

# Christian Theology and American Economics

## From the Free Market to Socialism

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This article examines the different trajectory of Christian theology in nineteenth-century American economics as compared to its trajectory in nineteenth-century British economics. While this trajectory is not identical in the two countries, there are several important similarities. Understanding the similarities, as well as the differences, requires an understanding of the influence of both American exceptionalism and the role of republican ideology in nineteenth-century American thought.<sup>1</sup>

## Christian Theology and Economics

Understanding the historical relationship between Christian theology and economic theory requires an open and capacious mind; or more to the point, it requires that one study more than “just” the history of economic thought and engage, instead, in a fuller intellectual history. The problem is well illustrated by the cases of the two most well-known figures of the Scottish Enlightenment: David Hume and Adam Smith. Hume was either an agnostic or an atheist and Smith never publicly revealed his beliefs, though he seems to have been a Deist with a broad interest in natural theology.<sup>2</sup>

But while neither man was what would have been considered a particularly religious person as revealed in their private lives or their professional work, they were surrounded by some of the leading theologians and clerics of the Scottish Enlightenment, with whom they met regularly in the private clubs from which much of the energy and genius of the Scottish Enlightenment sprang.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is no surprise, for instance, that in different ways Hume’s and Smith’s work is

suffused with ideas and innovations that were alive in eighteenth-century theology. One of the most conspicuous places where the influence of eighteenth-century theology is evident in both political economists' work is the way that they employ the self-interested behavior of individuals to generate unintended outcomes that are highly desirable from a social point of view. This idea of the unintended consequences of self-interested behavior had been especially developed mid-century in the work of the British theologians Joseph Butler and Josiah Tucker.<sup>4</sup>

But if Smith developed a political economy that stimulated hope of progress and greater wealth for the nation, and if his work suggested a benevolent deity who had shaped human nature so as to provide improving economic conditions, this "good" relationship between theology and political economy would not last long in Britain. For no sooner had Smith died (1790) than the Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus published *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798),<sup>5</sup> which would complicate and make more difficult the relationship between theology and political economy. "[T]he consequent metamorphosis of 'political economy'—from an 'Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations' into the 'Dismal Science' of rational responses to scarcity—raised for the first time the possibility of strong dissonance between political economy and Christian theology."<sup>6</sup>

Anthony Waterman has argued that the debate around the theodicy articulated by Malthus in his *Essay* caused the subsequent separation of theology and political economy in Britain during the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The seemingly unanswerable question became, "How can a benevolent God create a world in which misery and vice are inevitable?"

For many people, it became hard to understand the God portrayed in *An Essay on the Principles of Population*. After Malthus, political economy appeared to many to be an enterprise antithetical to Christian theology, rather than one resonant with it, as it had seemed to be in Smith's work.

In America, however, no such separation between Christian theology and political economy was necessary in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Political economy in America developed on a quite different trajectory than it did in Britain in the early nineteenth century and since the economic reality on the ground was quite different than in Britain, so were the theories that mattered and the issues that gained traction. In the American context, Malthus's ratios made little or no sense.<sup>8</sup> The American population was growing rapidly, but so was agricultural output.<sup>9</sup> In fact, despite the rapidly growing population, the American diet (and standard of living) was improving quickly as better and better farm land was pulled into use and agricultural productivity continued to increase.<sup>10</sup>

Still, the insufficiency of Malthus's population thesis to describe the American situation was not the only factor at work in helping to make Christian theology and political economy more compatible in America. Nor was it just that God seemed to be a more benevolent deity in the American context. In order to fully understand the situation in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is also necessary to understand how Protestant theology had evolved in America during the previous century. The national identity at the time of the Revolution was, of course, Protestant, and the European settlers who had come to New England in the seventeenth century had come with the intent of creating a Protestant nation in the wilderness. But the nature of American Protestant belief had changed significantly during the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

One of the easiest ways to see this change is to consider the difference between the First (1730s–1740s) and Second Great Awakening (1790s–1840s). The First Awakening was focused narrowly on individual salvation and redemption. Jonathan Edwards, the leading figure in the First Awakening, titled his most famous sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” and focused on individual sin and individual redemption. But not everyone was understood to have the ability to be saved from their sins. This reflected the fact that American Protestantism had been founded by Calvinists who held a narrow understanding of predestination; desire for redemption was not enough to attain salvation, one also had to be chosen by God. One function of the revivals that defined the First Great Awakening, then, was to help identify exactly who had been chosen for salvation.

