CIVICS AND ECONOMICS

ALTHOUGH CIVICS AND ECONOMICS ARE BOTH “SUBJECTS” IN social studies, they are typically conceived and taught in significantly different ways. The *historical* story of America and our constitutional tradition are at the heart of the study of civics; economics, by contrast, is taught ahistorically. Civics is a *subject*, open to consideration from a variety of disciplinary perspectives; economics is conceived as a discipline—a “hard” social science—rather than as a subject open to different interpretations. Civic education is *moral* education; it initiates students into the roles and responsibilities of citizenship. Economics texts and teachers eschew moral language and categories.

As the national standards make clear, the implications for religion are significant. The civics standards are replete with references to religion; indeed, of all the national standards they are the most sensitive to religion. The economics standards, by contrast, ignore religion completely; of all the standards they are the most hostile to religion.

Civics

However much we disagree about the *separation of church and state* now—and we disagree a good deal—for most of history people agreed that the domains of religion and government overlapped in many ways. Students need to understand both the historical relevance of religion to government and the contemporary controversies over their relationship.

Standards and Textbooks

The relationship of religion to government, politics, and law is a recurring theme of the *National Standards for Civics and Government.* Indeed, if we look at the standards for high school civics courses we find some 30 references to religion. The references are often historical, but unlike the history standards, which relegate religion largely to the premodern world, the civics standards also emphasize the importance of understanding the role of religion in the *contemporary* United States.

We cannot do justice here to the many ways in which religion is woven into the standards but will suggest something of this richness by listing recurring themes. Students should understand

1. How, historically, various religious visions (grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Protestant Reformation, and Puritanism) have shaped government and American society;
2. Conceptions of the relationship of God to law (particularly natural law and natural rights theories);
3. The importance of religious liberty and the meaning of “separation of church and state” in our constitutional tradition;
4. Religious pluralism and the role of various religious groups in American politics;
5. The role of religion in creating conflict in the United States and other nations; and
6. How religion can challenge allegiances to the nation.

Perhaps our primary concern about the standards is that they (like the history standards) are so comprehensive that their emphasis on religion will be lost as teachers make difficult decisions about what to include in their limited time.

Religion has been all but lost in the four civics texts we reviewed.[1] Although each says something about religious liberty and the First Amendment, the accounts are typically brief (only one paragraph in one text). None says anything significant about traditional religious conceptions of the state, or religious sources of law or natural rights. (While each text highlights the paragraph from the Declaration of Independence that includes the phrase “endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights,” only one comments—in a single sentence—on the relevance of God to rights.) No text includes any discussion of higher law or religious arguments for civil disobedience (though each discusses Martin Luther King Jr., who did make such

an argument). The texts ignore the role of religion in contemporary politics. Two texts do include short sections on school prayer and the role of religion in public education. In sum, although the texts include a little about religion here and there, the discussions are almost always perfunctory, and the texts fall far short of the standards.

The Major Issues

Our discussion of the major issues in civics education will overlap, but also go beyond, references to religion in the standards.

• *Religious liberty and the liberal state.* In his famous sermon onboard the *Arabella,* John Winthrop, governor of the new Massachusetts Bay Colony, said this: “Thus stands the cause between God and us: we are entered into Covenant with him.” We shall be as one body, he continued, always having before our eyes our commission from God to “walk in His ways and to keep His Commandments and His Ordinance, and His laws” so that “the Lord our God may bless us” and shall “delight to dwell among us” (1630/1956, pp. 82–84). One hundred fifty-seven years later, when the Framers explained the authority of the Constitution of the new United States of America, they wrote: “We the people . . . do hereby ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America”—and failed to mention God at any point in their document.

Until the 18th century, most people in the West believed that the authority of government was grounded in religion; the “powers that be” are ordained by God. The laws of states were to reflect divine or *natural* law. States had established religions, and people assumed it was the state’s proper task to enforce religious conformity. People were born into a “station with its duties.” The spheres of government and religion overlapped if they didn’t quite coincide. Indeed, historically there was little in the Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox, or Islamic traditions that argued for separating religion and government.

In the 17th and 18th centuries a new view of government began to develop. People came to understand government as the result of a “social contract” between free individuals, and its authority now derived from the consent of the governed. People were born free, possessing among other natural rights the right to religious liberty. The purpose of government was no longer religious, but (as the Declaration of Independence put it) the protection of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Gradually, the roles of church and state were separated.

