that the *Century* speaks with one voice on these two topics.

In truth, the assertion that the *Century* "has powerfully shaped the thinking of two generations of churchmen to regard support of the welfare state as a religious imperative" is simply not true. What I find in Opitz is a position on modern life that objects strongly to certain emotional terms like "welfare state," whatever that means any more, and a desire by him to find that evil posture within the official position of *The Christian Century*. It is not there. It is not there in Opitz's paper because he did not examine the *Century's* editorial policy; he took two major figures of American thought—Bennett and Niebuhr—and identified them as the *Century* in that period. They wrote for the *Century*, along with many other writers, and both strongly disagreed with the editors on several occasions. They simply did not represent the *Century* in the 1920–1950 period. Who did? We do not discover in Opitz's paper.

The crucial role of editorial writings

But I can say that the way to find the *Century's* attitude toward economic issues in particular and religion and society in general during the period of 1908 to the present—it is not not clear to me why Opitz chose to stop in the 1960s with his analysis unless it was because Niebuhr became less active by then—is to examine the editorial writings of the various editors of the publication. This would not exhaust the topic, for editorials constitute perhaps less than twenty per cent of each issue, and a wide spectrum of mainline Protestant thinkers and church people were writing for the magazine in that period.

But the six editors who have served at the head of the publication since 1908 would provide an overview of the attitude of the magazine toward economic and societal issues. I have already suggested that Morrison was very much a Republican, celebrating the virtues of mid-America during his long tenure (1908–1946). His successors, Paul Hutchinson, Harold Fey, Kyle Haselden, Alan Geyer and myself, are considered in mainline Protestantism, leaning to liberal, especially among the latter three. None could be considered radical, and indeed I am willing to suggest that almost without exception, they were editors (including the present incumbent) who considered themselves patriotic Americans who very much wanted this nation to live up to its highest ideals of freedom and concern for those in need.

It would take a closer study of each editor's tenure to make a specific analysis, but in general, *The Christian Century* has known nothing of the love for "collectivism" and the "welfare state" that Opitz professes to find in its pages. The editors have been critical of "greed" in capitalism; of the absence of freedom in socialism; and of the failure of all systems to inspire citizens to higher ideals. The magazine has blessed no single system. It has been consistent in a commitment to the Christian faith, a faith, I should add, that does *not* "deny transcendence" as Opitz seems to imply, as he suggests that "collectivists of every hue," must do. He has not clarified what he means by collectivists; he does not connect the *Century* to collectivists; and he does not say why it is that a collectivist "must deny transcendence." As one who believes strongly in a transcendent God—and who has edited the *Century* for ten years—I find that implication strange and finally a little disconcerting.

A closer examination of each editor's tenure—in Morrison's case, a breakdown by decades—would reveal a fascinating evolution of styles and attitudes toward social issues in the United States and Canada. Morrison, for example, wrote many editorials that sought to deal with labour unrest in the 1930s. The Social Gospel inspired Morrison to champion programs that would put people to work, and reduce poverty. He abhorred violence but he finally supported strikes as a way of forcing employers to give basic rights and fair wages to employees. But just what this meant would have to be seen in the context of the period in which he was writing his editorials. In the same manner, an observer studying the editorials of the decade 1972–1982, during the period I have edited the magazine, might come across an evolution in the editor's thought, from naive hope to realistic expectations. Some-

day I might contribute to that research with an autobiography. But for the next decade or so, I intend to contribute weekly editorials, worked out in the crucible of the events of that week, against the background of the *Century's* tradition and the faith of the community which follows a transcendent God.

NOTES

1. Meyer, Donald B. *Protestant Search for Political Realism, 1919-41*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960, p. 120.
2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid.* p. 125.

Reply

Edmund A. Opitz

Mr. Wall's response to my paper does not attempt a critical assessment of the points I tried to make. He objects to my paper because it is not the paper he would have written, given my assignment – which was to sample the ideological flavour of *The Christian Century* in the context of the social creed of the churches during this century's middle third. In staking out the parameters of my topic I first assayed my own memories as a reader of the journal for more than two decades – from the

late thirties to the early sixties. The *Century*, when it dealt with the political and economic issues took the “liberal” position, as that label is customarily used in contemporary discourse. The word “liberal” in our time evokes such labels as New Deal, Fair Deal, New Frontier, Great Society, the welfare state. I understand that labels may be libels, as Dean Inge used to say, but what is one to do? The great social drift of the twentieth century in both the secular and the sacred realms is in the direction of more extensive and more centralized political planning of the nation’s economy, with the purported end of providing cradle to grave security for the nation’s citizens. The impression left upon me by my reading is that *Century* articles and editorials which dealt with economic and political issues were in the vein of New Deal liberalism, somewhat sermonized.

The Christian Century Reader as source-book

I checked my personal impressions against the *Century*’s own assessment of what it considered important by consulting *The Christian Century Reader*, a 447 page anthology of fifty years of religious journalism. This grab bag volume contains a variety of editorials, articles, reportage, and poetry. Some is human interest material, some scolds Americans for moral failure, some deals with the social order. There are nineteen entries, amounting to 76 pages, which deal with economic and political issues. The viewpoint of the authors spans the spectrum from the Social Gospel to Christian Socialism, from the outlook associated with Walter Rauschenbusch to the more sophisticated approach of Reinhold Niebuhr and Norman Thomas.

In addition to the 76 pages of social action advocacy there are 50 pages devoted to the ecumenical movement. Everyone agrees that it is well for the brethren to dwell together in peace and harmony, and virtually everyone favours Christian unity in theory; but there have always been differences of opinion as to the nature of the foundation on which that unity shall be based. The twentieth century has virtually reached a consensus in the matter; the ecumenical movement in our time is founded on the idea of “seeking together as Christians ways of meeting the challenge of human social disorder,” as a 1954 World Council of Churches document puts it. The resolution of social disorder is to be sought in a middle ground somewhere between “communism and *laissez-faire* capitalism,” according to the famous Amsterdam pronouncement. The author of these words identified his middle

ground with British Trades Union socialism. Neither he nor any other ecclesiastical expert on the economy published in the *Century* exhibits the slightest understanding of market theory, the free economy, or the political and legal philosophy of the free society. Nor do they display any awareness of the operational imperatives of the socialistic ordering of society.

Mr. Wall feels that I set up a straw man, which I call “collectivism,” and he accuses me of making this “the evil centre of his plot” — which is to say, *my* plot. He declares that I identify “Niebuhr as the carrier of this evil . . .” and “as the evil bearer of bad news with *The Christian Century* . . .” and that I want the reader to assume that “Niebuhr and the *Century* are identical.”

Niebuhr — error vs. evil

Mr. Wall amazes me! Niebuhr was America’s most influential theologian for several decades. He was neither an evil man nor an evil influence; but even if I believed he was I would not feel called upon to press that kind of judgement. I make a distinction between evil and error, and I do believe that Niebuhr purveyed some egregious errors—as he himself would be forced to acknowledge. During the twenties and thirties Niebuhr was a pacifist and a scourge to those who were not. With World War II in the offing he renounced pacifism and became a devout anti-pacifist and a zealous advocate of America’s entry into World War II. Niebuhr can’t have it both ways; if his belligerency was correct his pacifism was in error.

Around 1950 he renounced his life-long socialism, declaring that he now believed that the socialist remedy would create more problems than the ills it sought to cure. I agree with Niebuhr that much of his life’s energy had been devoted to the promotion of erroneous notions in economics and politics, and that bad consequences resulted, even if his intentions were good. *The Christian Century* was one platform from which Niebuhr’s errors were transmitted to American churchmen.

Similar considerations apply to another influential theologian and familiar name to readers of the *Century*, John C. Bennett, at a time when he and Niebuhr were members of Norman Thomas’ Socialist Party, and when both men were the most powerful theological spokesmen for America’s armed intervention in the war then raging.

This belligerent position was staunchly opposed by Charles Clayton Morrison, whose *Christian Century* editorials made a brilliant case for

American non-intervention. The distinction between non-intervention and pacifism eludes Mr. Wall. Morrison was peace-loving but not a pacifist, and anyone who reads these editorials (collected in book form as *The Christian and the War*, 1942) can satisfy himself on that point.

The consistency of Christianity and communism

Mr. Wall reads page 135 of my paper and finds “some vague charges that at one time we called ‘red baiting.’” There are no “charges”—in the sense of accusations—on page 135; but I do speak of Hromadka as an apologist for the communist regime of Czecho-Slovakia. This is to speak mildly of Hromadka compared to the fulsome praise bestowed upon the man precisely because of this Marxism by *Century* editor Theodore Gill. Addressing Hromadka, Gill speaks of “. . . your passionately conscientious commitment to Marxist analyses and prescriptions . . .” Gill paints Hromadka a darker red than I, but where he praises Hromadka’s integrity I question Hromadka’s rationality—as I question the rationality of any theologian who believes that the earthly goals of communism and Christianity are the same, or even compatible. It is the Christian vision that man is made to serve a transcendent end, that the Kingdom of God is beyond history. It is, therefore, an earthly goal of Christianity to school man for life eternal. Communist theory, on the other hand, makes the State all-powerful in preparation for its withering away, its demise designed to leave the classless society depicted by the fevered imaginations of Marx and Trotsky. First Marx: “Communist society . . . by regulating the common production makes it possible for me to do this today and that tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, to fish in the afternoon, to carry on cattle-breeding in the evening, also to criticize the food—just as I please—without becoming either hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.”

Trotsky is even more lyrical: “Man will become incomparably stronger, wiser, finer. His body more harmonious, his movements more rhythmical, his voice more musical . . . The human average will rise to the level of an Aristotle, a Goethe, a Marx. Above these heights new peaks will arise.”

However, the classless society is a long way off. Meanwhile, as Bertrand Russell observed, there is “poverty, slavery, hatred, spying, forced labor, extinction of independent thought, and refusal to cooperate in any way with nations that have heretical governments.”

A Christian society is inspired by the vision of justice voiced by the Old Testament prophets and finds its ground for individual freedom in the conviction that there is a sacredness in the person, an inviolable soul, which the law should respect. Communism, by contrast, regards people as objects who are used and used up as required for achieving its earthly utopia. Christian ethical theory tries to relate to God's will, whereas right and wrong in communist theory are whatever the Party decrees. It is a sad fact that communism has practiced its deadly principles, whereas Christianity perennially betrays the ideals it professes. Similar earthly goals? Indeed not!

Mr. Wall really goes off the deep end in his wild allegation that "There is no room, in Opitz' world view, for anyone living in a communist country to profess belief in Christ, nor should people living in a 'free' society fail to condemn such people." This is a misrepresentation too gross to be dignified by a rebuttal.

The meaning of collectivism

Mr. Wall appears to be disconcerted by the term "collectivism." I use the word according to the accepted and familiar dictionary definition: "The socialist principle of control by the state of all means of production of economic activity," and I am critical of those churchmen who try to identify Christianity with collectivism. The great modern Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner, observed that "not only the world in general but the church too is infected with collectivism." I couldn't agree more. Paul Tillich remarked, as if to illustrate Brunner's point, "Any serious Christian must be a socialist." Let the late Dean Inge have the last word on this point: "I do not like to see the clergy, who are monarchists under a strong monarchy, and oligarchs under the oligarchy, tumbling over each other in their eagerness to become court chaplains to King Demos. The blackcoated advocates of spoliation are not a nice lot."

Mr. Wall misreads the paragraph at the bottom of page 32 of my paper. I declared that "the anti-capitalistic ideologues of twentieth century totalitarianism exalt the state into Hobbes' 'mortal god.'" It should be obvious that the reference here is to the red, black, and brown shirted True Believers of Communist, Fascist and Nazi nations. These are the people who have embraced an *ersatz* religion which is secular and political, and who persecute faithful Jews, Christians and Moslems. The "mortal god" state cannot allow the loyalty of its min-

ions to be divided between itself and the true God. Those who acknowledge the claims of the transcendent over their lives and try to live by its mandates are a constant threat to the collectivist state, and must be subdued, body, mind and soul.

Two religions are here in contention. The secular religions of collectivism is driven by its internal logic to deny God and the moral law as being subversive of a state demanding total loyalty from its subjects. The historic faiths are barely tolerated – if they survive at all.

Mr. Wall feels that “welfare state” is an emotional term. I am opposed to the welfare state, although some of my best friends are welfare staters! I don’t use the term pejoratively, but try rather to translate the “welfare state” idea into its practices. Apparently the term means little or nothing to Mr. Wall, who speaks of the “‘welfare state;’ whatever that means any more.” The term does mean something, and I assume that it meant a great deal to Mr. Justice Douglas, otherwise he would not have referred to it as “the greatest political invention of the twentieth century.”

The politics of power and the politics of freedom

Politics under the Old Regime involved the unabashed use of political power for the economic benefit of the kings and nobles who wielded it. There were other elements in it as well, but the economic role of the state loomed large. Royalty and nobility neither toiled nor spun; they lived off the labour of peasants and serfs. Those who wielded power got something for nothing; those who actually produced the goods and services got nothing for something. Within this arrangement, into which virtually all states fall, there has to be a body of subjects whose interests are sacrificed to the advantage of those who rule.

Whig political theory broke with this pattern. Constitutional government and the Rule of Law would assure an evenhanded justice leaving men and women free in their productive pursuits and in the enjoyment of the results of their labour.

The welfare state reestablished the political pattern of the Old Regime; those who rule exercise their power for the economic advantage of themselves and friends at the expense of productive citizens. But there is a new twist; ideologists for the welfare state have convinced the public that this new system of compassionate rule is exercised for the benefit of “the poor.” The welfare state does not in fact operate this way, and contemplating the nature of power we may come to un-

derstand why it does not and cannot. When political power allocates economic rewards, the lion's share of the rewards will inevitably go to those who are shrewd, farsighted, and best organized to lobby government for subventions and subsidies of one kind or another. And these will not be the poor. In such a contest the poor serve as a stalking horse for those best able to manipulate the political process for economic gain. Thomas Sowell, the economist who has done meticulous work in this area concludes: "To be blunt, the poor are a gold mine. By the time they are studied, advised, experimented with and administered, the poor have helped many a middle class liberal to achieve affluence with government money. The total amount of money the government spends on its "anti-poverty" efforts is three times what would be required to lift every man, woman, and child in America above the poverty line by simply sending money to the poor."

The time-span

Mr. Wall wonders why I did not carry my study beyond the early 1960s. For several reasons. My paper was already overlong; I had used up by allotted space. Secondly, the agenda of the welfare state was well fixed in place by the sixties. We had the New Frontier followed by the Great Society. But meanwhile the country was turning its attention to the spread of overt social unrest—turbulence on college campuses, street demonstrations, "participatory democracy," the Vietnam War. I found the *Century* less and less helpful during this period, its tone crankier, its partisanship more blatant. So I gave up on it, and found this a sufficient reason to close my paper at this point.

Discussion

Edited by: Kenneth G. Elzinga

James Wall: I am certainly grateful to Dr. Opitz for introducing Reinhold Niebuhr into the discussion this morning even though if you've read my paper you are aware that I believe that the Niebuhr he describes is simply not the full-blooded Christian realist who shaped my own thought in religion and politics.

In addition, in linking Niebuhr to *The Christian Century*, the magazine that I have edited now for ten years, and which has been for mainline Protestantism a major avenue of communication for this century, I think Dr. Opitz gives far too much credit to one man's ability to shape a magazine's viewpoint. Certainly during the period of time that his paper cites, essentially the beginning of the 1920s and coming up to the end of the 1950s, the magazine's outlook was shaped more by its editors in that period of time. This was primarily a man named Charles Clayton Morrison, who was a fairly well-known Republican with a strong affinity for American culture as well as a pietistic bias regarding such matters as alcohol, and similar concerns, and whose politics permitted him to endorse Herbert Hoover, in both of his campaigns for the Presidency.

But certainly in one sense, Ed Opitz is correct. Reinhold Niebuhr, and he also cites John Bennett, influence the editorial policy of this magazine in that they do influence its current editor, and in that they do shape, to a large extent, much of the thinking in American theology regarding the inner connection between religion and politics. And this, of course, involves religion and economics. Just as many of you around this table have reached the point in your thinking regarding economics with considerable input from the work of Milton Friedman, senior, and I suspect have already and will in the future be influenced by Friedman the junior, Reinhold Niebuhr is essential to how we view religion with politics and economics.

I cannot have Niebuhr around the table, because he is not with us anymore. (You are blessed with having Dr. Milton Friedman with you.) I do, however, have around the table the Reinhold Niebuhr professor of Christian social ethics, Roger Shinn who will, I hope, be able to say more for us regarding Niebuhr.

But I think more really is at stake in Dr. Opitz's paper than how *The Christian Century* magazine views economics and theology. As much as I might enjoy indulging myself, and having the conference focus on my editorial policy, there's simply a larger question here at stake.

For I take it that what his paper wishes primarily to do, is to point to what he feels is a socialist bias in mainline Protestantism. And he, I think correctly, has pointed to a major publication to see if he can find, in that publication, evidence of this bias: what he calls the "collectivist organization of society," with government playing a more active role to control and regulate the economic and social activities of its citizens. So really, the larger question his paper raises is, of course, 'What economic bias is operative in today's religious community?' And it is to that question I would like to address a few remarks.

I can indulge myself a little about *The Christian Century*, because that is the subject of his paper. We have, in this magazine, sought to identify various manifestations of economic bias in contemporary Protestantism. And I think I can testify that there is no monolithic viewpoint.

Rather, present day Protestantism is influenced in part by Liberation Theology of Latin America; in part, by the neo-conservative persuasion of the likes of Michael Novak; and in part, by a continuation of the moralistic, prophetic voice of certain liberal, democratic oriented thinkers.