But while the Second Great Awakening also involved individual redemption, it was neither Calvinist nor predestinarian. By then, Protestant ministers had been influenced by the optimism of the new republic and argued that salvation was available to *anyone* who sought it, not just to those for whom it was predestined. Their optimism and openness to salvation for *everyone* meant that the Second Awakening also involved an appeal to many movements for social improvement as the *entire society* was subject to redemption and improvement, something that had not been a part of the First Awakening. So, for instance, the Second Awakening was the driving force behind both temperance and the abolition of slavery. As the multitude was welcomed to its salvation, an incumbent obligation to create a better world fell upon them.

But it was not just revivalists who were preaching an optimistic gospel; so did the professors who were introducing political economy to the curricula of the nation's emerging colleges and universities. Sometimes referred to as the “clerical economists,” because many of them were ordained Protestant ministers, the men who introduced political economy into the collegiate curricula in America

followed Adam Smith in believing that the pursuit of self-interest in a competitive market economy led to economic progress and an increasing standard of living; and like Smith they saw the working of the market economy as being a Newtonian system. Their difference from Smith was that they *explicitly* and *enthusiastically* attributed this situation to God's benevolence.

The first courses in political economy offered in the United States were at Columbia in the 1820s. The instructor of these first courses was the professor of moral philosophy, John McVickar, who was also an ordained Episcopal priest. Eventually, McVickar would become the professor of moral philosophy and political economy, and finally (simply) the professor of political economy at Columbia. In 1825, McVickar published *Outlines of Political Economy*, which became a popular textbook. In 1837, he expanded his market by publishing *First Lessons in Political Economy, for the Use of Primary and Common Schools*.

In addition to teaching that the pursuit of self-interest in a competitive market economy leads to prosperity and opportunity, as God intended, McVickar also taught that free trade was a divinely ordained means to further prosperity. He argued that God had created the world such that each nation had comparative advantages that made trade desirable with (and for) the rest of the world. And like Montesquieu, he argued that international trade would bring not only prosperity, but also peace. "To forbid trade among nations is, therefore, a very unwise thing; but it is also a very wicked thing, for it is contrary to the will of God."<sup>12</sup>

The most prominent (and successful) of the clerical economists was Francis Wayland, president of Brown University for thirty years and an ordained Baptist minister. His text *Elements of Political Economy* (1837) was the most widely used text for political economy courses in antebellum America, selling over fifty thousand copies. Later, he followed McVickar in publishing an abridged version for secondary school students in 1848.<sup>13</sup>

Wayland's text(s) followed Smith even more closely than McVickar's had done, especially in his focus on the central role of prices in the market system. "It is the operation of these principles that keeps the supply of any article ... always equal to the demand: and, it is surprising to observe, with what accuracy this effect is produced."<sup>14</sup> The interaction of price and costs was, as in Smith, responsible for the allocation of capital between competing uses. "The moment the price of an item falls below cost, it ceases to be produced, until the price rises. As soon as it is above ordinary profit, capital and labor are directed to it, and it is produced in sufficient quantity to meet the unusual demand."<sup>15</sup>

Wayland was even more effusive than McVickar about God's purpose in creating a comparative advantage for each nation and extended this idea to the regions within the nation. "The result was an expression of the harmony

in the universe, imposed by a benevolent deity.”<sup>16</sup> America’s leading political economists in the early nineteenth century were, thus, intent to meld Christian theology and political economy.<sup>17</sup> Not only was this a “positive” relationship as it was in Smith’s time, it was an explicitly (Protestant) Christian vision of a dynamically unfolding, increasingly prosperous future. The Christian dimension of early nineteenth-century American political economy was inextricably wound together with popular cultural and political ideas.