How do we account for this change? A part of the explanation is that the religious wars and persecution that followed in the wake of the Reformation did a great deal to discredit religion. When religion proved too divisive, it became necessary to develop a new moral framework that didn’t require religious consensus. Of course the new United States was made up of a welter of contending religious groups, and as each of them was somewhere in the minority, each in turn saw the benefits of religious liberty and secular government at the federal level. Social peace required it.

But there were theological and philosophical as well as pragmatic arguments for religious liberty and the idea of a *liberal* state. (Here _we use “liberal” in its classical sense: the liberal state maximizes individual liberty.) The Protestant Reformers insisted that human institutions—the church and the state—should not come between individuals and God; we should be free to follow the dictates of our consciences. No doubt Protestant countries continued to have established churches for some time, but the idea of a “free conscience” gradually began to shape Protestant thinking about government—particularly in America, through Roger Williams, William Penn, and then, in the 18th century, a multitude of Evangelicals. Indeed, to some considerable extent, we owe the religious liberty clauses of the First Amendment to an alliance of Evangelicals (especially Baptists) and Enlightenment Deists, such as Thomas Jefferson, who emphasized religious liberty (or freedom of conscience) as a “natural” right grounded in a religion of reason.

It is important that students understand the traditional religious conception of government, the historical backdrop of religious persecution and warfare, and the developing consensus about religious liberty that led to the First Amendment. No doubt we disagree about the proper limits to religious liberty, but the ideal has

long been part of our political consensus and is now endorsed by virtually all religious traditions in the United States.

• *The separation of church and state.* From the earliest days of our Republic, most Americans have agreed that religious liberty requires *disestablishment*—separating the institutions of religion and state. Indeed, the decision by the Framers to disestablish religion (on the federal level) is arguably the most momentous advance for religious liberty in history. But from the very beginning there has been much disagreement about how much "separation" the First Amendment's Establishment Clause requires.

As we have noted, for the past 50 years—ever since *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947)—the majority of Supreme Court Justices have interpreted the Establishment Clause to require a "wall of separation between church and state." Government must be neutral among religions and between religion and nonreligion; it cannot promote, endorse, or fund religion or religious institutions. This has been, and is, the liberal or "separationist" reading of the Establishment Clause.

Dissenting voices on the Court (including the current Chief Justice) take what is sometimes called an "accommodationist" view: the Establishment Clause prohibits the government from creating a national church or favoring one religion over another, but it does not prohibit general acknowledgment of religion by government (such as allowing nonsectarian prayers at school-sponsored events) or allowing religious groups to receive government funding on the same basis as secular groups (through vouchers for religious schools, for example).

For many religious conservatives, much is at stake in this long-running debate about the meaning of the Establishment Clause. They see the separationist position in its strictest applications as hostile to religion and religious expression. On the other end of the spectrum, many religious liberals and secularists view any government funding of religious groups and any government expression of religion, however indirect or nonsectarian, as a violation of conscience and a stepping stone to an unholy alliance of church and state.

Students need to be familiar with this ongoing controversy over the "separation of church and state" and the meaning of the Establishment Clause. Debate about the constitutional relationship of religion and government is at the heart of many recent and current conflicts over public policy, and the direction the Supreme Court takes on this question will do much to shape the kind of nation we will be in the 21st century.

• *Morality and politics.* Religious conservatives often argue that the courts have used the Establishment Clause to marginalize religion and secularize public life. The resulting "naked public square," to use Richard John Neuhaus's term (1984), is often criticized for undermining the sense of moral and religious community that sustains civic virtue and social relationships and provides a context of meaning for our politics.

People within the Western religious traditions have understood God to require justice of us, and not simply personal moral virtue; traditionally, the religious goal has been to transform society, to bring about the Kingdom of God. This has been a goal for religious liberals as well as for conservatives. Although we are now likely to associate religious politics with conservative Christianity, a generation ago religious liberals grounded their support of the civil rights and antiwar movements in their religion (while many conservatives believed that religion and politics must be kept separate). No doubt religion continues to provide the (ultimate) conceptions of morality and justice for much of our politics, both conservative and liberal—even if politicians don't quote chapter and verse to justify their positions (or even know the relevant citations). Of course, some know it quite well: within recent years, two Christian ministers (Jesse Jackson and Pat Robertson) have run for president, and religious organizations have played an increasingly prominent role in our politics.