Liberation Theology is a contextual theology. It grows out of a deep concern that in Latin America, and certainly in other parts of the world, there is a form of capitalism (if we may call it that) that clearly is oppressing the poor, and which calls for something to be done. This isn't so much a theological support of socialism, as it is an analysis of a particular situation critiquing what is wrong with a particular setting. And certainly the World Council of Churches, and to some extent the National Council of Churches which only represents some elected representatives, have argued that there are emerging nations, and emerging churches in those emerging nations, for whom the planned economy and a socialist setting appear to be the better option. Programs through the World Council and the National Council do speak on occasion with the rhetoric of socialism, and they do show a

preference for certain systems of a planned economy. But there are also strong voices in *The Christian Century* magazine—the editorials that I write are among them—which reject this rhetoric, and reject this preference, asking instead, “What is the context, what is the system that will best enhance all of society?”

Now in the U.S., as I indicated, Michael Novak and Richard John Neuhaus have themselves embraced a particular political and economic ideology: democratic capitalism. They, I think, (and we’ve been critical of them) have elevated this to a point of theological supremacy. They share Dr. Opitz’s conviction that collectivism and government control are not only bad economics, but bad theology as well.

The liberation and neo-conservative brethren are functioning contextually; they are not following Niebuhr. Nor are those Protestants following Niebuhr who continue to insist that political and economic solutions, as opposed to systems, may somehow be blessed as God’s precise will.

In *The Christian Century*, we’ve called these groups (at least I have in various things I’ve written), by shorthand terms (and journalists can use shorthand terms and get away with it, because we’re not fair basically in such matters) (laughter); we call them “liberationists,” “patriots,” and “prophetic moralists.”

But what the real thrust of mainline Protestantism is, is none of these (although we are influenced by all). Rather, it is a “politicist” thrust. It much more partakes of Niebuhr’s influence, which refused to baptize any single economic or political ideology as theologically superior. Dr. Opitz’s paper is valuable to us, then, in that he has introduced Niebuhr in our discussions, and he has properly identified Niebuhr as a shaper of *Christian Century*, though I do not believe in the way he identifies it.

And I will close by giving you a quote you perhaps know very well from Niebuhr, but it certainly sums up what he sees in religion, politics, and economic thinking. Niebuhr said:

In moral man and immoral society, politics will, to the end of history, be an area where conscience and power meet, where the ethical and coercive factors of human life will inter-penetrate and work out their tentative and uneasy compromises.

This is not the voice of an ideologue.

Edmund Opitz: When I was asked to do a paper on *The Christian*

Century, it wasn't the kind of thing I went into eagerly; but I felt I had done a sufficient number of things, anyone of which would be cause for doing penance, (laughter) so I plunged into re-reading a lot of material that resulted in the paper under consideration. First there was the question of how to go about this thing, or where to focus it. I had been a reader of *The Christian Century* for many years, a subscriber for most of those years; so I had my own recollections of what was in it and what its major thrust was which is reflected in my paper.

Secondly, I consulted *The Christian Century Reader*, a thing put together in 1962 by Harold Fey, one of the editors, and Margaret Frakes, another editor. I quote from the preface:

Here is recorded . . . the swing from the concern of the social gospel with the outward structure of justice, to the inwardness of an ethic of culture. . . . The movement in Europe from Ritschl to Barth has been paralleled in America by the swing from Rauschenbusch to Reinhold Niebuhr.

This gave me a second clue that Niebuhr certainly was, and is, a key figure in this thing. In *The Christian Century Reader*, there is a pot-pourri of material—poetry, human interest stories, things of interest to anyone in the Christian world. But there are nineteen entries—articles and editorials—76 pages in all, roughly about twenty per cent of the total book, (and this has been selected, you recall, by the editors of *The Christian Century* as representing the main thrust of the magazine) which deal with Christian attitude toward the current social disorder. And the term “social disorder” reflects the failures of something that they would regard as capitalism and an absence of warranted government regulation. And it seems to me, from a lot of reading over the years, that official and unofficial church documents intend by reconstruction something along the lines of further intervention by government over economic life.

Furthermore, the *Century* has been dedicated to the ecumenical movement. This was a major interest and concern of Charles Clayton Morrison, one of whose books deals with the sins of denomination-ism, and whose whole life was devoted to the advocacy of Christian unity, which the *Reader* says “animated the *Century*'s pages from the start.”

Now Christian unity and the ecumenical movement are certainly not things that any one of us would say are unimportant. The unity of Christians living together in love and harmony is certainly a desider-

atum. But this particular move for Christian unity, the one that culminated in the World Council of Churches formed in 1948, has been built around the common concern, not for unity or harmony in theology, so much as in economic and political matters.

A 1954 publication, entitled “Ecumenical Documents on Church and Society,” says that “A very large part of the energy of the movement has in turn been directed towards seeking together, as Christians, ways of meeting the challenge of human social disorder.” And again, “social disorder” refers to the disorder of what is rather crudely labelled “capitalism.”

I shall append a number of comments on Jim Wall’s critique of my paper. At the outset, he says I set up a “straw man” which is collectivism. Well, it seems to me that in our circles, the definition of “collectivism” is fairly well understood. There are always dictionaries, and I consulted Webster’s large one before I left. It does say that this is a word virtually synonymous with “socialism.”

I’m not saying that socialism is evil. In my paper I didn’t say that anything or anyone was evil, and yet I’m charged with identifying Reinhold Niebuhr as the carrier of this evil, collectivism. I prefer to describe collectivism, to say what its implications are, and what it does to people, on principle, rather than simply label it as evil.

I did not attempt to make the case that societies have in our period drifted into collectivism, because the case has been made far better than I could make it by, among others, F. A. Hayek in *The Road to Serfdom*. I did not label Niebuhr as a carrier of Marxism. I simply quoted him.

I made no attempt to link my definition of “collectivism” with Niebuhr. I have no particular, peculiar, individual, unique definition of collectivism. I refer simply to the ordering of society from the top down, the political ordering of society, a theory common in official church documents.

As well, I mentioned Niebuhr’s brilliant Gifford Lectures. The Gifford Lectures, as some of you know, are the most prestigious lectures in the Protestant world, given successively at the four Scottish universities. I happen to be a fan of those lectures. Niebuhr’s Gifford Lectures of 1939, “Human Nature and Destiny,” are brilliant.

I am content to sit back and wait for posterity to judge Reinhold Niebuhr in terms of the Gifford Lectures, not in terms of his shifting position on a variety of social issues. His revelation back in the 1920s was pacifism. There was yet a new revelation in the 1930s that pacifism had some inadequacies, and he became, along with his colleague

John Bennett (my former teacher), one of the chief American theologians urging other Americans to enter World War II. Niebuhr's other revelation during this period was socialism. He was a member of Norman Thomas's party, along with John Bennett. He received a new revelation in about 1950, and he decided that socialism, if it were to replace liberal errors, would replace them with evils even greater. So, I'm not going to judge Niebuhr on the basis of his ephemeral positions, but on the basis of his real contribution.

Now again, how do we measure the social impact of *The Christian Century*, or its political bias? You do it by: (a) the editorial contributions; and (b) the articles the editor puts in the magazine. Obviously, I was not attempting to assess the whole of *The Christian Century*, but only its political bias: the impact *The Christian Century* had upon the kind of readers it attracted.

I voiced my opinion that this journal, edited by Morrison and by his successors achieved a high level of journalistic excellence in American thought, particularly with liberal churchmen, people interested in news of the Protestant world, or the religious world. I would give it high marks for excellence. It certainly was not a radical journal. If it had been, its impact on its readers would have been far less. It was its general excellence that made the articles it carried advocating further collectivism carry the weight they did with its readers.

Incidentally, Charles Clayton Morrison was not a pacifist. I recall vividly his essay, entitled "The Unnecessary Necessity." Here Morrison describes his position:

Now that war has been declared, it is necessary, but it was unnecessary prior to this. Now that we are in total war, there is no general oasis for a pacifist to occupy. You add your weight to the war effort, or you subtract it from our war effort, which in effect adds it to the other side. A pacifist who chooses to go to jail, ties up his jailer from doing adequate work for the war effort. He then coerces the taxpayer to support him.

Morrison was not a pacifist, but he opposed U.S. entry into the Second World War. Niebuhr had been a pacifist, but became very belligerent shortly before Pearl Harbor. Niebuhr also fell out with Norman Thomas on this issue, and Thomas fell out with the war party of some of his fellow socialists, who formed the Social Democratic Federation which published "The New Leader" during the war.

To say it again, *The Christian Century* is no radical, collectivist publication. I certainly did not charge that. Part of its impact results from the very fact that it was not. Morrison was no radical; he was certainly no Marxist. Who said he was? This reminds me of an article in *The Christian Century* back in about 1964 which began, “Goldwater is no Hitler, but. . .” (laughter) That type of article has no place in a magazine of the stature of *The Christian Century*.

Roger Shinn: I guess that it was about thirty-five years ago, I did a considerable study of the editorial policy of *The Christian Century* under Morrison. And it is certainly not at the tip of my tongue today, but I remember a few things from it that I think might contribute to the present conversation. Morrison was a good journalist who cultivated controversies within the pages of the magazine. I remember a particular series prior to World War II, of maybe twenty articles in which individuals were asked to write on the question, “What I will do if the United States gets involved in war?” (or approximately that question). And these ranged from pacifists to very militant types. Morrison knew what *his* position was; but he did cultivate that kind of controversy. And therefore in assessing the magazine, one must look at the distribution of articles and, then, above all, editorial policy. Now, here I would agree with Ed Opitz on one detail. Morrison, I think, was not quite a pacifist. He had a very general, Christian preference for peace, combined with a kind of isolationism, that in some ways ran close to the *Chicago Tribune*. And sometimes he particularly couched things in terms of geographical differences between east coast and the midwest. I would call him a “quasi-pacifist, isolationist.”

Harold Fey, a later editor, came directly from the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which was a pacifist organization. And that is a different position.

Now I think the interesting theological issue that concerns us in so many of the debates, and so many of the papers here, is what Jim Wall refers to as the “culture religion” characteristic of Morrison. Morrison tended to merge ultimate religious ethics with political policies in a rather close way. Consider an example I’ll pull out of memory (but I’m pretty sure I’m right). At one point he hailed Senator Borah, an isolationist of the time opposed to the League of Nations and so on, and said Senator Borah, “puts the day of the Lord’s return close at hand.”

Now he did not mean that Borah does this in the way that Hal Lindsay does: By merging a desired foreign policy to the eschatological im-

agery of the Bible. Morrison was almost ecstatic about the signing and ratification of the Kellogg peace pact. The nations agreed to renounce war as an instrument of national policy, which of course had nothing to do with the congressional appropriations for increased armaments that were passed in just about the same year.

Now that was a particular problem in Morrison's thought, as I would see it. And it is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that when he took this magazine, once a small denominational journal, bought it, and turned it into an ecumenical journal, he gave it the name, *The Christian Century*, in the quite literal sense that he expected the twentieth century to be, in human history, the Christian century—a little analogous to Charles Luce's later description of the twentieth century as "the American century." I have no idea how the thirtieth century, if the civilization survives, will characterize the twentieth century; but I'm about as sure as I am of anything human, it will not call it either the "Christian century" or the "American century." It is that quality of Morrison's thought that I always found particularly perplexing.

But the real issue that's involved here for all of us is: How do we relate our most exalted ideals to political realities? How do we relate the voluntarism of love to the elements of coercion in every political system? What is the role in society of what Seymour Siegel's paper calls "enforced philanthropy?" Should there be any such thing, or shouldn't there?

Now a word on the relation of Reinhold Niebuhr to all this. Niebuhr's disagreements with *The Christian Century* were so great that in about 1941 he founded *Christianity and Crisis* as a kind of counter-journal, a counter-voice in Christian ethical thinking. And I should think the contribution of Niebuhr to *The Christian Century* editorial policy was not the articles he wrote, but (as Jim Wall has already heeded) his general influence on theological ethics. This is so great that later editors, particularly Haselden, Geyer, and Wall, have a sense of the moral ambiguities in political and economic ethics; but I think Morrison did not have this. That is, rarely, if ever, do they identify faith directly with a particular political and economic position; though they do assert a constant relevance of faith to such issues.

John Cooper: I am glad Roger Shinn mentioned *Christianity and Crisis* because I think that Ed Opitz's paper would have been perhaps more appropriate had he focused on this journal. I just finished, in the last year, a dissertation on Niebuhr and Maritain. And one of the key

findings of that dissertation is that Marxism played a key role in their development. It was in responding to Marxism, first calling themselves Marxist, and later understanding in what ways Marxism was inadequate to their vision of society, that both Niebuhr and Maritain came to their mature positions. So, it's not inappropriate to talk about their particular stand on an issue at a point in time even though it did change later. But I think it does require some attention to what I would call "the mature Niebuhr" or "the mature Maritain." And there has been, in fact, something of a debate on this issue in *Christianity and Crisis*, among other places, in recent months.

It is my feeling that we have to do a lot more thinking about our history. It's a history that's a little too close to us to really understand. But the way I would characterize it, as it comes down to us through magazines like *Christian Century* and *Christianity and Crisis*, is that American Protestantism and in an occasional place American Catholicism had a good deal of consensus about democratic pluralism throughout the 1950s.

But somewhere along the way, a shift of tide occurred which split the leadership of American Christianity in two. And for handy shorthand, although it's inadequate, I call them "democratic capitalist theologians" and "democratic socialist theologians." If you wanted to find a democratic socialist, that is a truly "collectivist" ideology, in American theology, I think the only place you will find it is in the last decade or so. Up until that time, theologians were really pretty much in the mainstream of American ideological thought. Some were patriotic, some were critical, but not anywhere near the fringes. In more recent times, I would suggest that some people have gone further toward the fringe. And it parallels the secular political world—the transformation of liberalism into the "New Left." The collectivists are John Bennett, Robert McAfee Brown, Robert Bellah, William Sloan Coffin, Jr., M. Douglas Meeks, Gibson Winter, Tom Driver. Phil Wogaman can tell us whether he wants to be included in this list or not. And there are feminist theologians and black theologians, as well, who heap a great deal of praise on socialism.

In fact, you will find in the American Academy of Religion, a study group on religious socialism, another group on social justice, and a third group on economic justice. You would find that about two-thirds of the people have a bias towards socialism, and away from capitalism.

And that is the state, it seems to me, of theology today. It is worthwhile to study this phenomenon, because it's one of the most exciting debates going on among theologians. I think it's one of the most interesting topics at the American Academy of Religion.

But to return, finally, to Niebuhr and Maritain: they came to the conclusion that some of the things they learned from Marxism were important—the competition between classes, or between any groups within society, and the balance of forces in society—for instance, between industry and agriculture, between business and labour.

And they came to the conclusion that for all its faults, the American version of democratic capitalism has managed to create the greatest number of checks and balances of any of the western democracies. America was the kind of society which was not perfect, which indeed had a lot of disorders, but which was much better in every respect than collectivism—politically, economically, and spiritually. But if you want to find in theology democratic socialism, even collectivism of the most extreme type, you'll find it. And you will find its proponents will be claiming Niebuhr too.

Ronald Preston: When I first got to know Niebuhr, the thing that remained in my mind was his *extremely* critical attitude to *The Christian Century*.

I had not, when I first met Reinhold, (I was then an undergraduate), heard of or read *The Christian Century*; but later I did. But *The Christian Century* came into my life as the magazine that Niebuhr was always criticizing.

I think I was the second person in Great Britain to read a book by Niebuhr. It was introduced to me by the first person, who'd read it. (laughter) He has had an enormous influence on me. But in Britain, the interesting thing is that the politicians who've been most influenced by Niebuhr are, on the whole, conservatives. Hardly anybody on the left has been influenced by him. Tony Benn *claims* to have been influenced by Reinhold, but I have not been able to detect one single explicit influence in anything I've heard Tony Benn say. And he's almost the only politician on the Left that I've ever heard claim to be influenced by him. All the others are conservative. David Martin, whom we are going to come to later, has also been extremely influenced by Niebuhr's thinking; but not, again, very much on a left-wing side.

I think Roger Shinn is perfectly correct in saying that the important thing that comes out of Niebuhr is that religion must not be tied up

with the cultural situation; and in particular, the ambiguities of cultural Protestantism. Now this speaks really powerfully to Britain where there is a traditional Anglican establishment which, of course, we'll be discussing later. So he has very important things to say to Britain.

The sad thing is that in my experience Niebuhr is hardly read by students today. This is why I'm extremely interested in finding how often he's coming into the discussion here. I have introduced people continually to him, in the last few years, and found at least half of them getting very excited, because they've never read anything like it before. This element of Niebuhr's thinking is very largely missing in the different constituencies of the churches who now make up the World Council of Churches. And this results in a great loss of theological perception in many areas of the world where other theologians, who are less perceptive in these matters, are much more widely heard.

Philip Wogaman: I have been a reader of *The Christian Century* since early childhood. That was in my parsonage home, with my father as a minister. It was a standard feature and, I think, in a way that helps underscore the point that Mr. Opitz was making about pervasiveness, in some circles at least, of *The Century's* influence.

In the main, I don't find the Opitz paper terribly balanced, or a careful study of *The Century*. And, I think it might have been interesting to have placed *The Century* in relation to other journals. It's singled out in this setting as one very important formative journal. Perhaps it could rightly be viewed as the most important Protestant journal in the United States, at least.

But, I think to get a rounded picture of the influences bearing upon church leadership on economic questions, one would have to mention those other journals as well.