Not all the so-called clerical economists were ordained ministers, however, and not all were advocates of free trade; but the appeal to a benevolent God to explain the market economy and defend their policy proposals *was* universal across the group. Perhaps the best known clerical economist who was not ordained was Francis Bowen, professor of natural religion, moral philosophy, and civil polity at Harvard beginning in 1853. Author of *The Principles of Political Economy: Applied to the Condition, the Resources, and the Institutions of the American People* (1856),<sup>18</sup> Bowen was a staunch defender of the interests of New England manufacturers.

In other words, he was against free trade and in favor of tariffs. But just as McVickar and Wayland defended free trade as helping to further God’s benevolent plan to integrate the nations of the world, Bowen argued that the protection of domestic manufacturers by tariffs furthered God’s plan for people to be free. Like McVickar and Wayland, Bowen believed that self-interested individuals acted unintentionally to produce good outcomes; the difference being that Bowen felt that this desirable outcome did not hold in *international* trade, where he believed unregulated (untaxed) trade led to chaotic, undesirable outcomes. Better to tax and regulate international trade to ensure that each nation had the capacity to produce things for itself. Then the nation would have true freedom, as God intended.

## Pursuing the American Way

The close connection between freedom and Christian belief that Bowen evoked to build his argument for tariffs was itself a deep-seated dimension of American culture in the decades following the founding of the Republic. When Alexis de Tocqueville visited in 1830, the connection struck him as central to American democracy, “The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds, that it is almost impossible to make them conceive the one without the other.”<sup>19</sup>

This unique self-understanding laid at the root of Tocqueville’s narrative of the new democratic ethos of the American nation. Unlike in his native France, where class and social position were defined by birth and the legal system, Americans

had a rough and ready egalitarianism in Tocqueville's experience. Each man had equal claims to citizenship and to the right to make his way in the world. In fact, to be American was to have a *responsibility* to make one's own way.

This was what it meant to be an American. Every (white) man was equal before the law and equal in his innate worthiness. This was what set the nation apart for citizens of the early Republic. America was a different nation than any other in the world because it was built on this fundamental idea of equality. This was what made America exceptional.

America was seen to be leading the world to a new kind of freedom and equality. Unlike the Old World, America would not have a privileged class defined by birth and heredity. Every man had the ability to work and build a small capital that would allow him to homestead (or become a craftsman) and take part in society on equal terms with every other man. Working for wages was seen as something that a young man might do to build his grubstake, but it was not how a mature man supported himself. As late as 1860, Abraham Lincoln campaigned on the argument that fewer than one in eight men in America worked for wages. According to Lincoln, in the North there was "no such ... thing as a free man being fixed for life in the condition of a hired laborer.... Men, with their families ... work for themselves in their farms, in their houses, and in their shops, taking the whole product to themselves, and asking no favors of capital on the one hand nor of hired laborers or slaves on the other."<sup>20</sup>

## Undercutting the Republican Ideal

With the advantage of hindsight, we know that Lincoln was describing an ideal that was disappearing even as he spoke.<sup>21</sup> America (and Europe) would enter the Second Industrial Revolution in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, and society would be transformed. From railroads to steel production, the vertical integration of industry would change employment, immigration, and the urban landscape. But for the purposes of our story, the republican ideal of "Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men" would become like a distant dream in the decades following the war. America would become a nation of wage earners; the structure of the economy no longer allowing for the individual autonomy of which Lincoln spoke so eloquently.

With this change, the republican ideology would either have to be abandoned or changed ... radically. Two new and opposing Christian theologies evolved in response to the new American circumstances: the Gospel of Wealth and the Social Gospel.

The Gospel of Wealth embraced the new postwar concentration of wealth, and its advocates argued that the blessings of wealth were well-earned and should be seen as God's blessing on the hardworking. In fact, it was each man's responsibility to work to become as wealthy as possible. The Gospel of Wealth is perhaps most often remembered as embodied in Russell Conwell's famed sermon, "Acres of Diamonds," which he is said to have preached over five thousand times. Conwell told his audiences that to become wealthy, they merely had to look around and that the "acres of diamonds" spread out in front of them would become theirs. "I say that you ought to get rich, and it is your duty to get rich ... if you can honestly attain unto riches ... it is your Christian and godly duty to do so."<sup>22</sup>

In many ways, the Gospel of Wealth was a new manifestation of the optimistic impulse that had animated early nineteenth-century American economics, based on a belief that Christians would play an important role in the future prosperity of the country. It lacked any clear connection, however, to the idea of equality that had animated the republican ideal and that made America an exceptional nation. It was as if looking (approvingly) upon those who had found their "acres of diamonds," the advocates of the Gospel of Wealth could not see the people who worked as wage earners.

