

Editorial *The State of the Question
in Religion and Economics*

With this issue of the *Journal of Markets & Morality*, we introduce a new semi-regular feature section, the *Status Quaestionis*. Conceived as a complement to our *Scholia*, which are original translations of early modern texts and treatises on ethics, economics, and theology, the *Status Quaestionis* features are intended to help us grasp in a more thorough and comprehensive way the state of the scholarly landscape with regard to the modern intersection between religion and economics.

Some texts, such as Raymond de Roover’s essay, “Cardinal Cajetan on ‘Cambium’ or Exchange Dealings,” fit naturally with *Scholia* selections and can serve as invaluable introductory sources.¹ Others, however, are better situated as stand-alone essays that reflect on the various dialogues between and among disciplines such as religious studies, history, sociology, economics, political science, legal theory, theology, and ethics. For various reasons the scholarship in Anglophone lands has often remained insulated from broader scholarly discussions. Whereas the *Scholia* are longer, generally treatise-length works located in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, the *Status Quaestionis* will typically be shorter, essay-length pieces from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

An example of the sort of work that we plan to feature is selected from the massive opus of the Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). Kuyper has been an especially important influence on the development of neo-Calvinist thought in the Netherlands and North America, but a great deal of his work, especially on social, political, and ethical topics, remains largely

inaccessible to the English-speaking world.² Ironically enough despite this lacuna, John Bolt wrote recently of Kuyper that “the multitalented Dutch neo-Calvinist theologian, church reformer, university founder, journalist, and statesman, may be more appreciated in North America today than he is in his own beloved Netherlands.”³ Without greater attention to the primary sources of Kuyper’s work and his own interpretation of the history of liberty, such appreciation is bound to be incomplete.

In other instances, the major commentators and experts on the work of significant figures in the history of economics and religion have worked in languages and publications often ignored or overlooked by the broader Anglophone community. For centuries, the work of Johannes Althusius (1557–1638) had been underappreciated by the Western world in general. As Stephen Grabill writes, “Until Otto von Gierke’s (1841–1921) rediscovery of Althusius in the 1880s, few political theorists and jurists, and even fewer theologians, had any substantive appreciation for Althusius’ contribution to either the Western political canon or the Western legal tradition.”⁴ The most active modern discussions of Althusius have taken place in continental Europe and not in North America.⁵

Our concern to broaden the state of the question also necessitates paying attention to voices outside of the traditional Western canon, alternative and non-Western voices such as the Indian sociologist and economist Radhakamal Mukherjee (1889–1968).⁶ It may well be that Mukherjee’s expertise in a variety of fields has contributed to his omission in the study of modern economics. The radical and often hermetic division between academic specialties often prevents us from acquaintance with important perspectives that may appear in a related but separate discipline. The cross- and inter-disciplinary focus of the *Journal of Markets & Morality* is especially valuable on this point.

The first installment of the *Status Quaestionis* will feature an essay by Sergey Bulgakov (1871–1944), a renowned and influential Russian Orthodox theologian. His essay included in this issue, “The National Economy and the Religious Personality,” first published in 1909, represents the first and in many ways most lasting Orthodox Christian response to the Weber thesis. This piece is a *tour de force* that precedes and anticipates many of the criticisms of the Weber thesis that would be made over the course of the twentieth century.

One of the most recent reappraisals of the Weber thesis appears in Rodney Stark’s *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*, which traces the origins of modern capitalism to European monastic estates of the Middle Ages.⁷ Bulgakov both predates and expands upon Stark’s proposal. Bulgakov rightly observes that productive monasticism was not a monopoly of Western Christianity, but rather that “it is in the monastic practices

of both Western and Eastern Christianity where asceticism receives the clearest form of expression of its attitude toward economic labor.” Indeed, “inasmuch as the present rests on the shoulders of the past,” concludes Bulgakov, “we can generally claim that our contemporary economic life is built upon the foundations set by the ascetic monastic labor of medieval Europe.”