I would like to add two footnotes to the paper in areas where I know something a little more directly about the persons involved. One of them is Joseph Hromadka who was roundly criticized, in some respects justly, for being too uncritical of Marxism. At the time of the 1954 assembly of the World Council of Churches, he had a very difficult time getting into the United States. He was tailed by the FBI everywhere he went. As a historical footnote, it's worth noting that back in Czechoslovakia, Joseph Hromadka was the leading figure and creative force behind the emerging Christian-Marxist dialogue. And the Christian-Marxist dialogue was one of the formative influences in the development of the Prague spring — that is the reform movement

in Czechoslovakia. Now one might view that still as dangerously leftish, but certainly that was a very redemptive kind of thing, viewed in the context of Czechoslovakian Stalinism. And Hromadka's role certainly was not as an uncritical communist. It was to be a Christian, to have a transcendent view of Christian faith, transcending economic matters; and to bring this to bear in the cultural arena.

The second footnote is a little more minor, but reference is made to James W. Wine and his 1960 article which one must see in context. Jim Wine was a fascinating character. He was the associate general secretary of the National Council of Churches, a very stormy person in many respects. The flavour of his personality is caught a little bit here in the reference made to him in Ed Opitz's paper.

But the strong reactions of Wine in that article were severely critical of the churches as being pro-communist. This appeared in an official United States Air Force training manual used to train officers, which was brought out that spring. At that time I happened to have completed my graduate studies and was working briefly with the National Council of Churches in researching the background of those attacks; and during that period, I worked to some extent, with Jim Wine. Seen out of context, this might appear to be an irresponsible defensive charge on his part. Seen in context, it was in response to what was an absolutely outrageous use of military training procedures to castigate large numbers of American churches.

Seymour Siegel: I just want to make a few general comments. First of all, it's strange, although now I think when Mr. Opitz spoke orally we know the explanation, that almost all the references to *The Christian Century* stop at 1962 or 1963. We are now in 1982—some twenty years later—and I think that that is of some significance, especially since it is in the 1960s, or the late 1960s and the 1970s, that conservative political and economic thought has gained currency in wide intellectual circles in the country, in the academy, and in the pulpit, and in the seminaries. And I think, therefore, any survey of anything that ends in the early '60s, as changeable and dynamic as these things were, leaves something to be desired.

Secondly, I think it's also interesting to note the influence of periodicals on the formation of thought, in political and economic spheres, especially. And I think that that is a very good place to begin, because religious practitioners, especially who are harried and don't have much time, do rely a lot on periodicals. And therefore both in ana-

lyzing the formation of their ideas and in projecting how to modify them, the periodical is a very good way to operate.

As a matter of fact (if I can just put in a little plug) that is the reason why some of us founded the new journal, *This World*. It was projected to create a periodical literature which would promote a more conservative political and economic program amongst those who teach and preach religion, as well as practice it. As a matter of fact, *This World* magazine had its genesis in a conference something like this one, in which people who taught theology and social ethics in some of the leading seminaries of the United States, at least, said (with the exception of the Jewish seminaries, which are not infected and affected by this) that Marxism was one of the main economic and political ideologies that was being taught there. Now I don't know whether that's true or not, but that was asserted by the people who, themselves, were involved in this; and that is why we thought that it would be a good idea to launch this project in order to mitigate this, what I think is a lamentable fact, if indeed it is true.

Then, I just want to follow up on what Mr. Preston said, in regard to Reinhold Niebuhr, who has been one of the two foci of our discussion this morning. Almost everybody that I know in the Jewish community who claims to be and indeed is a Niebuhrian is always on the conservative political and economic side. The most famous one is Will Herberg, who claims in the introduction to his book, *Judaism and Modern Man*, to state Judaism in Niebuhrian terms.

So, I found it really strange that we should think that, if we had only Ed Opitz's paper, of the legacy of Reinhold Niebuhr as contributing to the promotion of collectivism.

Anthony Waterman: I want to come back to one feature of the paper which has been neglected in the discussion so far. And that is the attempt, or rather the assumption I suppose, that there is some connection between Marxian communism or, in general, Marxian ideology on the one hand, and the trend toward collectivist organization and government action on the other.

There's virtually no connection whatsoever, in my opinion, between the drift towards collectivism on the one hand, and Marxian ideology on the other. It began, as everybody knows, in Britain before Marx was ever heard of, in the 1840s and 1850s. And it began in response to some pressing social needs, which occurred in what economists call disequilibrium situations, as a result of very rapid industrialization.

And the people who first began to formulate what eventually became programs of government regulation and intervention were without exception people who professed to believe, and actually did believe in *laissez-faire* capitalism in its purest form. And bit by bit, they said, “Well, this is an exception. And here we absolutely have to intervene to regulate some particular abuse in the factories” or something of this kind.

The ideology of those who initiated this kind of process was entirely innocent of any kind of Marxism; and had they been aware of Marxism, they would have utterly repudiated it.

It seems to me that throughout the nineteenth century, the sorts of things which, in Britain at any rate, brought about the trend to greater government participation were if anything more a result of industrialization.

Example: Nowadays, in all countries, governments exercise some control over monetary conditions. How did that start in Britain? Essentially because in response to the requirements of the city of London for there to be a more or less stable pound exchange rate, the Bank of England almost accidentally discovered that by manipulation of interest rates, it could maintain the exchange value of the pound.

Example: Because of the rapid industrialization of Britain throughout the nineteenth century, there was a great need for social overhead capital. More roads had to be built. More schools had to be built. Harbours. Docks. Things which, by and large, the market isn’t going to supply, at least not under those circumstances at that time. So, it seems to me that a lot of this drift toward collectivization is entirely unrelated to ideology. It is simply a function of industrialization. And I think that insofar as that’s true, it’s almost an irrelevance to invoke Marx.

Milton Friedman: I just want to make a comment on your comment, and raise one other question. I agree with you that so far as Britain is concerned, it was not Marxism that was responsible. But I don’t agree with you that it was believers in *laissez-faire* capitalism that were responsible.

I recall that it was the aristocrats, the people from the aristocratic structure of Britain, who had the “noblesse oblige” notion, who did not really believe in *laissez-faire* capitalism at all, who were leading the movement in the ten hour day. And they were not believers in *laissez-faire* capitalism.

One other point. What you say about Britain is true. But I think what you say about the rest of the world leaves much to be desired. It was not industrialization that produced communism in Russia. Not in the slightest. And, in general, if you take the really collectivist movement in the twentieth century, Russia and China are two examples where you cannot attribute these developments to industrialization.

Now, while I have the floor, may I make one other comment? I just want to ask Roger Shinn a question. He referred to a Christian preference for peace. I would like him to explain to me how that differs from a non-Christian preference for peace.

Anthony Waterman: I'm responding to the second part, because I agree that Russia and China don't fit my model at all. But as far as the first point is concerned, I entirely agree, of course, that many of the proponents of these reforms were members of the aristocracy who had no love for capitalism at all. But it is also the fact that the most influential (may I call them) "ideologues" of the time, were people like Thomas Chalmers, (roundly abused by Marx for that role) Archbishop Sumner, author of *Treatise on the Records of Creation*, which was the major contribution in the 1820s and 1830s towards the *laissez-faire* ideology. Both those men, and their lesser colleagues on the episcopal bench who in those days sat on the House of Lords and had a large part to play in legislation, always supported intervention and always justified their support by saying that it was an exception.

Paul Heyne: We all know that the political character of a religious magazine, or of a denomination's social statements, or of the statements of a prophetic moralist, are going to be very difficult to describe in a way that is satisfactory, both to the people making the statements and to the critics who feel themselves somehow alienated by those statements. I think we all recognize how difficult it is to characterize *The Christian Century's* political stance in a way that both Jim Wall and Ed Opitz will accept.

Why do we try? I think it's important to recognize that we try in these cases, with religious magazines, denominational statements, and prophetic moralist assertions, because none of us likes to be criticized from a transcendent perspective. And it is terribly easy to adopt a transcendent perspective, or to take for yourself a transcendent perspective, and not even recognize that you're doing it.

But the people who feel themselves excluded – who feel that the positions that they have arrived at on the basis of their own faith, reason, and evidence, are somehow being condemned as out of step with God – these people understandably are sensitive to such nuances.

I have no solution to this problem, but I do believe it is at the root of much of what bubbled into this conference. It is at the root of much of the concern of active, religious lay people with church activism in the social area.

Now, to finish up and tie it to Marx. In my judgement (I think I could support this with a considerable body of evidence) one role of Marxism is to supply a transcendent perspective for some people who want one but are unable, in a religiously pluralist society, to find one that is satisfactory. Marxism provides a transcendent perspective from which certain propositions are defended.

Roger Shinn: This is in response to Milton Friedman’s question. I am very grateful if what I called a “Christian disposition towards peace” is quite widely shared. I’ve got no desire to make exclusive claims here.

But I’d like to refer to a course that Seymour Siegel and I co-teach, in both the Jewish and the Union Theological Seminaries. Here, when we come to the issue of peace, he points out that Judaism has never been a pacifist faith. There might be rare, individual exceptions, and so on. And I accept his word for that. But I would say that from the beginning, there has been a pacifist strain in Christianity, from Constantine on not dominant, but frequently recurring. Usually it takes a pretty big leap from the transcendent to the particular, very often sloppy – a few quotations from the Sermon on the Mount, and Isaiah, and so on, to conclude “we ought to be pro-peace,” and maybe, therefore, you ought to be in favour of this particular government policy, and so on.

But I use the words in relation to Morrison, because I think that’s exactly what he did. He took this legacy, this “pro-peace legacy,” and he made it a quasi-pacifist sort of thing. That’s all I meant.

Kenneth Boulding: In relation to that, I always regarded Niebuhr as a Judas. I mean for changing his previous vision about pacifism. I once had a row with him about this. It’s published in the little book I wrote for the National Council of Churches, *The Organizational Revolution*. Niebuhr went after me in a whole essay, criticizing it, and I wrote an essay about him. He thought I believed in anarchy, and I thought he believed in tyranny! (laughter)

I do agree with Professor Wogaman that the movement for reform in Catholicism has very little to do with Marxism. The point is that something can go wrong with anything and everything. As you've seen it this morning, what went wrong with Christianity? I regard myself as sort of a Christian, in a sense, at least as a camp-follower of Jesus. That makes me at least 80 per cent Jewish and maybe 20 per cent Greek or something, I don't know. (laughter)

Marxism is a red herring, I think, in a great deal of this. One of my heroes is John R. Commons, who wanted to save capitalism by making it good. And that's what the reform movement is all about. It's a movement of saving capitalism, and in this sense, the saving of the market, by correcting its defects.

If you pretend the market has no defects, you are its principal enemy because every system has defects.

Edmund Opitz: Regarding the cutoff date of my survey of the *Century*, by the time I got to page 37, I was still twenty years behind the times, and I was kind of tired. (laughter) I rationalized my stopping then for four reasons. One, I thought most of you here would have had your own exposure to *The Christian Century* over the past two decades if you'd wanted it. Secondly, I did not want this thing to become a personal confrontation between myself and the present editor.

Third, I felt that I could sort of draw upon my own well-springs from personal exposure to it as a regular reader over a long period—in the period I covered—in a way I could not do for the past twenty years or so. And fourth, I surmised that the past twenty years have been shaped by the previous twenty years!

It does seem to me that the argument as to whether or not there has been a lineup between official church pronouncements, and a particular form of ideology, is perfectly clear. I have a little note from Tillich, an article that appeared on the 15th of June, 1949, which speaks of the central importance of social ethics. And social ethics, again, in this context means to get government to correct the evils of capitalism; this is the central importance social ethics has in American theology.

Mr. Preston quotes from William Temple, and Temple again is someone whom I greatly admire. I am now going through his great Gifford Lectures "Nature, Man and God" for the umpteenth time. But Temple identified socialism with the Christian gospel, with slogans such as, "Christianity is the religion of which socialism is the practice." For an organization that Niebuhr formed called "Fellowship

of Socialist Christians” seems to imply that the men who belonged were socialist because they were Christians.

The identification to me is perfectly clear. And I am not criticizing them. There are lots of ways of being wrong besides being a socialist. I would criticize them for not boning up on the literature of the other side, and for selecting the particular opponents they choose to rebut.

Now there have been opportunities, presumably, for writers for *The Christian Century* or other journals, to pick a staunch opponent, and a serious opponent of socialization, and show what’s wrong with this position, but to pick on the Air Force manual, or a Carl MacIntire, or whatever. If we talk about picking a straw man, these are the kinds of straw men one would pick – the most extreme irrational examples of opposition to what the church is doing.

If I had some confidence that Niebuhr exposed himself properly to any one of a number of books on economics, such as Hayek’s *Constitution of Liberty*, or whatever (which I do recall was reviewed in *The Christian Century* by Gibson Winter; and reviewed, I thought, very very poorly) I’d feel more confidence in these men when it comes to this area. I have more things to say about Jim Wall’s rebuttal, but I will refrain.

Chapter 4

From Theology to Social Decisions – and Return

Roger L. Shinn

I. INTRODUCTION

The roadway between theology and the social sciences, though bumpy and filled with pot-holes, is well travelled in both directions. But since the legitimacy of such travel is controversial, I shall start on a more fundamental level.

Long before there was any formal discipline of theology, there was religious belief and practice. And long before there were any social sciences, there were societies with organizations and institutions. So far back as we can go in human history, we find the interaction between faith and organized social activity. Each acts upon the other.

Thus Moses told a reluctant people that their God called them to move out of slavery into a promised land of freedom; faith required social decision and action. To this day Judaism commemorates the Exodus and the Passover; the social decision and the social history shape the religious cult and belief. Similarly the resurrection faith of the early Christian community led to actions that offended civil authorities, and the social history of martyrdom influenced and still influences the worship and doctrine of the church.

Eventually there came the intellectual disciplines of theology and the social sciences. Inevitably they interacted. Contemporary society is a scene of raging debates on how they ought, or ought not, to interact.

I begin with theology. It certainly intends to have an impact on social decisions and on the social sciences. The social sciences may resist, but they recognize the intention. The impact may be overt or subtle. “Every philosophy,” wrote Alfred North Whitehead, “is tinged with the colouring of some secret imaginative background, which never emerges explicitly into its trains of reasoning.”¹ Part of the business of theology is to explore imaginative backgrounds, to move them from secrecy to visibility, to criticize or cultivate them, to rationalize some of them into doctrines. Theology finds those imaginative backgrounds colouring the social sciences no less, or almost no less, than philosophy. It therefore claims to see the sometimes hidden meanings and motivations of social sciences. And it frequently tries to direct the social sciences toward the solving of human problems and the improvement of human life—goals that some social scientists accept and others reject.

Theology also recognizes a need for social sciences and a desire to learn from them. Motivated by historic faith, theology may ask: how in our world do we love the neighbour and show concern for the poor? We shall do these ineptly, especially in our highly organized society, unless we understand the social institutions and mechanisms that help or hurt the neighbour. It is common in our time to talk of the need for counter-intuitive behaviour. The impulse to do good may spend itself in futility or actually result in harm unless informed by a knowledge of social techniques and systems. So churches draw social scientists into their processes of decision-making.

As churches reach toward the social sciences, either seeking to influence them or asking their help, they find the social sciences reaching back in ways sometimes threatening and sometimes encouraging. The sociology of religion, for example, helps religious communities understand themselves. It shows churches, to their pain and illumination, that they often function to legitimate practices that are actually alien to their faith. The great debates about “the Protestant ethic,” provoked by writings of Max Weber and R. H. Tawney and a host of their successors, are good examples of the issue. Did Protestant Christian belief nurture capitalism or did capitalism capture and corrupt Protestant Christianity? There are many answers to that question, but none of them derive from doctrine alone; the social sciences are needed to interpret the history and to throw light on some of the doctrines.

One definition of theology, much quoted in our time, comes from Gustavo Gutierrez, the Latin American Roman Catholic “liberation theologian”: theology “is a critical reflection—in the light of the Word accepted in faith—on historical praxis and therefore on the presence of Christians in the world.”² In so describing theology, he places himself in a tradition as old as St. Augustine.³ But he says, as Augustine could not have said in his time or place, “The social sciences . . . are extremely important for theological reflection in Latin America.”⁴ Not all theologians agree with Gutierrez on the importance of the social sciences or on his extensive appropriation of Marxist themes, but a sampling of theological literature will show a widespread awareness of the social sciences, as prominent in our time as the awareness of the physical sciences in the eighteenth century.

II. A PERPETUAL DEBATE ON “LINKAGE”

From faith to action in world religions

To understand the relation between theology and the social sciences it is necessary to return again to the prior issue: the relation of faith to action. That some relation exists is hardly debatable. It is impossible that any widely shared religious faith *not* influence the surrounding society and respond to the influence of society on it. But there are major debates on the nature of the “linkage,” to adapt a term from contemporary controversies about foreign policy. The debate goes on in many religions all over the world.

The Ayatollah Khomeini, for example, has impressed the world with his fervent desire to build an Islamic society, in which the most detailed political decisions get the direct sanction of ultimate religious authority. His position has roots in traditional Muslim faith; it is in part a direct reaction against modern secularization of society. Yet other Muslims, while recognizing that their faith calls for action in the world, prefer that government have freedom for some pragmatic experimentation, some negotiation of conflicting interests, a step or two removed from the direct mandates of religion.

Hinduism, with its classic doctrine of Nirvana, might seem to remove the ultimate concerns of faith from the work-a-day world of *Maya* (appearance, perhaps even illusion). Yet Hindu religion has historically prescribed the minute details of the caste-structure of society.

Buddhism's disciplined path to Enlightenment appears at first to be as little concerned as Hinduism with political and economic controversies. Yet saffron-robed Buddhist monks were conspicuous in protests against the war in Vietnam and are today prominent in the opposition to nuclear armaments, both in Asia and in the United States.

Chinese Confucianism was for centuries deliberately related to political wisdom and the arts of government. Taoism, although far less directly concerned with government, produced characteristic styles of leadership in government and even of generalship in war.

