

**THE STATE OF ECONOMIC EDUCATION IN
UNITED STATES SEMINARIES**

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A Report from the Center for Economic Personalism at the
Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty

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INTRODUCTION

Over a century ago, the social imperative in American Christianity was given new emphasis. For Catholics, the publication of Pope Leo XIII's social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* ushered in the modern era of Catholic social teaching. Among Protestants, the development of the Social Gospel movement indicated a growing recognition of the importance of social issues—poverty and racial harmony, for instance—as central areas of concern for those claiming to be followers of Christ.

Since that time, the various Christian churches within the United States have been actively involved in social issues at many levels. From establishing and staffing homeless shelters, hospitals, and orphanages, to lobbying Congress on behalf of specific policy proposals, America's churches have sought to be a positive influence on the lives of Americans in need.

While there has been consensus with respect to the need for socially active churches, there has been deep division—even within churches—as to the precise manner in which this social obligation is discharged. National organizations representing individual churches or groups of churches have advocated political policies that many of their constituent members have questioned or rejected. Some Christian individuals and organizations have contended that churches should not actively lobby in the halls of government at all but instead should focus on non-governmental initiatives to address the social problems confronting the nation.

These differences, in turn, are often based on differing ideas about the relationship between economics and theology. Does a theological belief in a preferential option for the poor imply economic redistribution through a system of taxation and benefits? Does a theological commitment to social justice require a federally mandated minimum wage? In short, do the doctrines of Christian social ethics readily translate into economic policy? If so, how? Deeper still lie differences over the content of Christian theology and the principles of economics.

Within the Christian communities of the United States, the clergy maintain an important role, both as spokespersons for their churches and as opinion molders for their congregations. The views of these religious leaders are, in large part, dependent on their formation at the hundreds of seminaries and schools of theology that dot the educational landscape of the country.

This study, then, is intended to assess the content of the education that future religious leaders are receiving at these institutions. More specifically, this study focuses on the views of economics and social justice held by the faculty at these schools. Our assumption is that the views of the faculty will, at least to some degree, influence the views of the next generation of clergy. Since religion continues to be an important part of Americans' belief systems, the views of these clergy will have widespread ramifications for the future of social action and policy in the United States.¹

Many groups will benefit from an examination of the results of this survey. Among them are those who are interested in general in the impact of religion on public life, those who are involved in theological education, and those who hope to influence the social and economic views of America's religious leadership. It is hoped that this study will be a source of information for a range of individuals and organizations concerned with these matters.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a survey instrument sent to United States seminary presidents and deans in March of 2000. Dr. John Green of the Bliss Institute at the University of Akron administered the survey instrument, which was drafted by Acton Institute staff in conjunction with a project advisory team of Christian sociologists and scholars. Dr. Green was contracted as an independent consultant for this phase of the project to ensure impartiality and professional standards in social science research.

Two hundred fifty-one seminaries were selected as the sample for the survey. The sample included major Christian and ecumenical seminaries in the United States as well as major Bible and liberal arts colleges involved in theological training. These schools were culled from the 2000 *Directory of Higher Education* (Higher Education Publications).

Selection Criteria

Sample schools were selected according to a combination of the following criteria:

- 1) **Geographical location.** Schools from every region of the country were selected. Geographically, the breakdown of schools covers the entire United States.
- 2) **Denominational affiliation.** Every major Christian denomination is represented. Many schools, however, are non-denominational or are independently affiliated.
- 3) **Academic reputation.** Schools with long and recognized reputations of academic excellence were included in the survey.
- 4) **Previous contact with the Acton Institute.** Schools that have sent students to Acton Institute programs or who have had any involvement with the Institute were added to the survey.
- 5) **Number of students in attendance.** The sample was limited to schools

with a sizable student population—preferably, though not in all cases, to schools with a population in excess of fifty students.

Survey Return

The survey was conducted between March and June of 2000 and involved three waves of questionnaires. These mailings produced 129 usable returns, for a response rate of 53 percent (excluding undeliverable mail). A return rate of 38 percent is usually the minimum required for statistical accuracy.

