

The New Holy Wars – Economic Religion versus Environmental Religion

My Sources of Interest

- Economics Graduate School – A Religious Quality to Much Economics
- Interior Department, 1975-1993 – Growing Perception that Environmentalism Also Acts and Feels Like a Religion
- Environmentalists and Economists Have Major Difficulties Communicating – Talk Past Each Other
- A New Form of Religious Disagreement
- 1990-2010 – Three Books, Many Papers and Articles on Economic and Environmental Religion

Standard Models of Public Decision Making

- The Rational Model
- Schools of Public Administration, Policy Analysis
- Private Interest Bargaining
- Political Science – Interest-Group Liberalism (Theodore Lowi)
- Economics – Public Choice School

The Large Role of Ideas – A More Recent Appreciation

- Much That the Standard Model Cannot Explain
- The Power of Ideology
- Large Influence of Cultural Values
- New Recognition of Importance of Religion
- Need Broad Understanding of Religion – Includes “Secular Religion”

Definitions of Religion

- Paul Tillich – The Search for an Understanding of “Ultimate Reality”
- Max Stackhouse – “Worldviews ... such as Marxism, whenever they form a creed, a code and a cult, and are used to interpret and guide the formation of an ethos, can properly be seen as [religious] faiths.”
- Religion “Frames” the Basic Understanding of Humans and their Place in the World
- Religion Addresses the Most Fundamental Questions of Existence

Three Books on “Secular Theology”

- Reaching for Heaven on Earth: The Theological Meaning of Economics (1991)
- Economics as Religion: From Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond (2001)
- The New Holy Wars: Economic Religion versus Environmental Religion in Contemporary America (2010)

Another New Appreciation -- Secular Religions Have Judeo-Christian Origins

- Common Vision of Human Progress
- Human Purpose Found in Historical Process
- Heaven on Earth Replaces Heaven in the Hereafter
- Transforming Power of Economic Forces Substitutes for the Role of God
- Reverence for “the Earth” Substitutes for the Worship of God

Marxism – A Judeo-Christian Offshoot

- The Marxist Garden of Eden – The Happy Natural Condition Before Economic Conflict Arose
- Marxist Moment of the Fall – The Beginning of Economic Struggle Between Classes
- Marxist State of Original Sin – The “Alienation” of Human Beings from their Truer, Natural Selves
- Marxist God – Economics (The Laws of Economic History Are Omnipotent)
- Economics Determines Even Ideas in the Mind (“False Consciousness”), All Social Institutions, etc., etc.

Marxism (cont.)

- The Marxist Apocalypse – A (Predestined) Terrible Clash Between the Capitalist and Laboring Classes
- Marxist End of Sin -- The End of Class Struggle, of Alienation, of Government and Property as Forms of Coercion
- The Marxist Millennium -- Arrival of a New Heaven on Earth
- Marxism – A New “Bible,” From Genesis to the Book of Revelation, in Economic Metaphors

Richard Ely – The American Progressive “Gospel of Efficiency”

- Ely – The Leading Figure in Founding the American Economic Association (1885)
- Writes that economic science will facilitate “a never-ceasing attack on every wrong institution, until the earth becomes a new earth, and all its cities, cities of God.”
- American Progressivism (1890-1920) – Scientific Management for Economic Progress Along the Path to Heaven on Earth
- Ely -- Economics Departments should be Located in Schools of Theology.

John Maynard Keynes – “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren”

(1930)

- Economic Progress Will Soon Transform “The Material Environment of Life for Human Beings” – In About 100 Years
- Economic Progress, Eliminating Scarcity, Will “Lead Us Out Of the Tunnel of Economic Necessity into Daylight” – to a Newly Perfected Human Condition
- A Truer and Better Morality for the Future Will Recognize that “Avarice is a Vice, the Exaction of Usury is a Misdemeanor, and the Love of Money Is Detestable”
- Surprisingly Similar to Marxism, But Without the Apocalyptic Elements

The Essence of “Economic Theology”

- Severe Material Deprivation is the True Source of Bad Behavior (of “Sin” in the World)
- Materially Desperate People Lie, Cheat and Steal
- Hence, If We Solve the Economic Problem, We Solve the Human Problem, Morally as Well as Materially.
- The Arrival of Complete Abundance Will Usher in a New Age of Peace, Well Being, and Harmony – A New Heaven on Earth

Crime – The Question of “Evil”

- No Intrinsically Bad People, Only Bad Environments
- William Baumol (Princeton economist): “I believe deeply ... that money [economic shortage] is the root of all evil.”
- 1960s – The “War” on Poverty (On Sin)

Economic Origins of Terrorism

- Thomas Friedman (NYT) – Poverty creates the “conditions that spawn terrorists.
- Gordon Brown – Success in “the global war against poverty” is required to achieve success in “our war against global terrorism.”
- Matthew McHugh – “If you have impoverished people, it promotes helplessness, instability, and radical solutions” like terrorism.