Faith and action in the Judeo-Christian tradition

In short, the great world religions have always responded to social-historical situations and have exercised influence on society. And that double interaction has been especially evident in the religious heritage most influential in Western history—that of Judaism and Christianity. The Hebrew Scriptures give great attention to political and economic history. The writings of law and prophecy are filled with moral declarations directed to rulers, to controllers of economic power, and to the people in their social and economic relations. The Talmud and the rabbinic tradition carry on this concern, working out its details in a great variety of historical situations. Sometimes the Jewish people are in charge of their own societies, and sometimes they are scattered in diaspora under alien rulers; such differences determine their opportunity to shape society and therefore influence the ethical teaching. But in either case the concerns of faith touch all of social and personal life.

The Christian New Testament, in contrast to the Hebrew Bible, was written within about a century and its immediate purview covers little more than that. Furthermore, its writers were part of a minority community, and they expected an early end of history. So they rarely addressed themselves to the big issues of statecraft and organization of economies. But they too insisted that faith influenced all of life. They adopted the Hebrew Scriptures as their own Scriptures. And when in later years they came close to or even occupied the seats of secular power, they sought to influence political and economic life—most obviously in the Roman Catholic, the Calvinist, and the Social Gospel traditions. Yet there were always—or nearly always—some distinctions between theological and political judgements. The mystery and transcendence of God impose some reservations upon those who seek

to declare the divine will. Those who are too sure they know God's will and too quick to condemn all who disagree with them are in greatest danger of the pride that is the central sin.

So the church struggled through the centuries with the relation between the certitudes of faith and the ambiguities of social ethics, with the connection between uncompromising religious commitments and the compromises that constitute political processes, with the meaning of the perfection of God's kingdom and the imperfections of all human kingdoms.

The contemporary picture

Today the American church, as it looks back on its history, wonders why it was sometimes so sure of ethical judgements that now seem so fallible. Equally often, it wonders why it was so reticent on ethical issues that now appear clear and important. Church people may look with an ironic smile on past confident attempts to legislate sabbath observance, outlaw contraceptives, and prohibit alcoholic drinks; but these same church people may painfully wonder why churches were so slow to speak out against slavery, against race prejudice, against imperialism and the economic abuses of the robber barons of the gilded age.

The debate about linkage between faith and social involvement is as confusing now as it has ever been. "Conservative" preachers a few years ago were criticizing "liberals" for mixing religion and politics in protests against the war in Vietnam; some of those same conservatives are now crusading for legislation and constitutional amendments against abortion, and they are studying "hit lists" of senators and representatives whom they want to defeat in the next election. "Liberals" have made careers of pleading for involvement of church people in political issues; now they are telling self-proclaimed "moral majorities" to be less sure of their own righteousness and to recognize that doctrine does not entail uniformity of political opinion.

If this situation makes for some confusion, it is also a good learning situation. Knee-jerk reactions, whether conservative or liberal, to issues of faith and social life are not adequate. Ad hoc responses, shifting from issue to issue, lack integrity. Religious communities and societies must rethink the linkage between theology and political life.

III. WHERE DOCTRINE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The unintended consequence of religious views

An exploration of the “secret imaginative background” of philosophies and cultures discovers many themes that influence political and social systems. The important issues are not always the ones most obviously verbalized in propositions. They may appear in cult and myth more vividly than in doctrine. They include some sense of the relation of time and eternity, of matter and spirit, of humanity and nature (often of human law and natural law), of freedom and determinism, of political order and cosmic order, of religious commitment and pluralism. Convictions on such themes influence history and social problems, even though the makers of history may not articulate them or deliberately try to apply them to social problems. Historian Herbert Butterfield observes:

Those who preached the Gospel for the sake of the Gospel, leaving the further consequences of their action to Providence, have always served the world better than they knew, better than those who worked with mundane purposes in mind—sometimes they served the world better even than they would have liked if they could have foreseen the consequences.⁵

To that I would add that unconscious or barely conscious religious apprehensions may also do harm in the world, far beyond the intentions of their holders. For better or worse, the traffic between religious and political-economic institutions makes a difference, beyond the deliberate plans and purposes of the people involved.

The Benedictine monks are an example of an influence, largely unintended, on economic history. Economist Kenneth Boulding writes:

If one is looking for the beginning of a continuous process of scientific and technological development this might be traced to the monastic movement in the West of the sixth century A.D., especially the Benedictines. Here for almost the first time in history we had intellectuals who worked with their hands, and who belonged to a religion which regarded the physical world as in some sense sacred and capable of enshrining goodness.⁶

Similarly, historian Lynn White, Jr. says: “St. Benedict of Nursia, the founder of the Benedictine Order, is probably the pivotal figure in the history of labor.” The Benedictine monk, he adds, “was the first intellectual to get dirt under his fingernails.”⁷ The historical influence extends to millions of people who know nothing about the Benedictines.

Explicit implications for social order

However, in other cases religious doctrine and ethics leads to deliberate efforts to shape society. If there are beliefs that have little direct effect upon social activity, there are others that require efforts to shape the social order. Two examples are conspicuous in contemporary Western theology: (1) the ethical values that guide conduct, and (2) the doctrine of human nature and history.

As to the central religious value in the biblical tradition, the emphasis is on a love that seeks justice. Jesus, asked what is the greatest commandment, selects two commandments from the Hebrew Bible: love of God and love of neighbour. An apostolic writing says, “he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20). Love is not a mere disposition or emotion; it is active concern for the well-being of the neighbour. And the neighbour is anyone in need, including the stranger who is alienated by religious and ethnic conflicts (Luke 10:29–37).

In biblical ethics love is enacted in just human relations and institutions. It is hypocritical to claim to love while hurting other people. There are no formal definitions of justice in the Bible. But, in contrast to the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions in which justice is hierarchical, biblical justice moves in the direction of equality. There is an upsetting of hierarchies in the repeated expression of concern for common people against unjust demands of kings, in the attention to the needs of widows and orphans, the poor and the weak. The prophets and Jesus find themselves frequently in conflict with the wielders of power, whether the power be political, economic, or religious.

The Bible does not define an ideal political structure or economic system. But love enacted in justice clearly has significance for the distribution of power and of wealth. A biblically-based justice protests against destitution in the midst of affluence, against impotence in the midst of power.

Eschatology and ethics

Turning to the doctrine of history and human nature, we find repeatedly in the Bible the expectation of a messianic age or a coming Kingdom of God in which the poor will be blessed and the meek will inherit the earth. Much of Scripture communicates the mood of prophetic expectation. Particularly in the New Testament, people are called to live in the spirit of the coming age. Christ's beatitudes declare the reversal of values and of position in the coming Kingdom. Paul calls on Christians, "Do not be conformed to this world"—the Greek text says to this "age"—"but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

Yet with this recognition of a coming era and a transformation of history, there is a recognition of the stubbornness of the old age and the necessity for institutions that take account of it. In the chapter immediately following his call for transformation, Paul—in a passage with a fateful later history—acknowledges the importance under God's sovereignty of the political institutions of the Roman Empire. The central problem bestowed by the New Testament on the ethics of the later church is the relation between eschatology and ethics, between the ultimate promises and demands of the Kingdom of God and the necessities of a functioning worldly society.

William Temple, a famous Archbishop of Canterbury, stated the issue in pointed terms:

[I]t is sometimes supposed that what the Church has to do is to sketch a perfect social order and urge men to establish it. But it is very difficult to know what a "perfect social order" means. Is it the order that would work best if we were all perfect? Or is it the order that would work best in a world of men and women such as we actually are? If it is the former, it certainly ought not to be established; we should wreck it in a fortnight.⁸

That did not leave Temple complacent about the injustices in society. He was a foremost advocate of economic change in Britain, a representative of liberal leftist programs. The statement just quoted appeared in the context of a double-pronged ethical argument: that the church should exercise itself forcefully for the increase of social justice, but that the church simultaneously should practice some restraint in prescribing the details of a just social order.

An example of the tension between eschatology and ethics is the issue of motivations and incentives for action. Biblical faith seeks a world in which concern for the common good is as powerful an incentive as concern for self. It elevates love above personal ambition, cooperation above competition. But it knows very well that any political-economic order must take account of self-interest. If cooperation is ethically better than competition, still competition is better than collusion in restraint of trade. And an open appeal to self-interest is better than authoritarian compulsion in getting the world's work done.

Thus, to continue with the reasoning of William Temple:

a statesman who supposes that a mass of citizens can be governed without appeal to their self-interest is living in a dreamland and is a public menace. The art of government in fact is the art of so ordering life that self-interest prompts what justice demands.⁹

An ethical politics and economics must constantly ask how to use the self-regarding motives of people without enhancing them and crushing the equally fundamental human concern for others. The *homo economicus* of traditional economic theory is as far from reality as the idealized *homo benignus* of utopian economic dreams.

Historically the biblical prophets and ethically sensitive leaders of the churches have been more effective in pointing out the wrongs in society and in calling on society to face issues of justice than in prescribing in any detail the methods and systems that love might employ in seeking justice. If that is clearly true in the biblical situation, it is even more evident in the modern world. One of the reasons is the emergence of the social sciences.

IV. THE RISE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The social sciences — principally political science, economics, and sociology — provide new powers for understanding and guiding social processes. Yet their history is one of controversy, not only about specifics but about their definition and aim: are they normative enterprises, or are they solely descriptive and analytical? The debate arises in comparable form in all the social sciences, but their histories are different enough to justify a brief look at each in turn.

Political science

The oldest of the social sciences is political science. In Plato and Aristotle political thought was inseparable from philosophy: the love of wisdom and quest for the good life. Yet there was an empirical component in it. Aristotle's *Politics*, for example, began with an examination of both the idealized governments in Greek literature and the actual states that he knew. Both Plato and Aristotle assumed a hierarchical order of society, analogous to the metaphysical hierarchy of being, as they understood it. Yet both protested against tyranny.

Augustine was the father of political philosophy in the Christian West. His thought shows the tension, which I have already mentioned, between eschatology and political ethics. On his radical side, he desacralizes the Roman empire, stripping it of the divinity ascribed to it by pagan religions and some of his Christian predecessors. He declares that a state without justice is no better than a robber band. He refuses to absolutize any specific political system, tolerating and even encouraging diversity of customs and practices. He condemns the traditional Roman law for denying rights of inheritance to women. He insists that the separation of good and evil people must await God's final judgement, not be imposed now by church or state—although he wavers and makes an exception in the case of the schismatic and unruly Donatists.

On the conservative side, Augustine accepts the imperfections of the world. He longs for a better society, but does not expect it or urge radical reforms. Given the disruptive power of sin, he puts high value on order. His acceptance of slavery, unlike Aristotle's, is not based on the natural order; slavery is a consequence of sin, to be removed in the End but not yet.

With the Renaissance political thinking took a new turn. Machiavelli sets out to describe politics as it really is, not as it ought to be. He shows that things happen by manipulation, deceit, intrigue, violence, the use of power, the ambition of despots. But he does not formulate a value-free theory of politics. In *The Prince* he gives advice to a ruler who might unify Italy and restore something of its ancient glory. Since Machiavelli, Western political thought has exemplified a mixture of ethics and tactics, of idealism and realism or cynicism.

It is only since the Enlightenment that social scientists have developed the analytical tools that constitute a modern political science. But political science, more than the other social sciences, is rooted in a

long tradition. And the issues discussed by a modern Hans Morgenthau or Henry Kissinger are analogous to issues debated through centuries of history.

The same issues appear in theological efforts to develop a political ethic. Repeatedly the hopes for an ideal society are shipwrecked in the squalls of conflicts of power; yet every lapse into despair is disturbed by new aspirations. In the famous words of Reinhold Niebuhr, "Politics will, to the end of history, be an area where conscience and power meet, where the ethical and coercive factors of human life will interpenetrate and work out their tentative and uneasy compromises."¹⁰

Economics

The origin of economics is much more recent than the origin of political theory. Although all societies have economic practices and beliefs about them, it is only in modern times that an intellectual discipline called economics has appeared. Even more recently has it been called a social science.

As Robert Heilbroner puts it, a "separate, self-contained economic world" did not "lift itself from its social context"¹¹ until the sixteenth or seventeenth century. The concepts of markets in land, labour, and capital are modern. So is the notion of economic "laws" (of supply and demand; of money supply, goods, and inflation), sometimes deliberately modelled on the laws of physics.

The ambivalence about the relation of ethics to objective analysis, which we have already noticed in political theory, persists in economics. One of the motivations of modern economics was to liberate economic activity from the stifling moral constraints of medieval Christendom. The most important of early economists, Adam Smith, in his most famous passage wrote:

[The individual] is led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good.¹²

Yet there is no denying a moral concern in this recognition of a-moral forces in the market. Adam Smith made his reputation as a moral phi-

losopher before his great work in political economy. (I realize that there is a lively argument about the extent of continuity and discontinuity between *A Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*. Like Fred Hirsch,¹³ I am persuaded by the sources that the continuity is real.) Smith assumes some basic human decencies and some restraints on predatory competition (even as he remains suspicious of the monopolistic scheming of producers and merchants). In the passage just quoted he acknowledges the interest “of society” and the “public good.” He puts a value on personal freedom, on mobility, on decentralization of decision-making, on initiative and self-reliance.

Certainly the history of economics is well sprinkled with ethical discussion. John Maynard Keynes, the most celebrated economist of his time, made the point in a letter to William Temple. I have already referred to the book, *Christianity and Social Order*, in which Temple upheld the right of the church to “interfere” in the economic sphere, while recommending restraint in religious endorsements of specific economic measures. When Temple sent proofs of the book to Keynes, Keynes responded by saying that Temple had *understated* the case for the church’s intervention in issues of economics. Keynes then continued:

Along one line of origin at least, economics more properly called political economy, is a side of ethics. Marshall used always to insist that it was through ethics he arrived at political economy and I would claim myself in this, as in other respects, to be a pupil of his. I should have thought that nearly all English economists in the tradition, apart from Ricardo, reached economics that way. There are practically no issues of policy as distinct from technique which do not involve ethical considerations.¹⁴

In that respect the Keynesian tradition, although under criticism on many fronts, persists. When James Tobin won the Nobel Prize in economics for 1981, a former student recalled a course in theory that he had taken with Tobin: “It was abstract, but Jim never let you lose sight that the ultimate reason for studying theory was to make the world a better place. To him, the ultimate justification for economics and social science was to benefit people.”¹⁵

Obviously not all economists agree. A school of contemporary economic thought, prominent some years ago and still persisting, maintains that the function of economics is to build models, independent

of values and of policy recommendations. But when economists recommend public policies, as many of them frequently do, they inevitably enter into debates about ethical values as well as economic techniques. To point to an example, ethical language is conspicuous in the regular columns of Milton Friedman and Lester Thurow in *Newsweek*.

Sociology

The third of the major social sciences, sociology, has the shortest history. (I need not here enter into the argument as to whether anthropology is a sub-set of sociology or an independent social science.) Auguste Comte invented the word and the concept in the nineteenth century. It has become the most familiar of the social sciences, because everybody claims some first-hand knowledge about society.

Comte shared the ambivalence about science and value, fact and purpose that has haunted the history of all the social sciences. His positivism was certainly not identical with the logical positivism of more recent fame, but the common terminology is more than coincidental. In his version of the nineteenth century faith in progress, he divided history into three ages: the theological (the most primitive), the metaphysical, and the dawning positivist age, when science could become truly factual and abandon all mythology and speculation. He also ranked the sciences in order of development and maturity: mathematics (the only truly “ripe” science), astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology (including psychology), and the newly emergent sociology. His hope was that the science of society would develop in the direction of mathematics, astronomy, and physics.

Nevertheless Comte was a crusader. He wanted to rebuild society on a more scientific and “spiritual” basis. He established a Religion of Humanity, a sort of church without any God or metaphysical beliefs but with ritual, festivals, and sacraments. Sociology has left behind that particular form of cultism. But the tension between the two aspects of Comte persists. People half expect sociologists to be objective, value-free and “scientific,” while half expecting them to be liberal, enlightened, and reformist. And sociologists themselves contribute to these contradictory expectations.

These brief historical observations on the rise of the social sciences point to the perplexity that surrounds interactions between theologians and social scientists. Sometimes the two meet on a common turf

of shared concern with social values. Sometimes the work of theologians seems totally irrelevant to the work of social scientists, except as an idiosyncrasy of human behaviour that may, like any other aspect of behaviour, be studied scientifically. History helps to illuminate these differing situations. But their importance becomes more clear as we investigate what goes on in the decision-making processes of a society.

V. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THEOLOGY AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES TO SOCIAL DECISIONS¹⁶

We approach the nub of the issue in two questions directed to me in the invitation to write this paper: What right does theology have to address questions of social organization? What qualifications and what limitations does it bring to this task?

I shall try to answer both questions. In doing so, I shall direct the same questions to the social sciences.

I begin by stating a few assumptions. (1) Neither theologians nor social scientists are an elite privileged to make decisions for societies. (2) Societies make their own decisions, intentionally or accidentally, partly by political processes and partly by thousands of personal and group decisions that result in an impact upon the total society. (3) Religious leaders and theologians have a right to participate in those decisions, just as social scientists do. (4) Both theological and social scientific insight have a contribution to make to the social process. (5) Religious communities and social scientific communities alike sometimes avoid their social responsibilities, sometimes out of timidity and sometimes out of indifference. (6) Both communities sometimes exaggerate their competence and their authority to influence decisions.

Rather than defend these assumptions, I shall show how they become operative in society. My continuing argument will illustrate the effect of assumptions.