A comparison of the respondents and the original mailing list revealed little response bias in terms of religious affiliation. For example, 40 percent of the returns were from schools in the evangelical Protestant tradition, which matched the 40 percent in the original sample. Similar figures for Catholics were 22 and 23 percent, respectively; for mainline Protestants, 36 and 35 percent, respectively. The only significant bias was among Orthodox schools (.8 to 1.6, respectively). There was also no bias in terms of region. However, markedly fewer liberal arts colleges responded than seminaries and Bible colleges. Indeed, more than a dozen colleges explicitly declined to participate in the survey because they understood themselves as not directly involved in the training of clergy.

The Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was six pages long and contained 110 items. Roughly one-half of the items requested background information as well as information on the role of social justice in the curriculum. The other items were assessments of the opinions of the school's faculty and students on a range of issues pertaining to social justice. Because the survey focused on the institutions themselves, the decision was made to direct the survey to presidents or deans. The original respondents were given the option of passing the survey on to more knowledgeable members of their institutions, and a number did so. It is important to remember that the data presented here represent the judgments of institutional leaders, not the official positions of these institutions or the views of individual faculty.

DATA

I. SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THEOLOGICAL CURRICULA

Table 1 presents evidence on the role of social justice in the curriculum of sample schools. These data revealed a great deal of diversity. First, the emphasis placed on social justice varied, with over one-third reporting considerable emphasis; two-fifths, some emphasis; and more than one-quarter, less emphasis.

There was also considerable variation in how social justice appeared in the curriculum. The most common form was as part of classes on other subjects (four-fifths of the sample), followed by field work/pastoral experience (two-thirds), and then a special class, conferences/visiting speakers, and preaching (each more than three-fifths). Extracurricular activities/programs were mentioned by one-half of the schools, and two-fifths mentioned individualized programs.

About one-eighth of the respondents listed other ways that social justice appeared in their programs, including community service projects, internships, retreats, summer and weekly workshops, and special degree programs, such as a master's degree in peace studies.

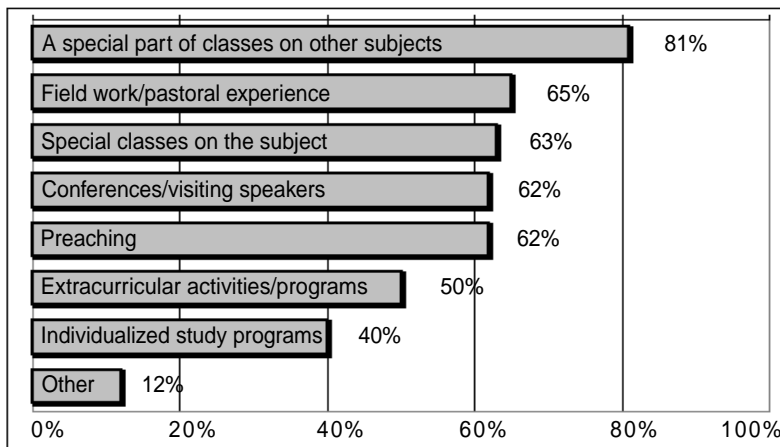
Respondents were asked to assess the percentage of the typical student's credit hours devoted to the topic of social justice, either directly or indirectly. The results were a mean of 9 percent obtained for direct exposure (standard deviation of 10) and 19 percent obtained for indirect exposure (standard deviation of 22). Taken together, these figures suggest that students were, on average, exposed to social justice topics in more than one-quarter of their classes.

TABLE 1. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE CURRICULUM

Emphasis the curriculum places on social justice:

Great Emphasis		Some Emphasis		Modest Emphasis	
13%	21%	40%	12%	15%	

How social justice appears in the curriculum:



Percentage of typical student's credit hours devoted to social justice:

	Mean	St. Dev.		Mean	St. Dev.
Directly	9%	10	Indirectly	19%	22

Overall effectiveness of curriculum regarding social justice:

Very Effective		Some Effectiveness		Not Very Effective	
13%	27%	43%	16%	2%	

Effectiveness of means by which justice appears in the curriculum:

	Very Effective	Some Effectiveness	Not Very Effective
Field work/pastoral experience	43%	3%	26%
Special classes on the subject	41%	38%	21%
A part of classes on other subjects	38%	50%	12%
Individualized study programs	21%	34%	55%
Extracurricular activities/programs	18%	40%	52%
Preaching	15%	50%	35%
Conferences/visiting speakers	14%	38%	48%

Student interest in studying social justice:

Very Interested	Some Interest	Not Very Interested
9%	26%	45%
15%	6%	

Student preparation for studying social justice:

Very Well Prepared	Some Preparation	Not Well Prepared
6%	21%	38%
24%	11%	

Table 1 also reports an assessment of the effectiveness of the social justice curriculum at the schools. Two-fifths of respondents judged their programs to be effective, and slightly more noted some effectiveness, with about one-sixth reporting less effectiveness. Interestingly, reported emphasis and effectiveness were positively correlated, suggesting that schools that emphasized social justice were generally pleased with the results.

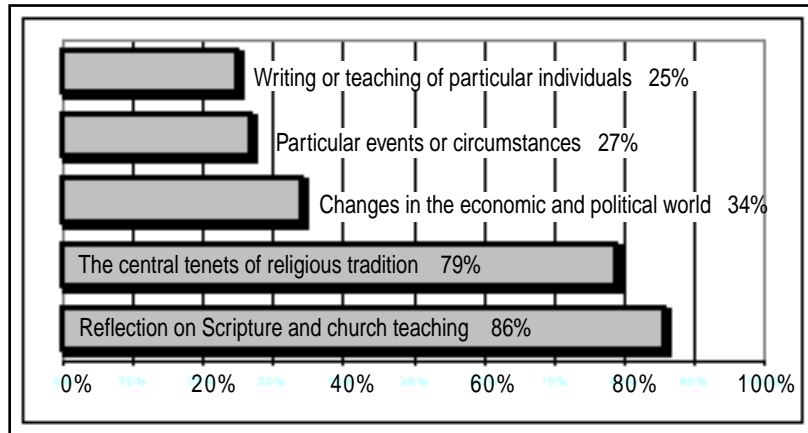
There was considerable variation in the evaluations of the various ways that social justice appeared in the curriculum. Field work/pastoral experience was judged to be the most effective, followed closely by special courses, and then part of classes on other subjects (all three were rated as very effective by approximately two-fifths of the respondents). Individualized programs, extracurricular activities/programs, and preaching came next (ranging from one-fifth to one-sixth in “very effective” ratings). Conferences/visiting speakers were rated the least effective approach (at less than one-sixth).

Relatively few schools reported that their students were interested in studying social justice (about one-third of the sample), although more than two-fifths noted that there was some interest, and one-fifth claimed the students were not very interested. A similar pattern was obtained for how prepared the students were to study social justice.

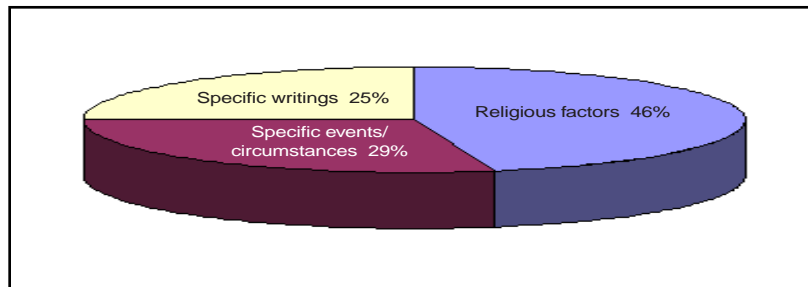
TABLE 2. AGE, ORIGINS, AND CONTENT SOURCES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ASPECTS OF THE CURRICULUM

Average age of present social justice curriculum: 19.5 years

Origins of present social justice curriculum:



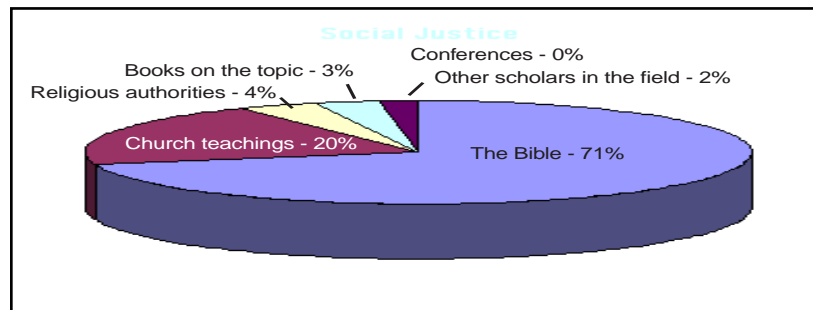
Combined origins:



Relative impact of content sources on social justice views of the faculty:

	A Great Deal of Impact	Some Impact	Modest Impact
The Bible	84%	14%	2%
Church teachings	46%	38%	16%
Books on the topic	27%	48%	25%
Other scholars in the field	19%	48%	33%
Religious authorities	15%	38%	47%
Conferences	9%	27%	64%

The most important content source for faculty views on social justice:



Theological orientation of the student body:

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
	0%	9%	31%
	40%	20%	

Political views of the student body:

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
	0%	6%	41%
	35%	17%	

Table 2 concerns the origins of social justice programs and sources of their content. The mean age of the “current emphasis” on social justice at these schools was 19.5 years. If the standard deviation of 15.9 years is taken into account, two-thirds of the surveyed schools developed their programs in the thirty-year period between the mid-1960s and mid-1990s.

Table 2 also reports the motivations for the present social justice emphasis at these schools. Nearly nine of ten respondents reported that reflection on Scripture and church teaching constituted the primary source, and nearly four-fifths claimed that their program derived from the central tenets of their religious tradition.

Many fewer schools reported other motivations, including one-third who noted changes in the economic and social world, and more than one-quarter who mentioned particular events or circumstances. Although most respondents did not give specific examples, those who did gave a wide variety of responses. Examples include: the civil rights movement, gender issues and feminism, the 1960s and 1970s, greater awareness of poverty and hunger, the evolution debate, immigration and diversity, urban riots, Latin America and South Africa, abortion, gay rights, environmentalism, urban poverty and riots, separation of church and state, capital punishment, the baby boom, and the Vietnam War.

When asked about the motivation for their programs, one-quarter of the respondents mentioned specific writings or the teaching of particular individuals. Here, too, only a small portion of the sample wrote in examples, and these were also quite diverse, including: Dale Brown, Francis Shaeffer, J. Alfred Smith, John Wesley, John Yoder, John Fuder, Martin Luther King, Jr., Marvin Ellison, Phyllis Tribe, James Wallis, Carl Henry, Robert McAfee Brown, Ron Sider, T. B. Mastor, Arthur Swin, P. Bresse, W. Swartley, Tony Campolo, Pope John Paul II, Pope John XXIII, D. Bonhoffer, and Saint Thomas Aquinas. In addition, other respondents listed liberation theology, feminism, and Catholic social teaching.

When combined, these items produced considerable variation, revealing many different paths in the development of social justice programs. However, three general patterns were evident. Some 46 percent of the schools reported that religious factors—not specific events or writings—were the principal motivations for their programs. About 29 percent stressed the importance of events and circumstances in addition to religious factors. The remaining 25 percent added specific writings to religious factors and events.

Finally, Table 2 reports assessments of the relative impact of different sources of content on the faculty. The Bible had the biggest reported impact, with better than four-fifths of respondents citing it. Church teachings came next (less than one-half), followed by other scholars (about one-fifth), religious authorities (one-sixth), and, finally, conferences (about one-tenth). When asked about the single most important source of content, respondents chose the Bible as their top choice (71 percent); church teaching was a distant second (20 percent). The remaining items each received less than 5 percent of the responses.

The focus on the Bible may reflect the theological orientations of the students, three-fifths of whom were judged to be theologically conservative; one-third, moderate; and less than one-tenth, liberal. The students were judged to be political conservatives as well, but with a larger moderate contingent.