Part of what makes our culture wars so difficult is that religious conservatives and liberals approach moral and political issues from such strikingly different worldviews. We noted in our Introduction James Davison Hunter's (1991) influential analysis of how our different ways of justifying our most fundamental values almost inevitably lead to conflict over issues such as abortion, sexuality, the family, education, and the meaning of America. Many conservatives ground their positions in biblical texts and historical revelation, whereas liberals believe in moral and religious progress that allows them to reform their traditions. To make

sense of our politics, students need to understand the religious worldviews that shape our culture wars and the ongoing debate over the proper role of religion in politics.

• *Individualism.* Religious critics from both the Left and Right have been critical of modern (secular) individualism with its relentless emphasis on the self. From within all religious traditions persons are understood to be social beings rather than individualistic social atoms; we have natural obligations to help others, not just voluntary contractual relationships.

• *Pluralism.* The United States has become increasingly pluralistic religiously in ways that complicate (and sometimes enrich) our politics. Interestingly, although the multicultural movement has exerted great influence in education, it has essentially ignored the extent to which our deepest sense of identity is often rooted in religion. Again, many of the issues relate to "the meaning of America" and our sense of community. How do we live together with our deepest differences? To what extent should our laws help to sustain distinctive religious communities, traditions, and institutions, rather than level differences and nurture a common culture? For example, what can be said for and against vouchers that would enable people to educate their children in their own religious traditions rather than in public schools? Many religious conservatives are strong supporters of the parental rights movement because they believe the state and its various regulatory agencies have too much authority over their children. Should public policy rely on and provide greater financial support for "mediating structures" such as religious organizations in addressing poverty and welfare reform?

There is, of course, a foreign policy dimension to these issues. To what extent should the United States (and international organizations such as the IMF and World Bank) attempt to "impose" secular Western ideals and institutions on nations where more traditional, often religious, ideals and institutions offer alternative models for development?

• *Authority and allegiance.* Within virtually all religious traditions allegiance to God takes precedence over allegiance to the state, and patriotism is in constant danger of becoming a kind of idolatry—exalting something limited into something absolute. In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King Jr. argued that segregation laws were not binding (indeed, they were not "true" law) because they violated "natural law"—the law of God. For King and other leaders of the civil rights movement, allegiance to that higher law justified civil disobedience. Many opponents of abortion argue in similar ways for civil disobedience.

Through civics classes schools place a powerful emphasis on making students good citizens and good Americans; it is also tremendously important that students appreciate the widespread religious concern about nurturing an uncritical allegiance to the state. Students need to understand different views of the nature of the state's authority—and its limits. Should state law conform to "natural" (or divine) law—and what if it doesn't? When is civil disobedience (or even revolution) justifiable?

• *Key public policy issues.* Virtually all public policy issues can be debated on religious grounds, but several issues relating to the proper role of government are of profound importance within religious traditions. For many religious conservatives the great moral issue of our time is abortion—which they take to be murder. Students should understand why. For many religious liberals, the key issues are those of social justice and the role of government in "liberating the oppressed." For some members of minority religions, the problem of minority rights is omnipresent in a society in which most people are at least nominally Christian. Students must learn to look at the actions of government through the eyes of people in various religious communities if they are to understand our politics and make educated judgments about justice and government.

• *Religion and public education.* Finally, many of these issues come together, and become personally relevant for students, in considering the role of religion in public schools. Students should understand the major court rulings regarding prayer, Bible reading, and religious liberty. They should also acquire historical and religious perspectives on the governing ideals of public education as a civic institution: What values do public schools properly nurture in a multicultural and religiously pluralistic culture?

The Educational Implications

A good deal of what is taught in civics texts and courses is not controversial. We can agree on much of the relevant history; the Constitution and the court rulings that have determined its meaning are part of an “objective” historical record. But civics courses inevitably engage fundamental questions about which we disagree deeply: the meaning of America; the separation of church and state; the wisdom of court rulings; the moral grounds of public policy; and the relative authority of the state and religion. Often these disagreements are grounded in our different worldviews. To be liberally educated, students must hear the different voices in our cultural conversation and begin to think critically about them.