Commitment and knowledge in social ethics

One proposition is essential to all that follows: *Social policies take shape at the convergence of two kinds of human experience that are distinguishable although not absolutely separable.* The first involves human commitments, loyalties, purposes, a sense of the meaning of life, a belief about the qualities of a good life and good society, and re-

flection on priorities and conflicts of values. The second involves a body of information about the world and analytical skills for organizing that information, for understanding the physical universe and social process, and for maintaining or changing a society.

Every human being, starting from infancy, enters into both kinds of experience. It is not the case that some people generate the first kind of experience while others generate the second. But the first set of experiences is characteristic of the arts, of ethical insight, of religious sensitivity and commitment. It is a central concern of religious communities, although certainly not of them alone. Its intellectual analysis is a subject for some types of philosophy and for all theology. The second set of experiences is characteristic of every effort to survive and function in the world. It is a professional concern of physical scientists, who investigate nature, and of social scientists, who investigate societies.

It is easy and important to make some distinctions between the two kinds of experience and to see the necessity for both. For the sake of brevity, I shall identify the first kind of experience as commitment, recognizing that it includes a wide variety of esthetic, ethical, human, and religious responses to life. I shall identify the second as informational analysis, recognizing that it includes knowledge from everyday experience, from the physical sciences, and from the social sciences.

The importance of distinction

Commitments are involved in any social policy, but commitments without informational analysis can never prescribe an effective policy. If I am committed to helping people in need, I cannot do much until I know what the needs of people are. If they are hungry, if they are drowning, if they are bored, if they are illiterate, if they are infected with lethal viruses, if they are being invaded by enemy troops, these different needs call for different responses. I cannot learn the needs of people by steeping myself in religious tradition or by practicing mystical meditation *apart from* informational analysis. Even if I focus on a single need—say, malnutrition and starvation—I cannot contribute to an effective policy without learning something about calories and vitamins, climate and weather, economic pressures that help or hinder producers of crops and their customers, international relations that subject some societies to decisions made in other societies.

Equally important, no quantity of informational analysis adds up

to a social policy apart from the commitments that are joined to it. Occasionally a commitment is so widely shared (or at least tolerated) that information leads almost inevitably to policy. When informational analysis showed the possibility of eliminating smallpox at a modest cost, there were no prolonged debates or power conflicts about the desirability of doing so. But most commitments are more controversial. Information about the destructive power of nuclear weapons for example, leads some people to work for higher defense appropriations, others to work for disarmament. Information about energy shortages leads some to calculate ways of protecting their privileges, others to search for ways of sharing limited supplies. Information about projected inflation leads some to call for policies to stop inflation, others to figure how to make money out of inflation.

Because social life is extremely complex, these illustrations are all too simple. For example, information is fairly clear—with many genuine controversies about quite extensive agreement—about the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons; it is not nearly so clear on what policies increase or decrease the likelihood of nuclear war. Opinions on that subject require informational analysis of weaponry, international relations, human motivations, and much more. Equally, informational analysis may show that some policies designed to stop inflation are ineffective or counter-productive, while other effective policies have serious side-effects. But at almost every stage of the decision-making process, there is some interaction of ethical purpose with physical and social scientific information, and neither alone produces a policy.

In a world of diverse specializations of knowledge and insight, it is easy—and sometimes valid—to criticize false uses of authority. If a famous athlete earns more money endorsing miscellaneous consumer products than knocking baseballs out of parks, anybody might ask why the athlete's real or pretended preference for a soft drink or an automobile should carry any weight with the public. But when a society enters into discussion of public policy, everybody must think beyond the confines of narrow professional competence. When religious communities try to influence public economic policy, the question invariably arises: what do those people know about what is *economically* good for society? The question is legitimate—just as legitimate as the counter question: what do economists and financiers know about what is economically *good* for society? In both cases a sound opinion requires some entry into a domain outside professional exper-

tise, or at least some sustained conversations with people in other domains. The presupposition of a democratic society is that such entries and such conversations are possible. Without that possibility, expressions of commitment degenerate into ineffectual platitudes and informational analysis becomes so technically trivial as to be useless to the body politic.

The convergence of the two

I have been emphasizing the *difference* between commitments and informational analysis, and I have been insisting on the necessity of *both* for policy decisions. I have accorded to each a relative autonomy, arguing that commitments cannot dictate informational analysis and that informational analysis cannot dictate commitments. But now I must carry the argument another step. The difference between the two kinds of experience that enter into decisions, though important, is not total.

As an example of the issue, I refer to a recent article by economist Lester Thurow, "Why Do Economists Disagree?" With an admirable ability to smile at his own profession, he acknowledges that they do disagree. One reason is that economics is not a laboratory science in which investigators can run repeatable experiments isolated from all extraneous influence. Then he offers another reason, still more important for our present subject:

There are no public policies so good that everyone's income goes up; there are no public policies so bad that everyone's income goes down. Every policy has income distribution effects. As a consequence economic recommendations contain two major elements. First, there must be some hard economic information as to whose income will go up, whose income will go down, and what is the net result of those gains and losses. This is the scientific part of every economic problem. Second, however, there is an ethical value judgment as to whose income "ought" to go up or down. This ethical value judgment has nothing to do with technical economics, but is usually at the heart of differences between liberal and conservative economists.

By the very fact that we use the words "liberal or conservative" with respect to economists, we are saying that the discipline is somehow different. No one talks about liberal or conservative

chemists. There are only chemists who in the rest of their lives happen to be liberals or conservatives.¹⁷

The further significance of Thurow's theme is that people see in a social situation what their desires, their commitments, and their social location enable them to see. It is not as though the world offers a knowable body of information and scientific principles waiting to be discovered. At best, only some aspects of a total situation are apprehended; and among them, some one or few aspects become centres about which observer-participants organize the rest into a meaningful pattern.

"Facts" are not simply made to order—even though such may seem to be the case in many public arguments. Facts, to be sure, have an "objectivity" beyond wishful thinking. As Gunnar Myrdal puts it, "Facts kick."¹⁸ Wishes are not horses or houses or meals. Turnips are not watches or good jobs or gold bars. But facts never come naked; they come clothed in, imbedded in meaning. As Myrdal again says, both "ignorance and knowledge are generally not simple and haphazard but are opportunistic."¹⁹

The importance of social location

One major determiner of meaning and of the facts that fit meanings is social location. A mountain looks different from various points of the compass, from its peak, and from an airplane above it. Society offers even more diverse perspectives. To say that a military objective is worth ten per cent casualties means one thing to the general planning a campaign and something else to the soldiers attacking. Unemployment has quite different meanings in the Federal Reserve Board Room and among the unemployed.

That is why the making of policy requires participation not only of experts with different skills but of people with different social locations. Because people with access to power have more influence than others, the process, even in a society intended to be democratic, is skewed. Churches in our own society characteristically represent the more stable and at least the moderately privileged social groups; but when they remember their historic faith, they feel a responsibility to represent the less privileged. Usually they lack the imagination or will to do so very well; but it is interesting that when churches take formal steps to influence social policy, their positions are somewhat different from the positions that come from an undifferentiated poll of the members.

Ideology

A second major determiner of meaning, almost as important as the first, is ideology. Since ideology is a word of many meanings, I shall say that I am here using the term in a non-pejorative sense to stand for any set of conceptions or any picture of society and the world that helps to guide action. It is not quite identical with a worldview, because a worldview may include speculations irrelevant to action. But in the sense that I use the word, everybody has an ideology, and the ideology influences decisions. It may often be that ideology, as Karl Marx and Karl Mannheim proposed, is a distortion of reality in the interests of protecting a privileged position. If so, the honest person will try to cleanse ideology and correct the distortions. But some ideology is necessary to guide effective action.

An ideology, as I am using the term, is neither sheer commitment nor sheer informational analysis, although it incorporates both—along with a lot of experience and common sense. It is an amalgam—powerful though usually imprecise—of information, ideas, purposes, emotional tones, hopes and fears, folk attitudes, and conventional wisdom of the dominant reference group for any individual.

Honest and rigorous thinkers and doers are uneasy about ideology. They try to whittle down its scope by identifying within it their considered commitments and their informational analysis. But they never eliminate it. The reason is that ideology is not simply a synthesis of values and facts; it is the framework into which people fit their values and facts; or it is the skeleton around which they arrange values and facts. Ideology determines what purposes and information, among infinite possibilities, will become the centre of organization for remaining purposes and information. It is both a magnifying glass and a filter for emphasizing and excluding perceptions in that opportunistic mix of knowledge and ignorance that Myrdal describes.

That is why a social-political process, designed to serve the needs of a society, will aim to secure the most complete and accurate informational analysis available, will relate this to the most carefully considered values of the society, and will incorporate in the process people from a variety of social situations and ideologies.

Social controversy, in fact, is largely ideological controversy. Such controversy is messy; it constantly argues values under the guise of facts and facts under the guise of values. It abounds in arguments hard to verify or criticize. We might wish for something better. But it is very hard to sort out the real issues and state them with precision.

Furthermore, none of us is expert on all the controversial issues that we are called to think and decide about. We listen to the experts and find them disagreeing. So we usually choose our experts on the basis of their ideological affinities with ourselves. And given the way experts make up their minds, we are not entirely mistaken in using that method of choice.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

I started with the title, “From Theology to Social Decisions—and Return.” My position is that any serious theology drives the believer to make social decisions and contributes to those decisions because it articulates the commitments incorporated in those decisions. But rarely if ever does theology alone determine the decision. It must be joined with informational analysis, for which theology needs the help of other disciplines, particularly the social sciences. Decisions take place at the convergence of commitments and informational analysis. They take place in a social location—preferable one broad enough to include many sublocations—and within an ideological setting.

A reverse process is going on. As theology contributes to social decisions, those social decisions are contributing to theology. It is in making decisions and acting on commitments that persons and communities expose themselves to new social locations and insights that enlarge and deepen perceptions and thereby influence theology. Nobody completes a theology, then acts on it. It is in activity, as truly as in reflection, that people and churches discover their theologies.

“What right does theology have to address questions of social organizations?” It has every right to address such questions, not to dictate the answers, but to exercise whatever persuasion it can. It has no right to avoid addressing such questions.

“What qualifications and what limitations does it bring to this task?” It has the qualifications and limitations of all human activity, which is never omniscient or infallible. It has the particular limitation that it depends upon informational analysis that is not derived from theology as such, but that depends on contemporary experience and the skills of many disciplines, especially (in our time) the physical and social sciences. In the interaction of the most basic human commitments with a variety of professional skills, social locations, and ideological perspectives lies the possibility that a democratic society can cope with urgent decisions in this precarious age of history. To participate in the process is the right and responsibility of theologians.

NOTES

1. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 11.
2. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 145.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
5. Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity in European History* (London: Collins, 1952), p. 25.
6. Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Meaning of the 20th Century* (New York: Harper & Row, Colophon edition), pp. 6-7.
7. Lynn White, Jr., *Machina ex Deo* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968), pp. 63, 65. Cf. Rene Dubos, *A God Within* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), Ch. 8.
8. William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 1942), p. 37.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
10. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932) p. 4.
11. Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p. 15.
12. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), Vol I, pp. 477-478.
13. Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 65-66, 137.
14. F. A. Iremonger, *William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury: His Life and Letters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 438-439.
15. William Brainard, professor of economics and provost at Yale University, quoted in the *New York Times*, Oct. 14, 1981, p. D1.
16. The argument of the following section is developed at greater length in my book, *Forced Options: Social Decisions for the 21st Century* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), Ch. 12.
17. Lester Thurow, "Why Do Economists Disagree?," *Dissent* 29:176-77 (Spring 1982).
18. Gunnar Myrdal, *Objectivity in Social Research* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), p. 40.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Comment**Arthur A. Shenfield****Shinn in general**

This is an essay on the interrelations between theology and the social sciences. With cogent argument Dr. Shinn upholds the claim of theology to pronounce upon the problems of society. At the same time he recognizes the right of the social scientist to face the theologian with the lessons of his information on social phenomena and his analysis of them, and to require him to take account of them in reaching his conclusions. The theologian and the social scientist, he tells us, must not only respect each other's standing and competence; they need each other. Each can help the other to follow his own discipline with greater success, to grasp its truths and elude its errors with greater certainty.

Thus, for example, on the theologian. "The mystery and transcendence of God impose some reservations upon those who seek to declare the divine will. Those who are too sure they know God's will and too quick to condemn all who disagree with them are likely to be in greatest danger of the pride that is the central sin." On the social scientist, for example, he gives us various references to eminent practitioners (Smith, Comte, Keynes, Tobin, Friedman, Thurow) who have recognized the importance, perhaps the primacy, of moral considerations in the study of their disciplines. There are numerous other statements, often pithy and to the point, which in Dr. Shinn's view describe a variety of aspects of the interaction or interface of theology and the social sciences.

The heart of the matter is described as follows. "Social policies take shape at the convergence of two kinds of human experience that are distinguishable though not absolutely separable. The first involves human commitments, loyalties, purposes, a sense of the meaning of

life, a belief about the qualities of a good life and good society, and reflection on priorities and conflicts of values. The second involves a body of information about the world and analytical skills for organizing that information, for understanding the physical universe and social process, and for maintaining or changing a society.” Thus commitments are basic to social policy, but they cannot be effective without informational analysis. Correspondingly “no quantity of informational analysis adds up to a social policy apart from the commitments that are joined to it.”

In their essentials Dr. Shinn’s propositions on the interface between theology and the social sciences are unexceptionable; and his exposition of them is admirably fair, judicious and well-rounded, with a clear intention to recognize impartially the proper functions and claims peering at each other across the interface. Hence it is regrettable that his essential argument is considerably vitiated when he descends to the consideration of particulars. Consider the following.

Shinn in particular

First, the most important. Dr. Shinn’s concept of the informational analysis necessary to mesh with commitments is defective. He describes it as follows. “If I am committed to helping people in need, I cannot do much until I know what the needs of people are. If they are hungry, if they are drowning, if they are bored, if they are illiterate, if they are infected with lethal viruses, if they are being invaded by enemy troops, these different needs call for different responses. I cannot learn the needs of people by steeping myself in religious tradition or by practicing mystical meditation apart from informational analysis. Even if I focus on a single need—say, malnutrition and starvation—I cannot contribute to an effective policy without learning something about calories and vitamins, climate and weather, economic pressures that help or hinder producers of crops and their customers, international relations that subject some societies to decisions made in other societies.” All this is entirely correct, but it misses what is by far the most important informational analysis necessary to balance, and to give a correct thrust to, the commitments prescribed by the theologian. What is sure to lead the theologian into grave error is ignorance not just of the fact of scarcity, as the economist defines it, but of the economist’s analysis of the consequences of scarcity. Allied with this, and equally damaging, is ignorance of the nature of market order and

of the consequences of governmental intervention into its operation.

Secondly, less important but still serious, the essay contains numerous observations which are rooted in popular myth and superstition, though fortunately Dr. Shinn does not descend to the levels deplorably common among theologians and religious spokesmen. Here are examples.

- i. "Did Protestant Christian belief nurture capitalism or did capitalism capture corrupt Protestant Christianity?" In the second part of this question capitalism is ignorantly convicted of evil, while this is by no means balanced in the first part because if one merely says that Protestantism nurtured capitalism, one may mean, as millions have been taught to believe, that it nurtured a viper in its bosom. Either way capitalism is assumed to be evil.
- ii. "Not all theologians agree with Gutierrez . . . on his extensive appropriation of Marxist themes." This is like saying that not all theologians are prepared to accept the goodness of sin. It implies that Marxism, though disputable and contestable, is one social theory amongst others which a theologian might possibly accept or respect.
- iii. ". . . these same church people may painfully wonder: why were churches so slow to speak out against slavery, against race prejudice, against imperialism and the abuses of the robber barons of the gilded age?" The list illustrates the confusions which buzz in the liberal (meaning, of course, illiberal) American mind. The listing of the last two with the first two is as odious as it is popular. There are imperialisms and imperialisms. No doubt Dr. Shinn has in mind, *inter alia*, the British, French, Dutch and Belgian empires which gave peace, law and liberty to hundreds of millions, and the dismantling of which may cogently be argued to have been one of the great disasters of the human race in this century. As for the alleged robber barons, Dr. Shinn has no doubt read the old muckrakers and Matthew Josephson, and imagines that they gave him gospel truth.
- iv. "A biblically-based justice protests against destitution in the midst of affluence." Correct, and yet commonly the cause of pestilential error. First, it is vital to ask if the affluence is the cause of the destitution or not. In pre-capitalist societies it largely was; in capitalism it is emphatically not, *pace* the critics of capitalism. In fact capitalism is the most powerful engine for the relief of destitu-

tion ever known to the human race. Secondly, is the relief of destitution to be by private action or benevolence or by the pseudo-benevolence of the State's fist? One has the uneasy feeling that Dr. Shinn's unstated assumptions are on the side of the latter.