But the emerging structure of vertically integrated capital placed a heavy burden on the growing ranks of wage earners. Urban poverty was rampant and industrial accidents were common and uncompensated. Where the advocates of the Gospel of Wealth looked at the new economy and saw the successful captains of industry, the advocates of the Social Gospel looked at the new economy and saw poverty and an unequal power dynamic between those who owned the factories and those who worked in them.

In fact, the best known of the Social Gospel economists, Richard T. Ely, adopted as his rallying cry, "Look and See!" He repeated this simple admonition over and over, believing that the advocates of *laissez-faire* were so mesmerized by their idea of capitalism that they could not see the suffering and poverty in front of their own eyes. If only people would look, they could see that the new vertically integrated industries did not produce a completely harmonious outcome that was the best of all possible worlds. Because the advocates of the Social Gospel believed that seeing and acknowledging the suffering of the working class were fundamentally ethical issues and involved appealing to ethical impulses overlooked by *laissez-faire* economists, they were also referred to as the ethical economists.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the ethical economists hoped that the government (federal or state) would address some of the issues that they saw when they looked at the conditions in which workers labored. Child labor was common and unregulated, for

instance. There was no income security for those who lost their jobs in the periodic downturns of the economy. All of these situations presented opportunities to build a better, more equitable economy.

Thus, the advocates of the Social Gospel represented a quite different variation of the optimistic impulse in American Christianity. In fact, before they adapted the Social Gospel moniker, its early advocates had referred to themselves as the Kingdom Movement because they believed that they could help to build God's kingdom in the here and now, on this earth, in their own lifetimes.

## Christian Socialism in America

The movement for a Christian socialism in America emerged from the ranks of the ethical economists. Both theologians and economists contributed to the movement, but in every case the thing that mattered was the changed situation of the American worker. Whereas Lincoln could claim in 1860 that in the North there was no class of working men "fixed for life" as wage earners, the reality by the 1870s and 1880s was that the country had been transformed by industrialization into a nation of wage earners.

The lives of these wage earners and their families simply did not jibe with the republican ideal of how freedom and autonomy were attainable for everyone, nor the rough and ready equality that had been assumed between people. It did not require a sense of betrayal of the republican ideal, however, to be alarmed by the new working conditions wrought by the Second Industrial Revolution. In fact, the emerging new industrial working class raised alarm across the North Atlantic community, in both Europe and North America. Everywhere in the industrialized West, the end of the nineteenth century found the "Social Question" at the heart of domestic politics and debate.

The "Social Question" referred to the emergent problems raised by an industrial working class facing ever larger concentrations of capital. What rights would these workers have? How would their concerns be addressed? Should they be allowed to vote? Should they be allowed to organize unions? What could be done about the newly destructive waves of unemployment for urban workers who no longer had the ability to raise food for themselves? What about the growing inequality? What about urban poverty? All these issues and questions were equally alive in Europe and North America.<sup>24</sup>

The first great theologian of the Social Gospel was Washington Gladden, and his focus was characteristic of the movement's main concern: the working conditions of industrial laborers.<sup>25</sup> Gladden was thrust onto the national stage by his first book, *Working Men and their Employers* (1876). He had stumbled upon



his theme when he tried to recruit workingmen to join his church and learned that the men were reluctant to join because they were subjected to poor working conditions by businessmen who already attended Gladden's church.