Economic Morality

- Must “Pay the Price of” (Must Sacrifice for) Progress
- Focus on the Long Run – It is Sinful to Stand in the Way of Economic Progress
- “Efficient” and “Inefficient” – The New “Good” and “Evil”
- Professional Economists the New Priesthood – They Must Dedicate Their Services to the Common Good, to the Salvation of the World, Unlike Other People

Cathedrals of Progress

- Dams (Hoover, Grand Coulee)
- The Space Program (Apollo Travel to the Moon)
- Skyscrapers (World Trade Center)
- Google

The Rise of Environmental Religion

- Rejects Key Premises of Economic Religion
- Economic (and Scientific) Progress Is Not the Path to Heaven on Earth
- Things With “Intrinsic” (Non-Economic) Value Are Vitally Important
- Ecology Replaces Economics as Core Discipline

Again, Implicitly, Bringing Back God

- Things Have “Intrinsic” Value Because They are Valuable in the Eyes of God (Not Humans)
- Modern Science and Economics Give Humans The Power to “Play God” With the World
- Humans Now Seek to Become as God Themselves
- Humans Worshipping a False God of Progress

Deuteronomy (28)

- “You Must Never Worship Other Gods”
- If you disobey this command, you will be “destroyed because of the sin of forsaking Him.”
- God “will send disease among you, ... fever, infections, plague and war. He will blight your crops. All these devastations shall pursue you until you perish.”
- Throughout the Old Testament, God Punishes Sinners with Environmental Calamities

Climate Change

- We Are Playing God with the Earth's Climate
- Al Gore, NYT (2/27/10) -- Unless we change our ways, we “face an unimaginable calamity requiring large-scale, preventive measures to protect human civilization as we know it. “
- Al Gore, NYT (2/27/10) – The “seas are rising. Hurricanes are predicted to grow stronger and more destructive. ... Droughts are getting longer and deeper ... the severity of flooding increases. The seasonal predictability of rainfall and temperatures is being disrupted, posing serious threats to agriculture. The rate of species extinction is accelerating to dangerous levels.”
- The Old Testament, Deuteronomy in Climate Change Metaphors

Environmental Cathedrals

- Yosemite
- Grand Canyon
- Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR)
- Wilderness Areas – Places in the National Wilderness System (5 % of U.S. Total Area)
- Wilderness Act of 1964 – Wilderness Is a Place “UnTrammeled by Man”
- Wilderness Defined by Absence of Human Presence, Impact (i.e., Sin)

Puritan Roots

- Mark Stoll – “Virtually All Founding Ecologists, the Theorists of the Communities of Nature, had Protestant Backgrounds.”
- Stoll – In America, more Specifically, “Ecology as a Science Crystallized Mainly Out of the Calvinist Puritan Tradition,” as Modified and Handed Down from New England Transcendentalism.
- Almost No Founders and Leaders of American Environmentalism Over the Past 100 Years With Catholic Backgrounds.

Environmental Calvinism

- Excessive Materialism is a Threat to the Earth, Must Cut Back Consumption, Curb Growth
- Recycle
- Lower Home Temperatures
- Eat Organic Food
- Reduce Driving
- Fewer Children
- Human Beings Suffer from an Excess of Pride, Hubris

God's Handiwork in Nature

- John Calvin – God “Revealed Himself and Daily Discloses Himself in the Whole Workmanship of the Universe. ... There is No Spot in the Universe Wherein You Cannot Discern At Least Some Sparks of His Glory.”
- -- Historically, Only Two Protestant Paths to God – The Book of the Bible and the Book of Nature
- No Church Group of Priestly (Professional) Intermediaries.
- Can Still Find the Creation – The Book of Nature – in Wild Areas Uncorrupted by Past Human Impacts
- So True Wild Areas Provide a Reflection of the Mind of God

Earth Day – April 22

- “God Day”
- Gather Together for A Day of Renewed Commitment to the Earth (God)
- A Day of Service to the Earth (God)
- “Earth Hour” – Shut Off Lights Around the World (Sydney Opera House, Forbidden City)
- A New “Easter”
- First Global Religious Holiday

Source of Appeal of Secular Religion

- Takes Deeply Rooted Religious Values and Translates Them To a New Vocabulary
- Offers Disguised Religion in the Name of Science
- No Mention of God, Little Use of Traditional Religious Language
- Many People Today Say That They Are “Spiritual” But That They Are Not “Religious”
- Environmental Religion, Like Economic Religion, Appeals To Such People