- v. "That did not leave Temple complacent about the injustices in society. He was a foremost advocate of economic change in Britain, a representative of liberal leftist programs." Obviously Temple is here presented not just as a champion of justice, which according to his dim lights he certainly was, but without question as an intelligent champion of justice. In fact Temple had nothing to offer the British people other than the fly-blown nostrums of the supposedly moderate political Left.
- vi. "... that the church should exercise itself forcefully for the increase of social justice." What nonsense, indeed evil, is perpetrated in the name of social justice! Dr. Shinn, and others, should read Hayek, *viz.* "What I hope to have made clear is that the phrase 'social justice' is not an innocent expression of goodwill towards the less fortunate, it has become a dishonest insinuation that one ought to agree to a demand of some special interest. If political discussion is to become honest it is necessary to recognize that the term is intellectually disreputable, the mark of demagoguery or cheap journalism which responsible thinkers ought to be ashamed to use because once its vacuity is recognized, its use is dishonest. I may, as a result of long endeavours to trace the destructive effect which the invocation of 'social justice' has had on our moral sensitivity, and of again and again finding even eminent thinkers thoughtlessly using the phrase, have become unduly allergic to it, but I have come to feel strongly that the greatest service that I can still render to my fellow men would be that I could make the speakers and writers among them thoroughly ashamed ever again to use the term 'social justice.'" (Law, Legislation and Liberty, Vol. 2, page 97).
- vii. "It elevates . . . cooperation above competition. . . . If cooperation is ethically better than competition. . . ." Here is the familiar failure to grasp the fact that competition in a free economy involves cooperation, though not the form of cooperation which many have been taught to believe is the only ethical one.
- viii. "The *homo economicus* of traditional economic theory is as far from reality as the idealized *homo benignus* of utopian economic dreams". Shades of Carlyle, Ruskin and all the other part-knaves-

part-fools who denounced classical economics! Here is the old illusion that the *homo economicus* was the very picture of selfish man. It is utterly deplorable that after countless exposures of its error (eg. by, amongst others, Wicksteed, who was a man of the cloth) this hoary old misunderstanding keeps rearing its head. Economics deals with the implications of purposive action, but the purposes may be selfish or unselfish, egoistic or altruistic.

- ix. “A school of contemporary economic thought . . . maintains that the function of economics is to build models, independent of values and of policy recommendations.” Dr. Shinn does not understand the difference between positive and normative economics, still less why positive economics is as important as it is. He would have understood it if he had thought through his observations about the importance of informational analysis.
- x. The passages on Comte—anyone who holds up Comte as any kind of scholarly thinker should know that his social “science” was about as scientific as the “science which Gulliver met in Laputa (see Hayek in “The Counter-Revolution of Science”).
- xi. *Pace* Lester Thurow, “liberal” and “conservative” economists do not disagree because they favour raising or depressing the incomes of different people. Economists of the classical, neo-classical and Austrian traditions favour policies which accord with the rights of *all* people, including those whose incomes may fall as the result of correct policy.

It is a pity that so intelligent and fair-minded a scholar as Dr. Shinn has not taken the trouble to clear his thought of the errors which commonly infest the public mind.

Comment

Murdith R. McLean

The risk of being wrong

I'm reminded of an occasion when several of us in the Philosophy Department with graduate students were meeting to decide on the distribution of graduate scholarships. One beleaguered colleague felt that in our deliberations the merits of one of his students were being quite ignored. After listening for a few moments to a resumé of alleged shortcomings in the written work of this student, our colleague drew himself up and exclaimed, "But at least what he says is *false!*"

Some of you will not be surprised to hear that among philosophers it is sometimes counted an achievement to say something false. Not that they admire falsehood above all else; given the choice, philosophers at least claim to prefer the truth. But it is—or at least has been—widely held among philosophers that on subjects of fundamental importance, people are more apt to utter profound-sounding nonsense than they are to say things which are even candidates for truth-value. Thus they avoid the sin of making false claims, by making claims which couldn't be true either; which really means not making claims at all.

I wouldn't want to suggest for an instant that Professor Shinn has avoided the risk of falsehood by uttering what is cognitively meaningless. In fact, if he is saying what I understand him to be saying, almost everything he says seems to me to be true. But I do think that Professor Shinn has paid an unduly high price—though not the price of meaninglessness—for avoiding falsehood. The price I believe he has paid is that of keeping the discussion at a level of generalization where there is little chance of disagreement—or of falsehood—but where genuine and important controversies are obscured or avoided.

That Professor Shinn carries on this discussion at an abstract level is in a way not surprising, for he takes on a daunting number of topics.

He begins with a discussion of some of the ways in which theology and the social sciences interact. He moves then to a consideration of the complex connections between faith (not just Christian faith) and action. Following that there is a capsule account of the emergence in recent years of the various social sciences. And, finally, Professor Shinn devotes some space to a consideration of the right possessed by theology and by the social sciences to address questions of social organization, as well as the qualifications and limitations each of them brings to that undertaking. Perhaps others more competent than I am in these subject areas will find bones to pick in the fairly general assertions Professor Shinn makes on these topics. My own reservations, as I have already indicated, have more to do with what surrounds and underlies Professor Shinn's comments. While he alludes at several points to the rockiness of the road between theology and social decisions, one is left, I think, with only the occasional sense of exactly what the impediments are like on this highway, and why any regular traveller should be obliged to put up with them. The result, I think, is just a general impression that there are rough spots in the relations between theology and the social sciences, and in their joint attempts to address matters of social concern; but on the whole the trip is managed by many without intolerable shocks to their intellectual suspension systems. I believe the road is and ought to be travelled, but there is need to be clearer about the location and dimensions of impediments. Part of the result may be that we come to see the road as even rougher than Professor Shinn suggests. But another part may be that we make better progress with serious road repair, and in the end more vehicles will get through reasonably intact.

The theologian's "rights"

Let me illustrate my point by considering the last topic discussed by Professor Shinn: "The Contribution of Theology and the Social Sciences to Social Decisions."¹ He takes direction for his enquiry from a pair of questions asked first about theology and second about social sciences. He asks what right theology/social science has to address questions of social organization, and then what qualifications and limitations each brings to that task. Professor Shinn prepares the ground by explicating six "assumptions":

1. Neither theologians nor social scientists are an elite privileged to make decisions for societies;

2. Societies make their own decisions, intentionally or accidentally, partly by political processes and partly by thousands of personal and group decisions that result in an impact upon total society;
3. Religious leaders and theologians have a right to participate in those decisions, just as social scientists do;
4. Both theological and social scientific insight have a contribution to make to the social process;
5. Religious communities and social scientific communities alike sometimes avoid their social responsibilities, sometimes out of timidity and sometimes out of indifference;
6. Both communities sometimes exaggerate their competence and their authority to influence decisions.

Having recorded his assumption that (among other things) theology and the social sciences have the right in question, Shinn expands somewhat on the familiar reminder that social policies result from the interaction of two elements: “commitment,” and “information analysis.” He emphasizes that these elements are distinct, at least to the extent that social policy cannot properly arise from either one on its own. But he insists also that they are not absolutely separable. Social scientists’ commitments, he contends, are not clearly detachable from their practice as social scientists. Moreover, he holds, it is true for all of us that such things as social location and ideological perspective play a part in determining the size and shape of “the facts.”

Professor Shinn concludes that theology and the social sciences interact in social decision-making; and that in the case of theology at least, there is a reciprocal effect, in that the process of translating theology into social choices does not leave theology unchanged. On the central question of what right theology has to address social questions, he concludes simply, “It has every right to address such questions.” Concerning qualifications and limitations, he is equally plain-spoken. “It has the qualifications and limitations of all human activity, which is never omniscient or infallible. It has the particular limitation that it depends upon informational analysis that is not derived from theology as such. . . .”

Now even if one agrees with these conclusions—and I will be surprised if there are many that find them controversial—there is surely something unsatisfying about the way that they are expressed and the route by which they are arrived at. Start with the question of theology’s right to address social questions. Surely to begin by simply assuming, as Shinn does, that theology has such a right is to ignore a

set of quite fundamental issues. It is not clear that all thoughtful people will so willingly concede such a right to the theologian; and many of those that do would at least require that some argument be forthcoming in support of that claim.

It is instructive, I think, to begin by being as clear as we can about what it is to *have* a right of this kind, and what it is that such a right would entitle one to do. That way of putting things already brings out something of what a right is; it is some kind of *entitlement*. It is a moral or legal possession which may be thought of as something like a license. To say that I have a right to defend myself against injury, or to paint my garage whatever colour I choose, is to say that I have some form of permission (moral, legal or both) to do those things. It follows that my rights bear with them restraints on others. To say that I have a right to do a given thing is to say that it is in some way wrong for others to prevent or interfere with my doing that thing. My rights, so far as they are honoured, bring me freedom from hindrance.

Given this very sketchy notion of what rights are, it is hard to see how anyone could deny to theologians the right to “address questions of social organization.” How could anyone deny that theologians are entitled to discuss such questions; and that if they wish to preach sermons on social topics, or write articles on such subjects for church papers and theological journals, it would be wrong to prevent them? This right seems but an instance of the more general right, given at least a good deal of lip service in our society, to freedom of speech. Perhaps this explains why Professor Shinn simply assumes the entitlement of the theologian to speak about social issues, and why he links it with the assumption that societies make their decisions about these issues as a result of the interplay of contributions from countless groups and individuals. And perhaps this explains as well his very modest account of the qualifications possessed by theology for this task, which are merely the qualifications “of all human activity.” No more qualification than this is needed, if it is just the right to freedom of speech that is being defended.

The right to be taken seriously

But this just isn't the way the debate actually goes on. More is demanded of theologians by way of qualifications than just their membership in another human activity, and surely most theologians believe they can meet the demand. The reason that more is required – and that

theologians at least attempt to meet the requirement—is that more is at stake than just the freedom of speech. The right that the theologian is interested in defending, and that is surely under discussion in Professor Shinn’s paper, is not just the right to discuss social questions within the household of faith. There are those—some from within the household!—who would deny even this domestic right to theologians; but I shall (at the risk of overlooking some genuine obstacles myself) ignore that extreme position for now. Theologians are concerned to earn more than the right to speak amongst believers on these issues. They want the right to speak to the community *at large*, believers and non-believers. And more than that. What is at issue here is not just the right to speak about these issues, but to be *listened to* and *taken seriously*. So, the question is whether theologians have a right to expect a hearing, for their utterances to be taken account of, in those councils where decisions about social concerns are taken.

I’ve had to use vague expressions like “being taken seriously,” “given a hearing” and “be taken account of,” for there is no very precise way of describing the kind of influence the church ought to have on these matters; nor is there unanimity among church people as to its proper authority. Professor Shinn is surely correct to remind us that theologians ought not to expect to be treated as sole and infallible sources of social decisions. But surely he is, with that very reminder, recognizing implicitly that *some* form of influence is being sought; and that the right in question is more than just a “Hyde Park” right to speak our piece, however inane, without interference.

If *that* is the right which the theologian seeks, then it can be seen why it is not immediately granted by all parties. And we can see, too, why the accompanying question about qualifications and rights is not only appropriate but unavoidable. If theologians want not just to be tolerated, but listened to with some attention, then they must be prepared to answer the question “why?” And I believe it is worth recognizing the sort of demand this places on theology. Obviously it will not suffice to rest theology’s claim on the modest proposal that Christianity is composed in part by a world view, which includes an account of the nature of humans and society, and that such views would be relevant to social decision-making. There are many world views, and to support its entitlement to be taken seriously Christian theology must establish more than its membership in the menagerie. Some theologians, or at least church members, who recognize this have elevated this form of justification one notch by adding the claim that Chris-

tianity is, as a matter of social fact, a prominent if not dominant outlook among citizens of Western societies. On those grounds, it is claimed, Christian theology earns a right at least to an attentive hearing. Those with a taste for what are sometimes called “political realities” may find themselves attracted by this argument. It has the great advantage of proceeding from premises which require no religious commitment in order to be granted. But in the end it is unsatisfactory.

It cannot be satisfying to the theologian, or convincing to the policy-maker, to rest with a claim to be heard that is based on what can only be viewed from outside the faith as a historical accident. If the theologian is to exhibit qualifications which can be expected to earn a hearing, they must have to do with the possession of insights relevant to the making of social decisions. Professor Shinn recognizes this when he includes in his assumptions the assertion that both “theological and social scientific insight have a contribution to make to the social process.” But to make this an *assumption* is to ignore a crater-sized hole in the road to social decision-making. Earlier in his paper, Professor Shinn rightly identifies two areas within theology that bear especially upon the social order: Christian ethics; and doctrines concerning human nature and history. But to have these resources taken seriously in the process of social decision-making, the theologian must be willing to develop the relevant theological positions *clearly*, and *compellingly* (Each of those adverbs invites considerable elaboration.) Theologians *believe* they have insights to contribute to the process, but they will have to make this evident to others than themselves. And one of the ironies here is that it is not just non-believers who require convincing.

Limitations on the right to be taken seriously

I have been talking about the theologian’s qualifications to speak out and be heard on social issues. I have touched upon what many theologians would regard as a qualification they hold; the possession of insights relevant to the discussion of these issues. But I have found myself drawn beyond that point to a reminder about another qualification which religious thinkers *ought* to possess; the ability to establish in that forum where they hope to be heard, the fact that they *do* have insights. With that reminder I believe we come to a point which has to be recognized as a limitation in the approach of theologians to matters of social importance.

One chronic difficulty faced by theologians when they attempt to win a hearing on social matters is that they do not speak with one voice. It may well be that the results of theological reflection on the raw material of the faith is rich with insights concerning human nature, society and history. But even the person who is anxious to bring these insights to bear upon social concerns will be struck at the diversity, and—what is worse—inconsistency, of what respected theologians have to say on these matters. Of course any intellectual discipline will be characterized in part by disagreement among its practitioners, sometimes on quite fundamental matters. Recent discussions about the logic of scientific enquiry, stimulated in part by Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, have spilled over into debates concerning the methods of the social sciences, and even theology.² One result has been a striking reminder of the extent to which intellectual disciplines may unite under one subject-title, thinkers who differ not just about the outcomes of any enquiry but about the very rules by which enquiry should be pursued. Perhaps theology is no worse off in this respect than its neighbours in the intellectual disciplines. But there are times when it *appears* worse off; when theologians appear to be starting from such disparate views concerning those insights which are supposed to inform our deliberations on social issues, that confidence in their utterances must be shaken. Indeed, the very questions of whether the churches should, as churches, address social issues, and whether other action on the part of the churches is permitted or required, are questions on which there is fundamental and chronic disagreement.³ It is in the nature of theology that it begins with a form of experience which is rich, varied and related in complex ways with every aspect of individual and collective life. And theology must attempt to precipitate from this experience words; words which will guide action as well as further experience. The sheer extent of this realm of experience, and the way in which it is interwoven through so much of human life, make it understandable that theology has even less by way of an approved method than other disciplines. This is what makes the diversity and incompatibility of theological opinion a limitation of theology, and not just of theologians.

Professor Shinn quite rightly draws attention to the incompleteness of the theological contribution to discussion of social concerns, and its need for the “information analysis” provided by the social sciences among others. And he draws attention to the way in which ideological controversy—and theologies presumably at least resemble ideologies—typically blurs our view of the issues by mingling facts with values.

The limitation to which I am now drawing attention is no doubt connected with those identified by Shinn. But in the context of theology's right to address social issues, and its need to establish the credentials to do this, the limitation in theology's method assumes special importance.

Summary

I have made a few remarks about the right of theology to address matters of social concern and some of the qualifications and limitations it brings to that activity. I've made a suggestion about what right is actually being discussed here, and the way in which that requires certain qualifications. That, in turn, has led to an observation about one significant limitation in the theological enterprise: the uncertainty of its method, and resulting diversity in pronouncement. I have not touched on the rights and qualifications of the social sciences; but then Professor Shinn gave most of his attentions to theology also.

My complaint that Professor Shinn's discussion was too general may now be thought to be an instance of one with a plank in his eye drawing attention to the speck in someone else's. All I seem to have managed is a death grip on the obvious. My defense is that we sometimes need reminders of the obvious. It is my view that theology will have the impact on social policy that it wants to have, and arguably deserves, only if theologians are willing and able to *win* that right. And that, I think, will require not just an enlargement but some re-direction of our theological energies.

NOTES

1. Professor Shinn points out in a footnote that his discussion is an abridgement of a chapter in a recent book. I have not read the book; but in any case assume it is fair to consider his argument in the paper on its own merits.
2. See Basil Mitchell's, *The Justification of Religious Belief* (London, New York: MacMillan; 1973.)

3. See, for instance, John C. Bennett, "Two Christianities"; Howard E. Kerschner, "What Should the Churches Do About Social Problems?"; and John Howard Yoder, "The Biblical Mandate"; all reprinted in Paul T. Jersild and Dale A. Johnson (ed.), *Moral Issues and Christian Response* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; 1976).

Discussion

Edited by: Kenneth G. Elzinga

Arthur Shenfield: I believe that in the form in which they are stated, and as far as they go, Roger Shinn's propositions on the interface between theology and the social sciences are correct, and indeed unexceptionable. Furthermore, it's clear that he seeks to distribute the rights and duties, respectively, of theologians and social scientists, with a most scrupulous and admirable fairness.

The question, however, is, "What happens as a result of grasping these propositions, when one gets down to brass tacks? How helpful are they in practice?" There, I fear, it is possible to grasp these unexceptionable propositions, and yet still be influenced by egregious errors.

I ventured to list a few of what I perceived to be such errors in Roger Shinn's paper. I don't propose to rehearse them, but it is very very important, it seems, to me, that one can have a very enlightened view, an intelligent view, of the interface between theology and economics, or the other social sciences, and still believe in some egregious errors about the social sciences.

I fear that it may well happen that some theologians sin against the light. They are, or ought to be, experts in theological propositions; but

they do not hesitate to harbour in their minds propositions about economics, or other social sciences, without ever seriously seeking to study them. Thus, they become slaves of the popular notions which happen to be floating around amongst the general public. They have a duty not to do that; nevertheless, I fear that they too often do.

The only point in my comment that I would like to say a few more words about, concerns the quotation from Hayek on the emptiness, indeed the evil, of the concept of social justice. The concept of social justice leads people into terrible error, indeed often evil, because first it's an empty concept, and secondly the pursuit of an empty concept in itself is likely to produce evil. Or perhaps, using very old fashioned language, it could be that, as we know, the Devil is most effective when he mimics the voice of God.

So, if you have a concept which looks as if it's a divine concept, but in fact is empty, you are then the prey to the devil's machinations. The concept of social justice is empty because it implies that the Great Society in which we live can be just. And the whole point of Hayek's exposition is that it cannot. People can be just; individuals can be just; groups of individuals acting as groups purposefully can be just; clubs, corporations, governments, even mobs can be just or unjust because they act purposefully. But a society, that is to say the Great Society in which we live, cannot be just or unjust because it isn't something that acts purposefully. It is a network of people.