Types of Schools by Curriculum

How do these features of the social justice curriculum fit together? Statistical analysis of the data in Tables 1 and 2 suggests there were three basic types of programs at the schools studied.² These can be labeled “incidental,” “extensive,” and “intensive.” These types of schools and their characteristics are presented in Table 3.

The incidental programs were found in 42 percent of the sample. The label derives from the fact that social justice appears to be incidental to the rest of the curriculum. The characteristics of this type of program are illustrated in the second section of Table 3 (“Components of Typology”), which gives the mean scores for some of the items used to create the typology. Note that the schools in this category reported less emphasis on social justice than the sample as a whole, and they were also less likely to report special classes. Here neither religious authorities nor other scholars had as much impact on the faculty.

The extensive programs made up 24 percent of the sample. Here the label derives from the more numerous ways that social justice appeared in the curriculum and the larger number of content sources that influenced the faculty. Note that these schools placed much more emphasis on teaching social justice than the incidental programs. They were also more likely to stress individualized programs and to be influenced by books.

The intensive programs accounted for 34 percent of the sample. The label derives from the presence of special classes on social justice and the influence of religious authorities on the faculty. These schools also gave the most emphasis to social justice, although it was only marginally greater than the extensive programs.

These three types of schools differed systematically on items not used to create the typology. For example, the incidental programs reported the least direct exposure of their students to the topic, while the intensive programs reported the most. There was a similar difference regarding indirect exposure, although here the extensive and intensive programs were about the same. A comparable pattern held for the number of social justice topics covered by the program (see Table 4 and the next section for details). The incidental programs reported a mean of 5.4, while the extensive and intensive programs reported means of 8.3 and 8.2, respectively.

TABLE 3. TYPES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE CURRICULA

	Curricula Types			
	Incidental	Extensive	Intensive	All
Percent of Sample	42%	24%	34%	100%
Components of Typology †				
Emphasis on topic	3.7*	2.5*	2.4*	3.0
Special classes	2.4*	2.0	1.5*	2.0
Individualized programs	2.8	1.5*	2.9	2.6
Religious authorities	2.7*	2.3	1.7*	2.3
Other scholars	2.5*	1.5*	1.7	2.0
Percent Social Justice in Curriculum				
Direct	4.3*	9.9	13.7*	8.8
Indirect	12.9*	24.0*	23.0*	18.9
Mean Number of Topics Covered				
	5.4*	8.3*	8.2*	7.0
Religious Tradition of Institution				
Evangelical	59%	36%	21%	40%
Mainline/ecumenical	33%	52%	30%	37%
Catholic/Orthodox	8%	12%	49%	23%
Types of Curricula				
Incidental	63%	29%	37%	46%
Extensive	19%	45%	30%	29%
Intensive	19%	26%	33%	25%
Student Characteristics ††				
Interest in social justice	3.2*	2.5*	2.5*	2.8
Theological conservatism	4.1*	3.3*	3.4*	3.7
Political conservatism	4.0*	3.3*	3.3*	3.6

*Difference from sample mean is statistically significant.

†These numbers are averages derived from the responses in Tables 1 and 2. For instance, a 1.0 would mean all schools of that type answered "Great Emphasis" on social justice in the curriculum, while a 5.0 would mean all schools answered "Modest Emphasis." For the criteria regarding how social justice appears in the curriculum, a lower number indicates a higher incidence. For instance, schools with intensive programs reported more appearances of social justice as a special class than did schools with other types of programs.

††These numbers are averages derived from the responses in Tables 1 and 2. For instance, a 1.0 would mean all schools of that type answered "Very Interested" in social justice, while a 5.0 would mean that all schools answered "Not Very Interested." A higher number for interest, then, means less interest, while a higher number for theological or political conservatism means more conservatism.