One other point to note in addition to the important context provided by the introduction to Bulgakov’s essay by Krassen Stanchev is Bulgakov’s critique of the notion of *homo economicus*, not as a limited methodological and analytical tool, but as an all-encompassing summary of what it means to be human. Bulgakov denies the universal validity of “the notion of ‘economic man,’ who does not eat and sleep but always calculates interests, seeking the greatest benefit at lowest costs; a slide rule that reacts with mathematical accuracy to the outer mechanism of redistribution and production, which is governed by its own laws of life.”⁸

In many cases, the *Status Quaestionis* features will contain the work of figures who not only contribute to the dialogue in the secondary scholarship but also are worthy of study in their own right as constructive and seminal voices in the study of religion and economics. Sergey Bulgakov is one such person. In our haste to explore the importance of those figures to whom the secondary scholarship points, let us also feel at liberty to linger over and appreciate the contributions of the secondary scholarship itself. Our hope is that these features will advance the state of scholarship and in this way contribute to the realization of the journal’s editorial mission to promote academic exploration of the dynamic intersection between ethics and economics, faith and freedom, law and liberty, markets and morality.

—Jordan J. Ballor, Ph.D. cand.
Associate Editor

Notes

1. See Raymond de Roover, “Cardinal Cajetan on ‘Cambium’ or Exchange Dealings,” in *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. Edward P. Mahoney, 423–33 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); reprinted as an introduction (pp. 195–208) to Cajetan’s *On Exchanging Money (1499)*, trans. Patrick J. Brannan, S.J., in *Journal of Markets & Morality* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 209–52. On de Roover’s importance, see Stephen J. Grabill, “Raymond de Roover’s Enduring Contribution to Economic History,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 1–3; and Thomas W. Blomquist, “De Roover on Business, Banking, and Economic Thought,” *Journal of Economic History* 35, no. 4, (December 1975):

821–30, a review of *Business, Banking and Economic Thought in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Selected Studies of Raymond de Roover*, ed. Julius Kirshner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

2. See, for instance, Kuyper's *De gemeene gratie*, 3 vols. (Leiden, Donner, 1902) and *Antirevolutionaire Staatskunde: met nadere toelichting op ons program*, 2 vols. (Kampen: Kok, 1916–1917). Notable exceptions are Kuyper's address to the First Social Congress in the Netherlands of November 9, 1891, published as *Het sociale vraagstuk en de christelijke religie. Rede bij de opening van het Sociaal Congres, op 9 november 1891 gehouden* (Amsterdam: Wormser, 1891), ET: *The Problem of Poverty*, ed. James W. Skillen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991) and *Christianity and the Class Struggle*, trans. Dirk Jellema (Grand Rapids: Piet Hein, 1950); and, of course, Kuyper's Stone Lectures delivered at Princeton University, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).
3. John Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), xi. The work of Kuyper's contemporary Herman Bavinck has recently enjoyed significant translation into English. See Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003–2008) and idem, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).
4. Stephen J. Grabill, "Introduction: Selections from the *Dicaeologicae*," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 404–5. See also the treatment of Althusius in Grabill's *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 122–50.
5. See Frederick S. Carney, Heinz Schilling, and Dieter Wyduckel, eds., *Jurisprudenz, politische Theorie und politische Theologie: Beiträge des Herborner Symposions zum 400. Jahrestag der Politica des Johannes Althusius 1603–2003* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2004). As Grabill notes, Carney is a noteworthy exception.
6. Mukherjee was author of, among many other works, *The Dynamics of Morals: A Sociopsychological Theory of Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1950); *The Economic History of India: 1600–1800* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1945); *Borderlands of Economics* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1925); and *Bhagavad Gita: Beyond the Religions* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing, 1999). I owe it to an essay by Sumita Kale, chief economist for Indicus Analytics, an economics research firm in New Delhi, for bringing Mukherjee's work to my attention.
7. Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2005).
8. See also Edward J. O'Boyle, "Requiem for *Homo Economicus*," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 321–37.