Secondly, the pursuit of this empty concept of social justice leads to a terribly dangerous atavistic notion or feeling which is clearly extremely prominent amongst the theologians who criticize the free society and the free economy. This atavistic feeling takes us back to the time when we humans lived in families or small clans. There, of course, you could have social justice because the family, or the small clan, wasn't just a network but a group with a collective will.

The principles on which the paterfamilias was able to dispense justice among his children were, of course, principles which enabled him to take account of the individual worth, deserts, or morality of each child, or each member of the family.

But when we come to the Great Society, the only thing which enables people to be just, not the society, is the establishment and maintenance of impersonal rules (Paul Heyne develops this in his paper)—impersonal rules of justice. Justice then has to be blind and must not be a respecter of persons. The individual moral worth of the plaintiff must not override the legal rights of the defendant, who may be a scoundrel, and so on.

Similarly, in the disposition of power by government, governments must not seek to do good according to their own lights. They may only seek to do good according to rules of law to which they are subject—impersonal rules of law; and so above all in the market.

What too many theologians see when they look at the market, and look at the free society, and what really irks them is the impersonal feature of it. So that what results is not what would result in a family, or a small clan. And, indeed, very often they talk in terms of the “family of man”; and all of us having a duty to our brothers, who are all mankind. They fail to see that if you try to pursue justice in that way, in the Great Society, you end up by undermining the impersonal rules which *alone* enable people in that Society to act justly as individuals, or as groups.

That, I believe, is the essence of this matter. And I hope we’ll see more about it when we come to Paul Heyne’s paper.

Murdith McLean: Well, my contribution, I think, is quite different from Arthur Shenfield’s. First of all, I don’t share his view that social justice is an empty concept. And neither do I detect, as I think Arthur does, all sorts of evidences of dangerous flirtation with left leaning views in Roger Shinn’s paper.

Where I think I disagree with him most, though, is in the second sentence in his paper (that is Arthur’s paper). He says, “With cogent argument, Dr. Shinn upholds the claim of theology to pronounce upon the problems of society.” And that’s my complaint: I don’t believe Roger does uphold that with cogent argument.

And let me take out of the number of topics that Roger chose to deal with, the last one, the question: What right does theology have to address matters of social concern? And, what qualifications and what limitations does it bring to that task?

Now first of all, Roger lists in the assumptions that occur immediately after the posing of that question, the assumption that theology does have such a right. And he concludes at the end that it has the qualifications, and by the way the limitations too, of any kind of human activity, plus the particular limitation that it requires the supplement of factual judgements that the social sciences often are asked to provide.

But when you ask the question, commonly: What right has person A to do B?, very often what’s built into that question is: What right, *if any?* In other words, it’s not open to the person who’s answering that

question just to assume that you have a right, and just say the right is whatever people usually have when they engage in this activity.

I should have thought the normal thing contained in that question, at least the normal thing that ought to be contained in the question in this context, is: Does theology have any right, at all? I don't think that we can get away with simply assuming that theology does have a right. And I think part, also, of asking that question: what right does theology have, is then going on to say: If you think it has a right, you must be prepared to argue for it by showing what qualifications it has. And you must have the decency to show the humility of being aware of the limitations it brings.

I don't think that just being another human activity, when you put things into this context, provides anything like enough by way of qualifications. Especially, I think, when it's recognized that the right that's being sought here is not simply the right to be able to stand up on our soap box and talk to one another in whatever sort of terms we like. Rather, it is to speak out in public in the councils where these decisions are being made, with the expectation that they will be given an attentive hearing.

I think that this is one of the most evident limitations of theology. Very often, too often, it assumes it has the qualifications to speak out on social issues. And that's an assumption I think that not everyone is willing to grant, and that theology is going to have to establish.

Behind this, I think, lies another limitation. It is the notable disparity, indeed very often the utter conflict and incompatibility of pronouncements, that theologians make with equal emphasis and equal applause from their constituencies, on matters of very fundamental importance to these social issues. I know that theology is not alone in speaking with a mixture of voices on these issues.

But, it's particularly vulnerable; and especially when it's got to win a right, which not everyone is going to concede, to speak on these issues. I think we have to get our act together a bit better. Now I know, again, that that's not going to come about speedily. It's going to be expected of any discipline that's doing any sort of work on anything, that there is going to be fundamental disagreement. But I think we are too patient of it in theology. And we live with it far too easily.

Shinn didn't say much, and neither did I, about the other part of that question—the right of social sciences to speak out on social issues. And I think that would be a very interesting question. And perhaps a good commentator would have spoken about that. I didn't, but

maybe we should in our discussion. What right, indeed, have the social sciences? God knows, if the voices of theology are mixed on these issues, I don't think the social sciences are noted for their unanimity either. The qualifications and limitations of social sciences, I think, would come in for some exploration.

One other thing. An intriguing question, that I don't think Roger raised, and I cannot blame him for not raising more questions when I registered a bit of a complaint that he dealt with as many as he did, but it would be interesting to ask: What right, if any, do the social sciences have to comment upon, not social questions, but theology itself? I'd love to have a go at that one, too. And what qualifications and limitations would the social sciences bring to their critique, if they ought to make it, of theology?

Roger Shinn: Mr. Chairman, my critics have shown a friendliness that does not hide the barbs in their comments. (laughter) And I'm not sure whether it's more bruising to a writer's vanity to be told by Murdith McLean that an essay says things so obvious they can't be controversial. Or to be told, as Arthur Shenfield does, that the essay is filled with egregious errors which commonly infest the public mind. Since both criticisms can hardly be valid, I'd like to think that neither is. (laughter) But I'd like to say to Murdith that I think I am more controversial than you think. And to Arthur, that I think I am more intelligent than you think. (laughter)

Now, I will start by referring to the question I was assigned to address. Though I was told from the beginning that the conference was on "the morality of the market, and its religious implications," that was not the topic I was assigned. I was almost sorry, because I lecture on that subject every year in the New York University Graduate School of Business Administration, where I co-teach a course with a professional economist; and I like lectures to do double duty.

But I was requested to write on the more theoretical question: the relevance of theology to social science and social thought. And that's what I set out to do. And that's why I took a look at the three major social sciences — not to do capsule histories, but to inquire into each of them as to the controversy within each, about the relation of values and ethical commitments to the rationale of each, and its empirical aspect.

Now in building my case, I opposed at least three positions fairly prominent in contemporary society. And maybe I should have made

this more pointed. First, I am critical of those social teachings and activities of the churches. — about half of what they do in this area — that fail to take account of what I call the “relative autonomy” of the social sciences. Those guilty of this offer pretentious moralisms in answer to questions they’ve not studied adequately in their empirical and secular dimensions. Or they make the easy movements from the certitudes of faith to the complexities of the social process (for which I criticized Charles Clayton Morrison earlier this morning).

Second, I am equally critical of the widespread assumptions of secular culture that religious communities have no business intruding in social controversies. Now this assumption is partly supported by the ineptitude of much religious ethics. But I think it is totally mistaken in its understanding of religion.

And third, I am rejecting the positivistic strain of the social sciences, which assumes that they deliver authoritative judgements independent of the social location and ideology of their practitioners. And in answer to that I propose the outlines of an epistemology. This epistemology owes something to the Hebrew prophets. It owes something to Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Karl Mannheim, something to Gunnar Myrdal and Peter Berger, while disagreeing in part with all of these. And if it seems obvious and uncontroversial, this is the first gathering of scholars where I found that response. And actually, as I read the symposium papers, I think I have a lot of work to do in making converts of some of you.

Now, on this point as a matter of detail, I’d like to say to Arthur Shenfield that I do not at all disdain the importance of building models. It was one thing I referred to. I have some slight reputation as an advocate of models. My quarrel is with those scholars who say that building models is the sole task of the social sciences; and who are often oblivious to the epistemological and ethical assumptions that enter into their models.

I think Murdith McLean has asked a very important question, when he asked, “What entitlement does a theologian claim in addressing issues of social organization, beyond the bare rights of freedom of speech?” In my paper I said, “Part of the business of theology is to explore what Whitehead calls those secret, imaginative backgrounds present but not explicit in most human thinking.” I am glad Murdith invites me to say a word more on that.

A theologian usually addresses, first of all, a community of faith. Theologians try to show the meaning of the beliefs, the rituals, the

symbolisms, of the community for its intellectual life and activity in the world. And their right to be taken seriously depends upon how well they articulate those meanings, and relate them to the culture in which they live. Some do it well, some badly.

When theologians address social issues, their right to an attentive hearing depends on their ability to drive the meanings of their tradition to the point of intersection with the processes of social analysis, coming out of secular disciplines of political science, economics and sociology.

Next, a theologian may also address the wider community—the society in general. Some don't, but most do. Then they try, as theology has often done through the centuries, to relate the convictions of the religious community to the insights and secret imaginative backgrounds that pervade the society at large. And then, they usually discover convergences and clashes—as in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. The history of synagogue and church are full of examples of this.

Now turning to Arthur Shenfield's comments, I'd enjoy replying to each of his eleven specific criticisms, if there were time. I think I could please him on some of them; but here I'll pick only one where I am sure I shall displease him. I do think that Marxism is one social theory, among others, from which theologians may appropriate some themes.

No theologian gulps Marx down whole. But Gustavo Gutierrez (to take the example I mention) maintains he draws upon Marx in the way that St. Thomas drew upon Aristotle. Now I see more problems in Aristotle than St. Thomas did and I see more problems in Marx than Gutierrez does.

Each effort at first seems highly improbable, and at second and third glance, each involves problems. But I see no reason to refuse to learn from Aristotle or Marx.

Now perhaps my stance will be clear if I comment on a topic that I was not invited to write upon, but that enters into most of the papers (and Arthur thinks colours mine—probably it does). I personally am not much interested in arguments about the abstractions—capitalism and socialism. Neither exists in pure form, and as ideal types both are pretty remote from reality.

I prefer Charles Lindblom's approach in his book, *Politics and Markets*, in which he says all societies have markets, and all societies have political processes and decisions. And the real issues are how societies operate and relate the two. I find the same thing quite explic-

itly in Hayek. I find a little bit different wording in Milton Friedman. Now, just to be candid, I'll say I am more persuaded by Lindblom's way of doing it, than by Milton's. But that sort of thing we can talk about.

I think the debates about how we mix the processes are very important, and much more useful than the debates about the abstractions. I rather like the pragmatism of the Chinese official who told Fox Butterfield, "We're having trouble defining what our system is. We are trying a number of experiments. Those that work, we will call socialism. Those that don't work, we will call capitalism."

In the United States, we tend to do it the other way around. I also like the old, old Polish joke, "capitalism is the oppression of man by man; socialism is exactly the opposite." (laughter) In reference to John Bennett, who is mentioned frequently in the papers for this symposium, in his latest book, *The Radical Imperative*, he urges this generation, "to press the socialistic questions, even though they do not accept ready-made socialistic answers."

Then he adds,

Those of us who spent ten years resisting the state in connection with the war in Vietnam, should not now choose economic institutions that have as their chief characteristic, the extension of the power of the state.

I think that perhaps the great social problem of our time is to discover ways, because our present ways are not adequate, of keeping powerful institutions—economic and political—somehow accountable to the people who constitute societies. I know of no nation that does this adequately. I do not expect or advocate utopia. I have theological and pragmatic reasons to resist it, but I do advocate improvement.

Walter Berns: I would like to pick up a new question that Murdith McLean gave us, and then reply to Roger Shinn in the form of a question. I will reverse the order of his questions. He asks, "What right has social science to speak on social issues?" And as a political scientist, I am struck by the muted quality of the voices of at least political science with respect to social issues.

It's not so true now as it was, and had been for a long time within my own discipline, but ten to fifteen years ago it was a matter of almost faith that political scientists adopt the position of saying, "We

have nothing whatever to contribute to social issues.” We, as scientists, insist upon this sharp division between facts and values, and we contribute only facts; and it was at that time that I gave up reading the *American Political Science Review*. Any large numbers of my colleagues gave up reading the *American Political Science Review*. And what characterizes that review is the absence of any counsel from political scientists on issues.

Now, I’ll let the economists speak here as to their right to speak on social issues, and turn to the second question: “What right has theology to speak on social issues?” We must question the authority claimed by theology to speak on social issues. To exaggerate a bit, although not too much I think, theology claims to speak in the voice of God. And that raises a problem, because at its extreme, this takes on a revolutionary form. *One* famous archbishop, geographically not so far from here, *is* claiming the right to decide for himself and for those who listen to his voice what taxes should be paid by a citizen of his particular faith to the federal government. This is only one step before the extreme, and it is happening right now.

And in Texas, another bishop has adopted the position that to be a faithful Roman Catholic, one must not work in a nuclear bomb assembly plant. This sort of thing is frequent in the history of the clashes between theology and law. In extreme cases, it led to revolution and civil war. Liberal democracy can be said to have begun when Hobbes argued that no one, and especially no theologian, was entitled to exercise “private judgment” with respect to matters of law and justice.

Now I don’t find that in Roger Shinn’s paper. In fact, I was struck by the absence of it in his paper. Earlier today, in his comments on the first paper, I thought I heard him use that term “ideology” in attributing it to Christianity, as well as to other systems of thought. And if that is so, that’s a very modest claim, indeed, he’s making on behalf of Christian theologians. In fact, one could even conclude that if Christianity is an ideology, and an ideology is as he defines it, then theology has nothing whatever to contribute to the discussion of social issues.

James Wall: To Walter Berns’ point: consider a man, such as Archbishop Hunthausen of Seattle, who considers himself as a religious speaker (and obviously he is an ordained priest and has been elected to be a church leader, and therefore is to be considered religious). If he speaks out on a social issue, I do not think we can say he is claiming to speak for God. I think, rather, he is speaking as he understands what

is correct. And the influences on his life certainly include God. All of us do that. There is not a person around this table who does not speak with a certain amount of certainty. We don't claim to speak for God, or for whatever motivates us. But we are motivated by something. There is not a soul here who is not motivated by something.

And therefore I have real trouble with criticism aimed at people like Hunthausen who speaks on a subject in a way I wouldn't speak. I would not choose to withhold my taxes for the war effort, or a defense effort. But that's his way of doing it. I don't think we can ever say that Hunthausen has said, "God directed me to say this, and therefore I am directing you in the name of God to do it."

He is doing nothing more than any one of us would do when we say, "Here is where I stand. I happen also to be standing within a context of religion. Take it for what it is worth."

Walter Berns: I suspect that this subject will be discussed at some length tomorrow. And I would confine my rejoinder here to a very brief remark, indeed. Hunthausen is not simply speaking; he is acting. And that you know, then allows me to formulate what he's now doing in Jeffersonian terms. He is committing an "act of the body." And Jefferson would say, "We have the right to put him in jail."

Philip Wogaman: I want to pose a question to Roger Shinn that, in a sense, was posed by Walter Berns, but I'd like to sharpen it and see if he could respond. I assure him that it's in the context of an overall very great appreciation for the paper. I think that it is a very solid, helpful piece of work. But on the matter of ideology: You remarked, Roger, a moment ago, that you didn't find the debate between capitalism and socialism a helpful exercise; and that the real issues came down to the more detailed questions of how government should relate to the economy, and the market. But then in your paper, as Walter Berns has pointed out, you have that statement "social controversy is largely ideological controversy," and so on.

On the next page, "we usually listen . . . we usually choose our experts on the basis of their ideological affinities with ourselves." And you indicate that's perhaps the way it should be. So the natural question that's left is: When you do your ideological thinking, and organize your ideological thinking, what do you find most helpful? Have you stated a different kind of ideology?

Roger Shinn: That is a very helpful question. Now, I am not happy about the fact that we choose our experts by their ideology. I say this is not totally erroneous. I would always, in a debate, prefer to get back to the evidentiary claims that support a particular position, and check it out that way.

Now because I cannot do this on every subject, on which as a citizen I have got to make up my mind, I am put in positions sometimes: am I going to take Milton Friedman's word, or John Kenneth Galbraith's word for something? So far as I can check it out, I ought to do that. Where I can't I will take the one who is more ideologically akin to me, because I will assume that that person has sifted out the evidence in the light of ideological criteria a bit like my own.

And I think you point to a real flaw in the paper, that on the one hand I seem to dismiss the argument between the great abstractions—capitalism and socialism. But insofar as these become ideologies, I do return and pay some attention to them. And I've got to think that one through a little further. Thank you.

Ezra Mishan: I want to address my comment to a question raised by Walter Berns. He spoke of the "right" of the church or theology to speak on certain questions. Well, the title of the conference was "Religion and Political Bias" with the subtitle, perhaps, "Why do Christians Tend Toward Socialism?" And yet, now we're talking of a "right" to pronounce on certain issues, to put it more strongly, in the name of God. Perhaps we ought to talk a little about the competence of an institution, such as the church, to pronounce on issues.

Now I can think of issues where it would seem to me that a Christian has an obligation to take up the particular position. Just to give an example, abortion on demand, or the persecution of a minority. This would seem to flow from the ideas of a Christian. But I will distinguish that from a competence to determine in advance which particular economic system would more tend to realize the aims and ideals of a Christian.

Milton Friedman: While I agree with many of the sentiments that Roger Shinn expresses in this paper, I think he has been led astray by asking the wrong question. He asked, "What is the 'right' of a theologian, or the 'right' of an economist (this ties in with what Walter Berns has raised) to speak on social issues?" And the answer is that an econ-

omist has no right to speak on any social issues as an economist; a theologian has no right to speak on social issues as a theologian. Roger correctly points out in his paper that any position on a social issue involves values plus information. This involves a view of what ought to be, plus a view of what is.