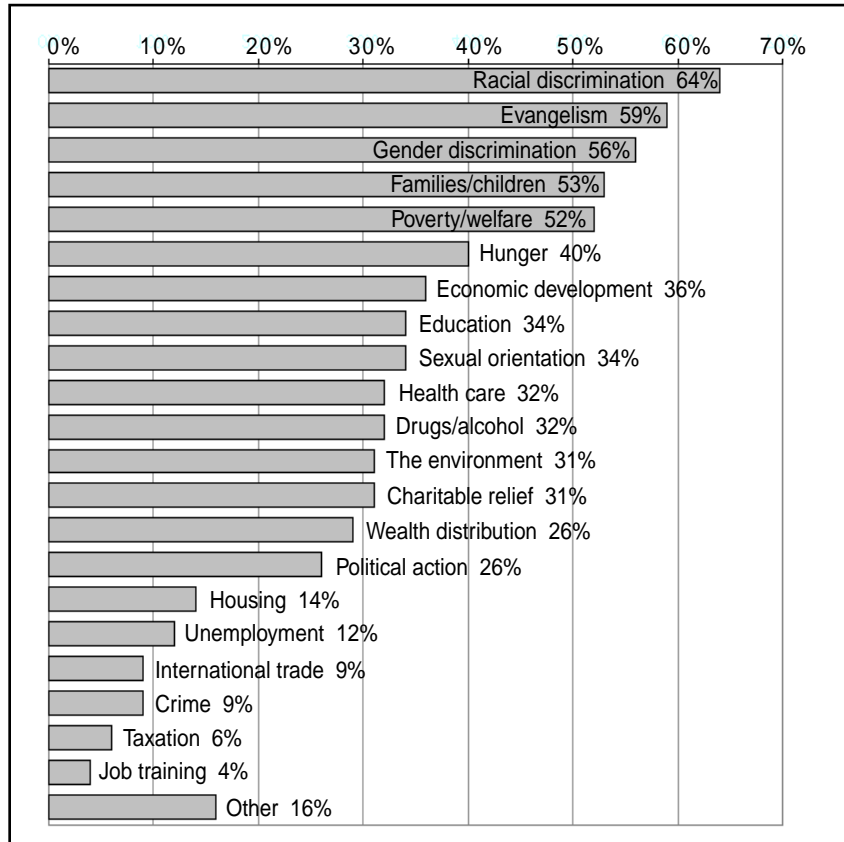
The origins of the programs differed, as well. Two-thirds of the incidental programs reported religious factors as the chief motivation, and less than one-fifth listed specific events or writings. In contrast, nearly one-half of the extensive programs mentioned specific events, with more than one-quarter listing religious factors or specific writings. The intensive programs fell between the other two, with better than one-third mentioning religious factors; less than one-third, specific events; and one-third, specific writings.

The three types of programs were concentrated in different religious traditions. Almost three-fifths of the incidental programs were in the evangelical Protestant tradition, one-third in mainline Protestant/ecumenical schools, and less than one-tenth in Catholic/Orthodox institutions. More than one-half of the extensive programs were at mainline Protestant/ecumenical schools, with better than one-third at evangelical institutions, and the remaining one-eighth in Catholic/Orthodox schools. Finally, about one-half of the intensive programs were at Catholic/Orthodox institutions, less than one-third at mainline/ecumenical schools, and the remaining one-fifth at evangelical institutions.

There were also differences in student orientations. Incidental programs reported both the lowest level of student interest in social justice as well as higher levels of theological and political conservatism. Extensive and intensive programs reported greater—and similar—levels of student interest as well as lower—and similar—levels of student conservatism.

TABLE 4. SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPICS COVERED IN THE CURRICULUM

Topics that receive a “great deal” of attention:



Average number of topics covered: 7.0

Relative stress of moral and economic principles in curriculum:

Mostly Moral Principles		Both Kinds of Principles		Mostly Economic Principles
34%	24%	41%	1%	0%

Table 4 lists social justice topics reported to receive a “great deal of attention” at these institutions. The most mentioned topic was racial discrimination (almost two-thirds of the sample). Evangelism (three-fifths), gender discrimination, families/children, and poverty/welfare (all over one-half) completed the top five topics. Hunger came next, with two-fifths of the sample, followed by eight topics, each with around one-third of respondents: economic development, education, sexual orientation, health care, drugs/alcohol, the environment, charitable relief, and the distribution of wealth. Political action followed, with one-quarter of the sample, and the last six topics all scored under one-sixth of responses: housing, unemployment, international trade, crime, taxation, and job training.