Schools should supplement civics textbooks with primary source readings chosen, in part, to reflect the differing points of view in our ongoing conversation about government and religion. Students should read John Winthrop, Roger Williams, and Thomas Jefferson on church and state. They should read Martin Luther King Jr. on civil rights and civil disobedience—and compare King’s arguments with those who advocate civil disobedience as a response to abortion. Multicultural texts should explore what it is like for members of minority religious traditions to live in a predominantly Christian culture—and the implications for our civic values and institutions.

According to the national standards, the goal of civic education “is informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy.” This requires acquiring “a body of knowledge,” “intellectual and participatory skills,” and the development of “traits of character” that promote the “healthy functioning” of the body politic (Center for Civic Education 1994, p. 1). That is, civic education is a form of moral education. It requires that students be initiated into the office of citizen—defined by social practices, obligations, and rights.

Classrooms must exemplify and nurture those “traits of charcter” or civic virtues—the rights, responsibilities, and respect—that we discussed in Chapter 1. Students must take one another—with their differing ideas, values, and traditions—seriously. Although students are certainly not obligated to agree with one another, they should treat one another with respect. Of course, the civic virtues are developed not just in studying government, but in the practice of student government and in the “ambience” of schooling. Perhaps most important, teachers and texts are obligated to practice these virtues by taking seriously—by including in the discussion—the contending voices in our cultural disagreements over government.

Economics

Because there is considerable concern in our culture about the relationship between God and mammon, it is a little surprising that there appears to be no concern about the relationship between economics, as we usually teach it, and religion.

Standards and Textbooks

In an astonishing statement the editors of the *National Content Standards in Economics* write in their Preface that the standards were developed to convey a single conception of the world of economics—the “majority paradigm” or “neoclassical model” of economic behavior, for to include “strongly held minority views of economic processes” would only risk “confusing and frustrating teachers and students who are then left with the responsibility of sorting the qualifications and alternatives without a sufficient foundation to do so” (National Council on Economics Education [NCEE] 1997, p. viii).

Using neoclassical theory, the standards eschew moral and religious language and convey a *value-free* conception of economics as _a social science. People “usually pursue their self-interest” (NCEE, 1997, p. 8)—and there is no discussion of altruism or of occasions _on which people shouldn’t pursue their self-interest. Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” is still at work: “The pursuit of self-interest in competitive markets generally leads to choices and behavior that also promote the national level of economic well-being” (NCEE, 1997, _p. 18). Competition increases productivity and is praised; there is no discussion of any moral or

social costs related to competition. Profits are an all-important incentive. Technology and economic growth are uncritically praised. Economic decisions should be matters of cost-benefit analysis. A benefit is "something that satisfies your wants" (NCEE 1997, p. 4), and there are no good or bad, right or wrong wants. All value judgments are essentially subjective. As long as the marginal benefit of an activity exceeds its marginal costs, "people are better off doing more of it" (NCEE, 1997, p. 4). Tradition has no inherent value, according to the standards. Economics is a science, as "people respond predictably to positive and negative incentives" (NCEE, 1997, p. 7). Not surprisingly, the standards are fairly critical of government—and remarkably uncritical of markets.

The standards do not discuss unions, class differences, the environmental costs of development, consumerism (or materialism), or poverty as a moral problem. They never use moral or religious language, nor do they ever require students to understand anything about morality or religion. Nowhere is there any discussion of justice, the sacred, or the dignity of human beings.

Although grounded in neoclassical theory, the four high school economics texts we reviewed are not quite so narrowly conceived as are the standards.[2] Each includes, for example, historical sections on labor unions and on Marxist and socialist alternatives to market economies. Although the texts claim that most behavior is self-interested, that the profit motive is fundamental, and that competition is essential to the successful functioning of the economy, they avoid universal statements and sometimes acknowledge that a more altruistic range of motives may come into play—though they provide no criteria for assessing the relevance or reasonableness of such motives and noneconomic goals, and they insist that values are "subjective" preferences. They often raise moral questions (albeit implicitly more than explicitly) but provide no resources for resolving them. For example, each text describes alternative tax systems (progressive and regressive), but they present no discussion of moral criteria or theories that might be used to assess their respective merits. Several of the texts include statistics on poverty that raise questions about justice, but they avoid any use of moral categories in assessing poverty. One of the texts includes 17 considerations relevant to choosing a career, but other than "union or nonunion workplace," none is in any way moral or religious, and the idea that one's career might be a "calling" is not considered. None of the texts includes any discussion of consumerism, Third World poverty, or the impact of economics on the environment. In their combined 1,800 pages there are no more than a half-dozen sentences that refer to religion in any way; each is a passing reference of no substance.