A theologian may be an expert, we hope, on what ought to be. Though there are differences about that too. An economist may be an expert on what is; but *qua*-economist, he has no right to speak on what ought to be. And *qua*-theologian, a theologian has no right to speak on what is.

It seems to me, we all of us have a right as citizens, as members of a community, every one of us has a right to speak on social issues. And in doing that, we ought to be careful to try to avoid speaking as if our discipline gave us that right. What gives us that right is our role as a citizen.

And I wanted to make this remark earlier by way of, in particular, one of Roger's comments to me, and his statement in his paper. He says: "A school of contemporary economic thought maintains that the function of economics is to build models independent of values and of policy recommendations." But he argues that when economists recommend public policies, as they frequently do, they inevitably enter into debates about ethical values. To point to an example, he quotes a *Newsweek* column of myself and Lester Thurow.

Now, of course when we discuss public issues, we do enter into debates about ethical values as citizens. But that is in no way in contradiction to the view which I hold very strongly, that economics as economics has the role of trying to find out what is, independently of values and of policy recommendations.

The wide scale misconception about economics on the part of the public, I believe, is because they judge economics from what we write as citizens and not what we write as economists. I would suggest that if Roger were to read my book on *A Theory of the Consumption Function*, he would find it very hard from page one to page end to find any implication about values. And the same thing is true of any of my other scientific writings.

I don't know Lester Thurow's bibliography as well, but I suspect that if you look at his scientific writings, you would say the same thing. If I may take a different example, which brings out my point very sharply: Oppenheimer and Teller had an enormous difference on the public issue of whether a hydrogen bomb ought to be built. But

that's not evidence that physics is about values. Both Oppenheimer and Teller agreed on physics, on the basic scientific content of that discipline.

So I believe that the question of whether theologians have a right as theologians, or economists have a right as economists, to speak on public issues leads the discussion in the wrong direction. The really hard question is how do I avoid when I write a *Newsweek* column appearing to speak from my authority as an economist, instead of trying to combine my role as a concerned citizen with the information and expertise which I happen to have because I spent my life as an economist?

Ezra Mishan: A very brief comment on what Milton Friedman said about economists eschewing expertise in normative economics. And I don't think I'm contradicting him here. You see Milton Friedman is my old tutor. And I am always very careful of saying anything that would go counter to his views; so I put it in this form as a kind of qualified footnote (laughter): that there does exist a body of literature on economics—what we call “allocative techniques,” cost/benefit analysis, linear programming—in which we come out with the conclusions that we ought to do this, and we ought to do that.

Now these things do depend upon values; if you like, ethics. Personally, writing in this area, I like to believe that the values we use spring from an ethical consensus.

James Wall: I am fascinated by Milton Friedman's assertion that he is seeking to speak as a citizen, not as an economist. I simply cannot comprehend, how you could, Milton, ever speak in any way other than as an economist, because you *are*; that is your life, that is who you are, that's the way you view the world. You simply cannot address any issue without the economic commitment that you clearly have. The second question would be, I cannot imagine it being value free.

So I have two concerns with your comment. I cannot imagine there being any value free economist; and I cannot imagine you ever speaking other than as an economist.

Geoffrey Brennan: My point is a semantic, terminological point. I think that it's unfortunate we've chosen to talk about all this in terms of “rights.” You know, the “right” to speak. I just think that's terribly, terribly misleading. I think the question that we are interested in is the

“nature of authority,” which I think is a different question.

We can all agree that people have rights to free speech. I think Murdith McLean made that point very well. The issue is whether what is being said is worth listening to or more broadly, it's a question of what the nature of the authority is, and where that authority comes from, and what authority means in these various domains. That seems to me to be crucial.

I could go on and say that I feel a little bit uncomfortable about Roger Shinn's talking about theology as a sort of exploration of this “secret imaginative background,” because I don't quite know what that means. I want to set against it something that seems to me to be fundamental to the Christian's self understanding, and I would have thought to the Jews and everybody else — namely, that in some ultimate sense, what we are about is bearing witness to the truth. And that the nature of some claim to a true spiritual reality is fundamental to the whole exercise. And so “secretive imaginative backgrounds” seem a strange way of putting it. What I want to say is, I want to hear talk in the language of authority, and then I want to know what “authority” a “secret, imaginative background” really brings to bear, if any.

Milton Friedman: Just a brief point. Oppenheimer was speaking as a physicist when he was against the hydrogen bomb. That doesn't mean that physics isn't value free. I am speaking as an economist, because I am an economist, when I recommend social policies. But, that doesn't mean that economics isn't value free. I am using economics to try to infer what the consequences of policies are. Then, in judging whether I like those policies or not, I am not speaking as an economist. I'm introducing my personal value judgements, as a citizen. And I try, when I'm systematic about this, to do what Ed Mishan suggests, to separate the value judgements from economics.

But the notion that economics cannot be value free is, I think, a very serious mistake. That doesn't mean that the kind of topics an economist may choose to study may not depend on his values. Just as a physicist may choose to study nuclear physics, because of his values about nuclear energy. But that doesn't make his study of nuclear physics non-value free.

Aaron Levine: I would like to address myself to a point that Murdith McLean raised regarding the qualifications of theologians who enter into social issues. I think that each theologian can interpret his respec-

tive religion, and identify certain goals; and also, constraints regarding the attainment of those goals; and beyond that he would abrogate expertise as far as the means to achieve those goals. For example, Judaism espouses a social welfare function. And, of course, all religions do. And in Judaism the highest ideal of charity consists of preventing someone from falling into the throes of poverty, rather than extricating him once he has already fallen into that status. And this translates, for the government, into the role of pursuing economic policies that create a favourable economic environment. Now, that clearly is a goal that we can identify: creating a favourable economic environment. But the Jewish theologian certainly does not have the expertise to recommend what particular policies the government should pursue in order that this favourable economic environment would be promoted. This has to be left for experts.

But the goal can be identified. Now in relation to this particular goal, a constraint also can be identified. If, according to Jewish theological thought, we don't leave charity to voluntarism, but rather that we have a coercive tax—that is a constraint. A solution that economists and other social thinkers would come up with, which is really a means to an end, would have to take into account that constraint.

Paul Heyne: I have often claimed that theologians and church leaders and denominational committees ought not to speak out on social issues. And people have been horrified to hear me argue that.

My arguments all boil down to this: I claim such statements are counterproductive. Given the goals of the person to whom I am speaking, I argue those goals are not well accomplished through pronouncements on social issues by theologians, church bodies, and so on.

But then comes this response: “you're saying religion has nothing to do with everyday life”; or “you're claiming religion is only about some world beyond this”; or “you're claiming that religious people do not have to care about social concerns.” The number of entailments that supposedly follow from the acceptance of the position that it is counter-productive for theologians to do social analysis in public seems to be infinite; and you can't refute an infinite number of wrong propositions. But I maintain that there are a lot of alternatives that are completely acceptable. If we bar theologians (not by force, but by persuasion) from making social statements, there are many desirable alternatives that these theologians themselves will welcome and will find more productive than what they are now doing. By the way, I want to

say that this applies, not only to Roger Shinn, but also applies to Dick Neuhaus and Michael Novak.

Murdith McLean: I think Paul Heyne’s intervention reflects a tendency that started off as soon as Walter Berns made his point about speaking out. I think we are really falling into a great unclarity about what “right” it is we are talking about here, or what “authority.” What is it we are talking about the right to do, or the authority to do? Is it, as some of us are starting to suggest, to pronounce upon—that is, to make a public declaration as to what the right thing to do is?

Or is it, to use the words that Roger used in his paper, to “address?” There’s a hell of a difference between those. I think theologians do have a right, (and ought to exercise it) to address social issues and can do it as theologians, or as social scientists, to make points that they think are relevant to the policy judgement, which is going to be made later. I think that’s different from claiming that theologians, or social scientists, have a right or have the authority to *pronounce* upon social questions.

Now, I think just in terms of our continued discussion, it is crucial that we keep it as clear as we can: What the right is, that we are discussing. Is it to “address?” That is to make what we think are relevant points. Or is it to “pronounce upon?” That is to give what we think is the final truth, or maybe back it up with the force of law.

John Cooper: I am surprised that we’ve spent so much time on what seems to me to be a rather elementary point; but, as a theologian, I’d like to affirm Milton Friedman’s simple point that we all speak with two voices, that we wear different hats. And the distinction between values and facts is an important one, although we could continue to argue about whether there can be a value-free social science. One almost hopes that there could be, but perhaps only in a theoretical sense.

I think that we could avoid a lot of problems if we took a look at the papal approach to this problem, which has a long history now—a hundred years, or so. In the social encyclicals, the popes are always calling for lay expertise. They are calling upon the Catholic parishes for laymen to emerge with a particular expertise in economics to help the church collectively choose the right policies in many different societies. After all, the Catholic church is a universal organization.

The popes make it very clear that their authority is to speak on general principles and goals, and that as representatives of the church,

they refrain from speaking on specific policies. They ask for lay expertise; in a sense they trust in God—rather than adding the church's weight to a particular policy.

For example, consider the popes' view that all human life is sacred. We need the popes and others, to say this, particularly if no one else will. But what does the sacredness of human life mean when you come to a specific policy—like abortion on demand? Or war? Or, the question of economic justice? Then we've got to make a distinction between general goals and principles, and specific policies.

And, frankly, I think the church—both Catholic and Protestant—has worked out this problem fairly well. It should be a fairly elementary point; although for non-theologians it may seem that it isn't.

I would think, finally, that a deeper point of issue arises: whether ethics is personal, individualistic, or social—an issue that I have heard raised around the table quite a few times today?

The present pope, doing exactly what his predecessors have done—that is, speaking on principles and not on specifics—has begun to elaborate a theology of economics, which I think is based on two notions—self-reliance and solidarity.

That is a way of saying that an individualistic ideology and a collectivistic ideology are two extremes, which perhaps have something to say but which, when isolated, are great distortions of reality.

So you always hear the papal social teachings trying to establish a “third way.” Now, perhaps that's a pipe dream; but it serves a purpose intellectually. It is as a way of saying that the church stands outside of ideology, affirms the right, and rejects the wrong in whatever ideologies the world may have to offer.

And in a specific case, it affirms not only all of the basic free market notions of incentives and self-reliance and freedom, but also the notion of community, solidarity, political supremacy over economic decisions. After all, even the business corporation is one of the great carriers of community—its focus is not individualism, but community.

Edmund Opitz: The phrase “economic power” has been raised, and one hears it frequently. Niebuhr uses the phrase and I quoted him. He said even something beyond that, that a giant corporation is really a part of government. It seems to me this is an error, and easily discernible as an error. Every one of us here remembers the Chrysler Corporation of, say, ten years ago. It existed then in a relatively more free economy.

What power did the Chrysler Corporation have when it was part of

the private sector? Did it have the power to persuade or force Americans to buy its products? No. So what did Chrysler do? It turned to the power structure in this society, and now it does have the power to make those of us who didn't want to consume its products contribute by our taxes for those who are now buying Chrysler products.

This is not an unusual situation in American economic life. Americans have always, from the beginning, from the very first law passed by the very first Congress, Americans have used, or at least sought to use, the public power for private advantage. This is not capitalism. This is not the market economy. It's an abrogation of the market economy. It's the use of the power structure, which is government, to gain economic advantage for some at the expense of others.

Government is *the* power structure of a society. The phrase "economic power" is a metaphor, not a very good metaphor, because in the economic sphere the business man has no "power" over anyone except the quality of his product and his persuasiveness in telling us of its virtues. However, there is a power structure in the society. The "power structure" is the government. It possesses a one-of-a-kind power in a society, unless the society is indulging itself in a civil war. So the term "economic power," I believe, should not be used.

Richard Baepler: One person who has not been much discussed who I think is crucial in many respects to the questions being raised here, is the preacher — who is neither a theologian nor an expert social scientist, and is, however, called upon every Sunday to speak out. The poor person has to work under very difficult circumstances, being neither expert in those areas that we mentioned, plus he is so very much beholden to the congregation. In a voluntary system such as ours, he is paid not by the state but by the congregation. And it's very difficult to be a prophetic figure, staring down at the faces of the people who are paying your salary, particularly if there are two or three major benefactors who will assure the success or failure of your next big building project.

Thus I think that typically, in this country, the clergy, and therefore the Christian church, has been a very conservative force. Rather recently the habit of public pronouncements by theologians and committees in the church on social matters has tended to make some people think of the church as a more radical force. I think it continues to be a very conservative force, precisely because the preacher finds himself in this situation.

Seymour Siegel: One of Mr. Heyne's comments struck me very negatively, especially his last sentence because I had always thought that people, ever since Amos, said to religious spokesmen on social issues, "Go away. Go do something else," because they didn't like their message. And I presume that this conference would not have been called if the National Council of Churches, and the bishops, and everybody had strongly supported the market economy.

Ronald Preston: One comment – the welcome calling for lay expertise in the papal teaching is relatively new. That point, I think, is important and very encouraging.

But, more important is that it seems to me that when we are talking about these pronouncements and edicts, if theologians and church-leaders are going to produce them, they have to do it with group work behind them. They cannot sit in their studies evolving pronouncements about the modern world by themselves.

Good statements come from working with groups of people of relevant but different experience, and of sometimes conflicting views and seeing if out of this kind of work, you get some broad judgement as to what are the really significant things going on in the world to which we need to give attention.

Sometimes, you get a fair consensus about all this, and even about some broad directions you think people ought to go. Often you don't, and you get agreement only part of the way. What you are doing is sorting out for your constituency among the great confusions and voices in the world, a way of coming to grips with things that are happening.

David Friedman: A long time ago, somebody told me a story about James Mill and John Stuart Mill, according to which the latter, in his innocent youth, once remarked that something was true in theory but false in practice. His father made him sit in a chair in a corner until he could justify that statement. As far as I could tell, the point of the story was that he is still there. (laughter) At the risk of suffering the same fate, I would like to say that Roger Shinn's thesis seems to me to be true in theory, but false in practice. That is to say, I agree that in order to reach conclusions about what should be done in the world, one needs both values and facts.

The practical question however, is, is it our opinion about values or our opinion about facts, or perhaps both, that actually determines which conclusion we reach? And so I was moved to ask the following

two questions. The first question is: Given the views I have about economics, if I were converted to the theological views of Philip Wogaman, would my political opinions change? And the answer is “No.”

Given the factual views I happen to have, any variation, any change in my values within the actual observed range of values that people hold (say, around this table), wouldn’t substantially affect my opinion that the unionization of the American farm workers meant that desperately poor people in Mexico stayed in Mexico instead of finding what they regard as well paid jobs in America. And, by Philip Wogaman’s principles, if that belief is true, it is an argument against the unionization of the farm workers.

On the other hand, I asked myself: If I were Philip Wogaman with Philip Wogaman’s ideological and philosophical views, and were convinced of my, or even my father’s more moderate economic views, would my social policies change? The answer is “Yes.”

And therefore, as I say, it seems to me that Roger’s thesis is unobjectionable *a priori* (we need both facts and values), but that in fact, it is the disagreement over facts, and not the disagreement over the values, that is the main reason for our disagreements on policy.

Roger Shinn: Both John Cooper and Arthur Shenfield have raised the point of whether justice applies to societies, or simply to individuals. And while I would agree there has never been a perfectly just society, I would insist that justice does apply to institutions as well as persons. Slavery is an unjust institution, even if a particular slave owner happens to be of a benevolent, ethical sensitivity. That totalitarianism is unjust, even if the ruler’s a nice guy, and so on. But, trial by jury and freedom of press, with all their imperfections are efforts to incorporate justice in institutions. I could talk a long time about that, but I won’t.

I come back to another point of Murdith McLean’s that I did not answer earlier – the immense disagreement among theologians. Partly this troubles me, although since I dislike monopolies, partly I welcome it. I just say this is characteristic of our world.

My daughter happened to major in psychology at Harvard, at the time when the two most famous characters in the department were Skinner and Erikson. Well, they could hardly have a conversation. Bill Coffin and Jerry Falwell did a little better (laughter) on television conversing than Erikson and Skinner. This is a fact of our world. The theologians disagree, economists disagree, psychologists disagree, and so on. And that does not discredit the disciplines, it poses a problem.

Now the question of authority was raised by many people, initially by Walter Berns. I would say at this point, a theologian never claims to speak for God (well, that could be refuted empirically; some have). (laughter) So I'll say normatively, no . . . the prophet, who says, "Thus saith the Lord," is either inspired or the ultimate blasphemer; and history makes judgements on that.

Theologians say, "Given a certain tradition, revelation, whatever, we interpret it to mean thus, and so." I would think a Catholic bishop is doing what bishops are supposed to do when he says, "To be a faithful Roman Catholic, one must do so and so," which is a little bit different from saying, "Thus saith the Lord."

Now, it is the business of other Catholic bishops who differ from him to say so, and then they thrash this out. As a Protestant, I have a somewhat different idea of authority. But I think it's quite appropriate for a bishop to say, "To belong to this community, requires a such and such," and then the discussion goes on.

I am most grateful to Milton Friedman for helping me persuade Murdith McLean that my statements are not so obvious as to be uncontroversial. (laughter) And I half share what he says: I accept the tentative—what I call the relative autonomy, in the social sciences—a sort of a working distinction between facts and values, as being quite useful. If you push it to the ultimate point, I think it has roots in the Kantian dichotomy between the theoretical and the practical reason, which I think is wrong, epistemologically, psychologically, logically, and in every other way.

And I come closer here to Gunnar Myrdal and John Dewey who would insist that in the whole problem of learning, commitments and values have much to do with our sensitivities in apprehending information, and organizing it, and presenting it.