About one-sixth of the respondents listed other topics. These included abortion/right to life, peace with justice, peacemaking, human rights, interfaith relations, international relations, prison issues, and stewardship.

The mean number of topics covered was 7.0 (with a standard deviation of 4.6). As noted above, incidental programs reported many fewer topics than the extensive or intensive ones. The kinds of topics varied accordingly: The less commonly mentioned topics tended to appear in the extensive and intensive programs.

Social issues (such as discrimination) tended to rank high on the list of topics, along with social welfare issues (poverty, hunger). Most economic issues (job training, taxation) appeared near the bottom of the list. This pattern fits with the reported emphasis placed on moral and economic principles in the curriculum. Nearly two-fifths of these institutions stressed moral principles over economic ones, although two-fifths stressed both. In contrast, only a single institution stressed economic principles over moral ones.

II. SOCIAL VIEWS OF THEOLOGY FACULTY

Tables 5 through 10 report assessments of faculty opinion at these institutions on a range of issues related to social justice. Such assessments must be interpreted with caution since they represent the judgment of one person—albeit an informed and sophisticated person—on the opinions of a group of people. These data do not represent the official opinions of the institutions or the individual opinions of the faculty.

These data are useful because they provide a sense of the climate of opinion among the schools’ faculty. Although surely mediated by numerous factors, these opinions are likely to influence the content of the curriculum in at least a general way. And as with the findings on curriculum, these data reveal much diversity between and within the schools studied. Indeed, the most common response on most items was “mixed opinion,” meaning that the faculty was divided on the issue.³ This finding could reflect the fact that the faculty simply disagreed on many of these issues. Another possibility is that many faculty members were not

particularly informed on these subjects. For ease of presentation, we will compare the percentage of respondents reporting agreement and disagreement with the individual items.

TABLE 5. ASSESSMENTS OF FACULTY VIEWS ON ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

	Nearly All Agree	Most Agree	Mixed Opinion	Most Disagree	Nearly All Disagree
Capitalism does more to foster social justice than socialism.	24%	23%	37%	13%	3%
Socialism does more to promote good moral standards than capitalism.	2%	6%	36%	34%	23%
Capitalism does more to encourage environmental stewardship than socialism.	9%	16%	49%	20%	6%
Socialism does more to promote humane culture than capitalism.	2%	8%	41%	27%	23%
Private property rights are sacred and absolute.	20%	16%	30%	20%	13%
Marxist social analysis is compatible with Christianity.	4%	12%	26%	18%	40%

Table 5 contains assessments of faculty opinion on economic systems. Overall, the respondents reported a preference for capitalism over socialism, but with some skepticism about market institutions. They believed capitalism was more likely to foster social justice (47 to 16 percent), moral standards (57 to 8 percent), and humane culture (50 to 10 percent) than socialism. In addition, respondents reported widespread disagreement with the notion that Marxism is compatible with Christianity (58 to 16 percent). However, there was a close division as to whether capitalism encourages environmental stewardship (25 to 26 percent), as well as the idea that property rights are “sacred and absolute” (36 to 33 percent).

TABLE 6. ASSESSMENTS OF FACULTY VIEWS ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

	Nearly All Agree	Most Agree	Mixed Opinion	Most Disagree	Nearly All Disagree
Social justice cannot be achieved without governmental redistribution of wealth.	5%	16%	39%	22%	19%
Nothing is fundamentally wrong with an unequal distribution of wealth.	9%	18%	33%	25%	15%
The tax system tends to benefit the rich at the expense of everyone else.	17%	26%	39%	10%	7%
The government should establish a cap on the level of personal income.	1%	5%	28%	31%	35%
Social justice cannot be achieved without private property and free markets.	3%	34%	46%	6%	2%
Taxation is a viable means of fostering a just distribution of wealth and income.	5%	29%	47%	13%	6%

Table 6 concerns opinion on the distribution of wealth. Here the respondents reported not only opposition to income redistribution but also a sense that all was not well with the present distribution of income. There was disagreement with the proposition that social justice requires the redistribution of income (21 to 41 percent) and that the government should establish a cap on personal income (6 to 66 percent). Along these lines, the respondents also reported support for the idea that social justice requires private property and free markets (47 to 8 percent). There was, however, disagreement with the statement, “There is nothing fundamentally wrong with an unequal distribution of wealth” (27 to 40 percent). The respondents reported mixed views on the tax system: By 43 to 17 percent, the faculties agreed that the tax system tends to favor the rich, and by 34 to 19 percent, they agreed that taxation can foster a just distribution of income and wealth.