Nonetheless, Gladden stuck to very traditional Christian solutions to laborers' problems in his first book, such as suggesting that factory owners follow the Golden Rule. Not until much later, in books such as *Tools and the Man: Property and Industry under the Christian Law* (1893) would Gladden begin to consider seriously the state as an agent to help working men. But by the time Gladden embraced the state as a means of improving the lives of workers, a group of academic economists, men such as John Bates Clark, Richard T. Ely, and Henry Carter Adams, had already raced ahead to consider Christian socialism. In order to understand what they meant by Christian socialism, however, we must step back and understand the background to their campaign.<sup>26</sup>

Following the Civil War, the first generation of Americans to seek the doctorate began to travel abroad to study. In the antebellum period, graduate study, when it was pursued, normally consisted of paying for an extra year of advanced study following completion of the bachelor's degree. Finding a willing mentor and paying a year's tuition was the normal means to garnering a "postgraduate" education, the doctoral degree not yet being available in the United States.

As Americans after the Civil War began to study in different European countries, the leading destination quickly emerged to be Germany, where graduate study was undergoing an evolution toward forms that still define graduate work: the seminar, the research paper, and the academic journal. These new ways of study were impressive and authoritative to the young Americans and gave them a sense of professionalism unavailable at that time in the United States.

Just as importantly, for the purposes of our story, their experiences in Germany gave them hope that the state could play an active role in addressing the "Social Question." The professors they most often chose to study with—Gustav Schmoller, Adolf Wagner, Karl Knies, Georg F. Knapp, Lujo Brentano, and Johannes Conrad—were all founding members of the Verein für Socialpolitik, a group dedicated to creating the space to address government economic policies. The young Americans saw what the Verein was able to achieve—serious discussion of economic conditions and policies to address them—and wanted the same kind of influence in America.<sup>27</sup>

In short, they wanted to discuss, critique, and recommend economic policies that would improve the working conditions and lives of American laborers. On the one hand, the young Americans studying in Germany learned in their lectures that the *laissez-faire* approach of "English economics" was of limited value (at best) in considering the situation in other countries. On the other hand, they

saw the way that their professors created the space within the Verein for serious discussion of alternatives to *laissez-faire*.

The young Americans did not advocate state socialism (state ownership of the means of production), nor did they advocate class-based politics. Neither of these was what they meant by socialism. Rather, socialism meant, for them, open discussion of the Social Question and the ability to address the issues they saw arising. Being able to openly say that unregulated capitalism did not necessarily produce a safe or fair outcome for working men was one part of what they advocated. But they also dreamt of helping to establish laws that dealt with things such as workplace safety, child labor, and old age pensions.

In some regards, it is fair to say that what the ethical economists sought was a *discussion* of economic policy and economic justice. If we look, for instance, at the early work of our three paradigmatic Social Gospellers, Clark, Ely, and Adams, we find them tentative and explicitly seeking engagement; they wanted to move past simple formulations of *laissez faire* and what they termed “individualistic economics” to find a common ground for social action. “‘Socialism’ the insurgent economists began to call this general transvaluation of values in the 1880s. The usage was a British borrowing, not a Marxian one.”<sup>28</sup>

Clark first broached the question of Christian socialism in an essay in 1879 in *The New Englander*, a journal where he had been publishing for several years. Titled “The Nature and Progress of True Socialism,” the essay became the draft of the closing chapter of his first book, *The Philosophy of Wealth*. But Clark does not advocate state socialism or the confiscation of property but rather asks the question of whether it is possible to build, on Christian principles, a cooperative workplace in which the workers are also the mutual owners of capital. In a sense, he seems to yearn for a return to the old republican ideal of every man as the owner of his own enterprise, equal to every other man; only now, capital will be owned collectively, not individually. He emphasizes that this outcome be the result of an evolution from the current position, not a revolutionary step.<sup>29</sup>

Ely and Adams express even less advocacy than Clark in their initial writings about socialism. In *French and German Socialism in Modern Times* (1883), Ely explores the contemporary experience with socialism in France and Germany; his analysis is sympathetic but critical.<sup>30</sup> Adam’s initial foray, “The Position of Socialism in the Historical Development of Political Economy” (1879), is likewise sympathetic but critical.<sup>31</sup> Adams’s point being that it is important to understand socialism in order to be able to fully grasp the history of economic reasoning. But as Daniel Rodger’s notes above, the ethical economists were interested in a “transvaluation of values” and they continued in earnest to explore what possibilities might be found in pushing the discussion further:

A certain deliberate vagueness inhered in all these progressive uses of the term “socialism,” an indefiniteness that drew from the well of displaced religious sentiments that young insurgent American economists knew so well. Their socialism was not class centered or state centered but, at heart, ethical. Socialism was the antonym of competitive individualism: an extension of the “social” idea that had struck them abroad. Socialism meant revolt against the “each one for himself” doctrine in economics, Ely explained. It meant, [E.R.A.] Seligman wrote, a wider scope for the “forces which tend to weld society together, [and] to render the idea of self subservient to that of the commonweal.”<sup>32</sup>

## The End of the Discussion

The dream of expanding the discussion would not last long, however. Together the ethical economists had founded the American Economic Association in 1885, among others reasons, to help themselves in the job market. The newly returned, German-trained economists had found it difficult to find regular employment and had hoped that banding together they might make their situation better. But the fact remained: It was difficult to find a position at a college or university if you did not support the *laissez-faire* positions of the older generation of economists.

And it was difficult to keep one. This had been true to some degree for their German professors who worked under strict scrutiny by the State and for whom “social democracy” was a third rail. Schmoller, Knies, and Wagner could discuss social and economic policy and advocate ideas, but they could not advocate social democracy, as this threatened the monarchy. For the young American economists who wished to replicate the intellectual freedom found in the Verein, the problem was not the primacy of the monarch or the prohibition against advocating social democracy; it was the wealthy industrialists who also generously supported higher education, and for them any sympathy with the position of laborers, especially support for unions, was seen as “socialism.”

There is an extensive literature on the consequences for many of the ethical economists as a result of their discussions of socialism.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, no one who failed to renounce socialism was allowed to continue their career as an academic economist. Some left academe altogether. Others simply changed disciplines.

A brief look at Henry Carter Adams’s experience illustrates the point. Despite his prominence, Adams worked the first years of his career in half time positions at Cornell and Michigan, splitting the year with one semester at each campus. Concerned about his interest in socialism, the president of Michigan, James B. Angell, asked Adams to answer a set of written questions about his social beliefs in early 1886; Adams kept his job despite answering honestly. In August,

however, he repeated some of the same opinions (as well as speaking in favor of unions) on a platform with a wealthy Cornell trustee; he lost his position at Cornell almost immediately. He kept his job at Michigan only by repudiating his earlier statements to Angell and declaring that he had been naive about “socialism” ever since he had spent a year studying in Germany.

Thus it was that any discussion of socialism was driven from American economics at the end of the nineteenth century.

## Coda

While the first part of our story differs from the British trajectory significantly, the second part has many parallels.

Christian theology and political economy in the early nineteenth century stayed “together” longer in America than they did in Britain thanks to the negligible influence of Malthus on American economics. In many important regards, American political economy remained “optimistic” and did not digress into the difficult theodicies of Malthus’s ratios. Thus, the first part of the trajectory in the early decades of the nineteenth century are quite different in British and American economics.

The rise of Christian socialism in the two countries is a different story, however. While the origins of Christian socialism in Britain in the 1840s and 1850s was not directly in response to the Second Industrial Revolution; and while it did not reflect the demise of a national ideology (republicanism): still, the British turn to Christian socialism did reflect the stagnated British living standards of the 1830s and 1840s. In other words, it arose from the same industrial misery to which Marx and Engels were responding at roughly the same time; and this response was not unlike the response to the urban poverty and destitution that arose in America later in the century when Christian socialism made its appearance in America.

Perhaps more to the point, when the ethical economists turned to Christian socialism, they explicitly turned to F. D. Maurice. Ely ended *French and German Socialism in Modern Times* not with a discussion of what was happening on the continent but rather in Britain with a reflection on Maurice’s work. Likewise, E. R. A. Seligman turned his doctoral thesis away from a study of “the medieval guilds to an intensely admiring study of the prophets of English Christian cooperative socialism.”<sup>34</sup>

Their turn to the British cooperative movement was as concrete as the ethical economists would ever get in their effort to encourage a discussion of socialism, but the form and content of their suggestion did not save their effort.<sup>35</sup> Focusing on workers and a system that placed them at its center, as republicanism had, was

not enough. Already by the 1880s, socialism in any form was anathema to those in power and would find no place in nineteenth century academic economics.