The Major Issues

Not surprisingly, the major issues for economics often overlap those relating to government and civics courses.

• *History and secularization.* Until the 18th century, the marketplace, like government, was shaped to some considerable, if lessening, extent by religious ideals and traditions, and it is important to keep in mind that the freedom in "free enterprise" is freedom from religious as well as from governmental regulation. So, for example, within the new market economies of the West usury, which had once been a sin, was rehabilitated as interest in order to facilitate the accumulation of capital; supply and demand replaced the conception _of a just price; guilds collapsed before the need for free and mobile labor; charity and begging, once virtues and signs of saintliness, became vices; self-interest and acquisitiveness, once vices, became the governing virtues of the economic world; and intellectual authority came no longer from theologians and philosophers but from the value-free calculus of that new (secular) specialty, economics.

This new way of thinking about economics went hand and glove with the Industrial Revolution and a torrent of economic energy that transformed society and, in the process, undermined traditional culture. As the economist Joseph Schumpeter put it, an essential characteristic of market economies is their *creative destructiveness* (1972, p. 83), for they require ceaseless change, competition, technological advances, mobile labor, and the creation of new wants. We should remember that in the 19th century the advocates of market economies were called "liberals" or "radicals," and their staunchest opponents were often those

conservatives who saw their world crumbling before their eyes. Much of the current criticism of "Westernization" in Muslim cultures stems from this recognition.

Whatever their destructive effect on traditional cultures, however, market economies have proven extraordinarily successful in creating consumer goods and raising standards of living. One result, not surprisingly, has been "consumerism" or "materialism"—an increasing cultural fixation on consumer goods that has redirected many people's fundamental orientation in life. No longer do most people understand themselves as living in a "vale of suffering" with their eyes fixed on the spiritual goods of the world to come; rather, they have tasted the goods of the marketplace, found them good, and are, as a result, ever more focused on the "pursuit of happiness" in the world at hand. To some considerable extent the goals of the economic system have usurped the role of religion in shaping our lives and our culture.

We are largely oblivious to the connection, however. Indeed, according to the sociologist Robert Wuthnow, the American middle class has no notion of the claims that religion once made on the economic world:

> Asked if their religious beliefs had influenced their choice of a career, most of the people I have interviewed in recent years—Christians and non-Christians alike—said no. Asked if they thought of their work as a calling, most said no. Asked if they understood the concept of stewardship, most said no. Asked how religion did influence their work lives or thoughts about money, most said the two were completely separate. (1993, p. 200)

• *Economics as a discipline.* There is, of course, a vast theological literature on the relationship of religion and economics. (Perhaps no subject in moral theology has been so extensively discussed by Catholic and Protestant theologians over the last century.) This literature is almost completely ignored by economists, and *is* completely ignored in the national standards and in textbooks. Economics is taught not as a subject that might be studied using theological as well as secular methodologies, but a discipline. We teach students to think about economics *as secular social scientists understand it.*

• *Neoclassical theory.* As the standards make clear, the particular view that underlies much contemporary economic thinking is neoclassical economic theory, which grew out of the market revolution, the seminal work of Adam Smith, and the Enlightenment understanding of the world. Perhaps the most significant points of tension flow from the fact that economics is conceived as a science, and as such is "value free."

In classical and neoclassical economics people are understood to be essentially self-interested; hence the importance of the profit motive and competition in economics. No religion has ever taken this view of human nature, however. Religions have placed rather more emphasis on cooperation and community, and even those theologians who have most emphasized human depravity and original sin have held that it remains our duty to rise above self-interest and act as God would have us act. Interestingly, studies by economists show that students who study neoclassical theory become more self-_interested as a result of their coursework (Frank, Gilovich, and Regan, 1993). Arguably, the prevalence of self-interest in human nature is, in part at least, a historical product of, among other things, our economic institutions.

Economists typically teach that we should use cost-benefit analyses to make decisions, though any religious perspective suggests both practical and theoretical problems with such an approach. As economists discuss them, the costs and benefits are those that accrue to people; yet most religious traditions tell us that we must consider the effects of our actions on all of God's creation—and on God. All religious traditions take obligations to future generations seriously, but cost-benefit analyses typically "discount" the future because the long-term effects of our actions aren't safely predictable. Cost-benefit analyses give extraordinary power to economists and other experts, and they discount tradition, conscience, and nonscientific ways of knowing. Almost inevitably, cost-benefit analyses weigh measurable (that is, material) costs and benefits and leave out of the equation what is sacred—those spiritual aspects of life that cannot be quantified. (How, for example, do we measure the value of the survival or extinction of a species in preparing an environmental impact statement?) Perhaps most fundamentally, cost-benefit analysis

involves weighing relative harms and goods—whereas most religious ethics is grounded in duties and the claim that some things are right and wrong in themselves and are not subject to weighing.

According to neoclassical theory the purpose of the economy is to maximize "preference satisfaction." Economics is "value free" and cannot privilege some preferences over others. Needless to say, it is all but impossible to maintain some sense of the sacred when all preferences are merely subjective and we think about everything in cost-benefit terms. The Sabbath and religious holidays cannot be kept holy, for there is no such thing as sacred time. Much advertising plays on themes of sexuality, power, and greed in ways that corrupt human dignity and sacredness of life. In theory (and, as a result, almost inevitably in practice) the Bible and pornography are interchangeable consumer goods.

Like modern political theory, neoclassical theory has emphasized individualism over community. Indeed, market economies and neoclassical theory have made a virtue of competition. Of course, Adam Smith believed that the common good—the "wealth of nations"—would flow from the competition of self-interested individuals in a free economy. Within virtually every religious tradition, by contrast, society is understood communally: we are born into webs of obligation with other people, with God, and with all of creation.

• *Poverty, wealth, and consumerism.* The standards give no moral weight to the needs of the poor, yet virtually every religious tradition has placed special emphasis on compassion and the duty to help the poor and oppressed: God has a special concern for the widow and orphan, for the "least" among us. Almsgiving is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Compassion is perhaps the fundamental Buddhist virtue. Whether the *state* should redistribute wealth is controversial on religious as well as secular grounds, but many contemporary theologians take God's concern for the poor to mean that our theories of economic justice must be broadly redistributive in some sense.

Although some religious traditions (Catholicism and Buddhism, for example) have found special virtue in monasticism and vows of poverty, most have not condemned wealth per se, but rather the undue attachment to wealth that keeps us from God. Although there are exceptions, virtually all religious traditions condemn contemporary consumer culture precisely for nurturing attachments to wealth and the material goods of this life. Of course, the economic system thrives by nurturing our acquisitiveness, creating stronger (and new) desires for consumer goods, requiring that we devote ever more time, energy, and education to economic pursuits. There have been and currently are religious movements that equate spiritual salvation with worldly wealth, but the religious mainstream is deeply wary of the effects of wealth and consumerism on our spiritual lives.

Of course, the pervasive poverty of the Third World—and the wealth of the First World—creates a moral problem of profound importance. Many theologians (not least Pope John Paul II) have spoken out forcefully regarding justice and the obligations of wealthy nations to the Third World.

• *The environment and economic growth.* The effects of economic growth on the environment have become catastrophic—we might even say "religious"—in their implications. Western theology has not been particularly sensitive to environmental issues until the last several decades, but discussions of stewardship and the sacredness of nature have become pervasive in contemporary theology. We shall have more to say about the environment and nature in Chapter 7; for now we simply note that economics must not ignore the implications of economic growth on nature, and the intersection of theological with economic and scientific categories for understanding and assessing economic growth.

• *Work*. From within all religious traditions, work must be understood in moral and spiritual as well as in economic terms. There are, of course, moral rights that should protect workers from exploitation, and working conditions must respect the dignity of people. Whether this requires, in particular cases, unions, affirmative action programs, or worker participation in decision making, may be debatable, but it is essential to ask these questions. Of course some work, even if freely undertaken, is by its very nature degrading (its contribution to the GNP notwithstanding). From within many religious traditions, work is regarding as a *calling*, as a way in which we fulfill our obligations to God by using our talents for the good of humanity. (We

might note how the idea of a *profession* has all but lost its connection to public service as professionals have become little more than experts-for-hire.)