But the work of the ethical economists was not for naught. In 1908, almost all the mainline Protestant denominations joined together to endorse the Social Creed of the Churches, an ambitious document that committed them to fight for legislation to address the problems caused by industrialization: child labor, workplace injury, the seven-day work week. While they were not able to foster the conversation that they wanted in the 1880s and 1890s, the church and the nation did eventually join them in the discussion they had so fervently sought. It took several decades, but the churches did eventually “look and see.”

## Notes

1. I wish to thank the guest editors of this volume for their comments and help in improving this article. I offer special thanks to Dylan Pahman, who provided invaluable advice in the final stages of editing and revision. All remaining errors are mine alone.
2. Smith, of course, taught natural theology as the professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow.
3. See Benjamin Friedman, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2021).
4. A. M. C. Waterman, “The Beginning of Boundaries: The Sudden Separation of Political Economy from Christian Theology,” in *Economics and Interdisciplinary Exchange*, ed. Guido Erreygers (London: Routledge, 2001), 48. Benjamin Friedman examines extensively Butler’s and Tucker’s influence on Smith. See Friedman, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. Anthony Waterman also refers to the possible influence of Tucker and Butler on Smith, but it is difficult to understand what historiographic moniker to place on Waterman’s essay since he says explicitly that he “is not trying to discover what Smith believed in 1776,” but rather is pursuing things that Smith may not have been aware of in his own work. A. M. C. Waterman, “Economics as Theology: Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*,” *Southern Economic Journal*. 68, no. 4 (2002): 908. Oddly, given his explicit disavowal of the pursuit of intellectual history in the original essay, Waterman later included the essay in a collection subtitled “Essays in Intellectual History.” See A. M. C. Waterman, *Political Economy and Christian Theology since the Enlightenment: Essays in Intellectual History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Perhaps his approach in the essay might better be labeled “rational theological reconstruction.” See also A. M. C. Waterman, “Mathematical Modeling as an Exegetical Tool: Rational Reconstruction,” in *A Companion to the History of Economic Thought*, ed. Warren Samuels, Jeff E. Biddle, and John B. Davis (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 553–70.

5. See T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population, as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers* (London: J. Johnson in St. Paul's Churchyard, 1798).
6. Waterman, "The Beginning of Boundaries," 48. One of the referees pointed out to me that Waterman has used "dismal Science" here in the traditional ways that it developed (i.e., as a term to connote the necessity of making rational responses to scarcity) rather than in the way that Thomas Carlyle originally used the label (i.e., as an epithet to protest against economists who advocated racial equality). It is not clear yet that the century of the former usage must be expurgated from all texts, although it is clearly worth noting Carlyle's original intent.
7. See Waterman, "The Beginning of Boundaries." Technically, Waterman does not qualify the separation of Christian theology and political economy to Britain. But even if British political economy in the first half of the nineteenth century was the cutting edge of the discipline, it was not the only place that the discipline existed. One of the readers of an earlier version of this essay protested that since Malthus did not necessarily see himself as different than Smith in his linking Christian theology to political economy, we should not either: and, more to the point, that we should not accept Waterman's thesis that Malthus's theodicy caused many people in Britain in the early nineteenth century to see a disconnection between Christian theology and political economy. My response can only be that whatever Malthus believed, the trouble that his theodicy in *An Essay* caused for others is well-documented by Waterman.
8. That is, Malthus's argument that population grows geometrically while food production grows only arithmetically. There is some mention in the early nineteenth-century American literature of Malthus's contributions to economics other than his population theory. McVickar, for instance, discusses the differences between Ricardo and Malthus as regards gluts without referencing *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. See John McVickar, *Outlines of Political Economy* (New York: Wilder and Campbell, 1825). But to the extent that he has a consistent place in early nineteenth-century American economics, it is largely as the author of *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, and this is essentially dismissed as irrelevant in the American context.
9. See Friedman *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, 268–69, for statistics on agricultural output and its rapid rate of increase in early nineteenth-century America. As Friedman points out, the American experience of continually bringing into cultivation new land that was not of a lower productivity than the land already being farmed brought the whole approach of the nineteenth-century classical British economists into question.
10. Interestingly, Malthus would begin to gain purchase in America later in the nineteenth century when urban poverty became a serious issue. William Graham Sumner, for