• *Capitalism*. While there is an Evangelical Left, religious conservatives are often advocates of capitalism—sometimes on Scriptural grounds, sometimes on more general moral and political grounds. Negatively, conservatives note the harsh treatment the Socialist and Marxist Left has accorded religion; positively, they argue that freedom in the marketplace complements freedom in the civic domain so that capitalism and democracy go hand in hand. Ever since the Social Gospel movement at the end of the 19th century, religious liberals, by contrast, have tended to be critical of capitalism, noting ways in which it has exploited people and appealing to Scripture for conceptions of justice and the "liberation of the oppressed" that require some form of democratic socialism or a mixed economy and welfare state. Over the hundred years between Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus*, Catholicism has charted a "middle course" between the Left and Right in matters of economics. Much Islamic thought has been highly critical of capitalism, in part because of its internal conceptions of justice and society, and in part because of the powerful role capitalism plays in the Westernization of the Islamic world.

Some theologians would maintain that it is anachronistic to argue that the Bible, the Talmud, or the Qur'an endorses either capitalism or socialism—creations of the 18th and 19th centuries—though Scripture surely does make claims about morality and justice that are not compatible with all economic systems. For our purposes, however, what is important is less the conflict between Right and Left, than the tension between secular and religious ways of thinking about economics. Do the secular categories of modern economic theory exhaust or distort our understanding of the economic world?

Consider an analogy. Many religious liberals readily accept evolution as God's way of doing things. All too often, however, religious liberals have been naive in failing to distinguish between the idea of evolution (which may be interpreted in theological categories as the working out of God's purposes) and neo-Darwinian evolution (which denies the relevance of religious categories and is explicitly purposeless). Similarly, in defending capitalism, many religious conserva-tives naively accept neoclassical economic theory and an essentially secular understanding of economics. Just as there may be ways of reconciling evolution and religion, so there may be ways of reconciling capitalism and religion. Of course, a scientist always has the option to argue that science gives only a partial account of nature, and an economist always has the option to argue that neoclassical theory gives only a partial account of the economic world. The problem is that we teach both science and economics without giving students any sense of their possible limitations. Just as most scientists are professionally oblivious to religion, so are most economists.

The Educational Implications

To be liberally educated, students must learn something about religious as well as secular ways of thinking about economics; if they are to receive an education that is religiously neutral they cannot be taught uncritically to think about economics in exclusively secular ways that, in effect, marginalize the religious alternatives.

How should we teach economics? At the least, the opening chapter(s) of any economics text and the opening session(s) of any economics course should put the discipline of economics into broad historical and philosophical perspective. Students must learn that the ways of thinking about economics they will study are controversial, that there are religious alternatives, and something about the major alternatives. We've noted that most economics textbooks include chapters on Marxism and socialism; why not on religious accounts of human nature, justice, and economics as well? Teachers must know enough about religion to alert students when texts convey religiously controversial assumptions and claims, and they should use primary sources drawn from a variety of religious traditions to supplement texts in dealing with particularly important, religiously contested issues.

We find the claim made in the economics standards that only neoclassical economics should be taught (lest students and teachers become confused about the alternatives) to be appalling. Of course, students should learn about neoclassical theory, but they should learn something about the alternatives, both secular

and religious. Indeed, moral and spiritual concerns so pervade our economic life that to teach economics apart from them is an educational travesty.

***

The state and the market are (along with modern science) the dominant institutions of modernity, and if students are to be educated they must be able to put the conventional assumptions of contemporary politics and economics into historical and cultural perspective. Indeed, it is particularly important that they appreciate the depth of the religious critique of these institutions.

In spite of our technology, economic growth, prosperity, liberty, and growing sensitivity to human rights, we find ourselves caught up in a catastrophic environmental crisis, mindless consumerism, massive poverty, senseless violence, and, in the richest of countries, something that looks very much like a crisis of spirit. The claim that progress inevitably marches to the beat of secular modernity is dubious.