instance, was an ardent Malthusian. See William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884). Sumner was, of course, a sociologist, not a political economist.

11. I know of no treatment of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religion and economic thought in what would eventually become the American nation that accounts for the presence of European Catholics who were in the Southwest from as early as the sixteenth century. It is not a trivial matter when one arrives in the early twentieth century and considers the land rights of indigenous people.
12. McVickar, *Outlines of Political Economy*, 31.
13. See Francis Wayland, *The Elements of Political Economy* (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Company, 1837); idem, *The Elements of Political Economy: Abridged and Adapted to the Use of Schools and Academies* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1848).
14. Wayland, *The Elements of Political Economy* (1837), 11.
15. Wayland, *The Elements of Political Economy* (1837), 11.
16. Friedman, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, 260.
17. Although staunchly pro-commerce and free trade, both McVickar and Wayland advocated government support for “internal improvements,” e.g., canals, roads, and railways, to support westward commercial expansion.
18. See Francis Bowen, *The Principles of Political Economy: Applied to the Condition, the Resources, and the Institutions of the American People* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1856).
19. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve, 4th ed., 2 vol. (New York: J. & H. G. Langley, 1841), 1:335.
20. Quoted in Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction* (New York: Harper, 1990), 11–12. It is worth noting that, on the one hand, the republican ideology in the antebellum world described only the experience of white men and their families while, on the other hand, noting that the republican ideology was the underpinning of much of the argument of the abolitionists. In an abolitionists’ ideal world, white and black families would all live as free citizens.
21. We now know that the number of free American males working for wages was approximately 40 percent in 1860.
22. Russell H. Conwell, *Acres of Diamonds* (New York: Harper, 1915), 18, 20.
23. While virtually all the ethical economists were Christians, there were noted exceptions such as E. R. A. Seligman, who was an Ethical Culturalist, not a Protestant.

24. And, of course, it must be said that these concerns were alive for both Catholic and Protestant Christians.
25. Gladden was also involved in the founding of the NAACP. He was also a founding member of the American Economic Association.
26. Much of what follows draws from Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
27. See Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, for an excellent treatment of the influence of the Verein on the generation of Americans who studied in Germany in the 1870s and 1880s.
28. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 100.
29. See John Bates Clark, *The Philosophy of Wealth: Economic Principles Newly Formulated* (Boston: Ginn, 1886); idem, "The Nature and Progress of True Socialism," *The New Englander*, July 1879, 565–82.
30. See Richard T. Ely, *French and German Socialism in Modern Times* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883).
31. See Henry Carter Adams, "The Position of Socialism in the Historical Development of Political Economy," *Penn Monthly* (April 1879), 285–94.
32. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 100.
33. See, e.g., Mary O. Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1975); Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
34. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 99.
35. See E. R. A. Seligman, "Owen and the Christian Socialists," *Political Science Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (1886): 206–49; Richard T. Ely, "Christian Socialism in England," *Christian Union* 31 (May 28, 1885): 7–8; idem, *The Labor Movement in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1886). Dylan Pahman's contribution to the conference at which this article was first presented, also published in this issue, suggests that Maurice was, through his patristic influences, interested in a Christian socialism that was, indeed, quite appropriate for the ethical economists in the sense that he was more interested in engaging the questions raised by the emerging industrial world than he was in class warfare or state socialism. See Dylan Pahman, "The Origins and Aims of F. D. Maurice's Christian Socialism: A Consideration of Patristic Motifs," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 26, no. 1 (2023): 27–49. There is no evidence, however, that the ethical economists were familiar with or influenced by the same patristic sources as Maurice.