From almost any religious perspective a significant part of the problem has been that modern civilization has marginalized religion. Arguably, the most important issues relating to both politics and economics are moral, even spiritual. The national civics standards do reasonably well in suggesting the importance of including religious voices in the conversation; the economics standards and texts are oblivious to religion and to the requirements of a liberal education.

Suggested Readings _and Resources

Thomas Curry provides a superb account of religion in the colonies on the eve of the First Amendment in *The First Freedoms: Church and State in America to the Passage of the First Amendment* (1986). In *The Search for Christian America,* three respected evangelical historians, George Marsden, Mark Noll, and Nathan Hatch, argue that America was conceived as an essentially secular state. For a historical defense of the separation of church and state in America, see Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness.*

The liberal or “separationist” position in the debate over the meaning of the Establishment Clause is forcefully argued by Leonard Levy in *The Establishment Clause: Religion and the First Amendment* (1986). Robert Cord provides the conservative or “accommodationist” alternative in *Separation of Church and State: Historical Fact and Current Fiction* (1982).

Ronald Flowers offers a helpful summary of recent Supreme Court rulings in *The Godless Court? Supreme Court Decisions on Church-State Relationships.* For collections of Supreme Court rulings on religion clause cases see the “Suggested Readings and Resources” that follow Chapter 1.

For a very good historical anthology of Jewish statements of the relationship of religion and government, see *Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience* (1997), edited by Jonathan D. Sarna and David G. Dalin; for a variety of contemporary Jewish assessments, see *American Jews and the Separationist Faith* (1993), edited by David G. Dalin. John Courtney Murray’s *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (1960) is something of a classic. Murray’s influence was felt at the Second Vatican Council: see its “Declaration on Religious Freedom” (in the *Documents of Vatican II,* 1966).

In *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (1984) Richard John Neuhaus argues from a neoconservative perspective that the absence of religion in our public space has created a dangerous vacuum in our culture. Stephen Carter echoes Neuhaus’s concerns from a more liberal vantage point in *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (1993). We have noted several times the influential work of James Davison Hunter in mapping the role of religion in our culture wars; see his *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1991). In *Habits of the Heart* (1985) Robert Bellah and his colleagues provide a wealth of historical and sociological perspectives on the role of religion in American cultural politics. *Religion in America* (1989), one of the “Opposing Viewpoints Series” published by Greenhaven Press, includes a variety of readings on the role of religion in American life suitable for classroom use. *The Ethics of War and Peace: Religious and Secular Perspectives* (1996), edited by Terry Nardin, includes essays that provide good summaries of approaches to war and peace in the major Western religious traditions. *Muslim Politics* (1996) by Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori is a finely nuanced study of politics on all levels. Bruce Lawrence’s *Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence* challenges the predominant stereotypes of Islam in relation to violence and gender issues.

Our position in the section on economics is developed more fully in Warren A. Nord, *Religion and American Education* (pp. 30–35, 144–148, and 296–302). Two classic studies of the historical relationship between religion and economics still make good reading: Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–1905) and R.H. Tawny's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1922).

A good collection of excerpts from major works, both liberal and conservative, on religion and the economy can be found in *Christian Social Ethics* (1994), edited by John Atherton. *Religion, Economics and So-_cial Thought* (1986), edited by Walter Block and Irving Hexham, is a rich collection of contemporary essays written from within the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions. There are brief summaries of the implication for politics and economics of the major religious traditions _in *Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions* (1996), edited by Peggy Morgan and Clive Lawton. E.F. Schumacher's essay "Buddhist Economics" in his *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as If People Matter* (1985) is a classic. Robert Wuthnow's *Rethinking Materialism* (1995) _is a good collection of essays on the spiritual significance of American materialism.

The most important recent Christian assessments of economics and justice would include Pope John Paul's encyclical *Centismus Annus* (1991) and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' *And Justice for All* (1986), both of which argue for welfare state capitalism. Michael Novak's *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1982) is the major defense of capitalism from a religious perspective; Gustavo Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation* (1971) is the seminal statement of liberation theology. *A Cry for Justice: The Churches and Synagogues Speak,* edited by Robert McAfee Brown and Sydney Thomson Brown, is a good sourcebook of essays on the major religious statements on economics. Gary Dorrien's *Soul and Society* (1995) is a superb history of 20th century Protestant political and economic theology.