TABLE 7. ASSESSMENTS OF FACULTY VIEWS ON GOVERNMENTAL INTERVENTION IN THE ECONOMY

	Nearly All Agree	Most Agree	Mixed Opinion	Most Disagree	Nearly All Disagree
It is important to minimize the role of government in economic decision making.	11%	22%	42%	21%	5%
The government should institute wage and price controls.	2%	8%	39%	34%	18%
Because businesses usually operate in a moral fashion, only minimal regulation is needed.	2%	5%	39%	43%	13%
Additional environmental protection is needed even if it costs jobs or raises prices.	5%	34%	46%	9%	7%
Without close governmental supervision, corporations will abuse their power.	9%	41%	41%	7%	3%
Free trade is necessary even if it costs jobs or disrupts communities.	5%	20%	64%	7%	3%

Table 7 reports the results for governmental intervention in the economy. On these issues, the respondents reported both support and opposition for governmental economic regulation. There was agreement about minimizing the government's role in economic decision making (33 to 27 percent) and strong opposition to wage and price controls (52 to 10 percent). However, there was also disagreement concerning the idea of minimal business regulation (56 to 7 percent) and the need to regulate corporations (50 to 10 percent). And there was support for additional environmental regulations (39 to 16 percent). The respondents also reported support for free trade (25 to 10 percent), but nearly two-thirds were in the "mixed opinion" category.

TABLE 8. ASSESSMENTS OF FACULTY VIEWS ON WELFARE AND POVERTY

	Nearly All Agree	Most Agree	Mixed Opinion	Most Disagree	Nearly All Disagree
The government should spend more on welfare even if it means higher taxes.	7%	24%	42%	19%	9%
Poverty is mostly caused by the personal inadequacies of the poor.	5%	6%	27%	33%	30%
The government should establish a minimum annual salary for all citizens.	5%	14%	35%	32%	14%
Multinational corporations are a force for genuine human development.	2%	6%	62%	23%	7%
Poverty is mostly caused by a lack of opportunity in society.	3%	26%	42%	20%	9%
Multinational corporations are a cause of poverty and injustice.	6%	23%	52%	9%	10%

Table 8 reports assessments of faculty opinion on welfare and poverty. As with governmental economic intervention, there was both support and opposition to welfare programs. The respondents reported modest support for increased welfare spending (31 to 28 percent) and strong opposition to a minimum annual salary (46 to 19 percent). The respondents disagreed with the notion that poverty is caused by the personal inadequacies of the poor (63 to 11 percent), but they were evenly divided as to whether poverty was caused by a lack of opportunity (29 to 29 percent). The respondents reported negative views toward multinational corporations, with most disagreeing that corporations are a force for genuine human development (30 to 8 percent) and agreeing that multinational corporations are a cause of poverty and injustice (29 to 19 percent).

TABLE 9. ASSESSMENT OF FACULTY VIEWS ON SOCIAL ISSUES

	Nearly All Agree	Most Agree	Mixed Opinion	Most Disagree	Nearly All Disagree
Abortion should be illegal except in cases of rape, incest, or if the mother's life is in danger.	38%	18%	20%	16%	9%
Homosexuals should have all the same rights as other Americans.	23%	31%	24%	9%	13%
Moral decay is the principal cause of social problems.	21%	31%	29%	14%	6%
Minorities need governmental assistance to obtain their rightful place in America.	9%	35%	42%	9%	6%
It is best if women who have small children do not work outside the home.	13%	13%	48%	19%	9%
Consumerism is the principal cause of social problems.	5%	16%	51%	18%	10%
A constitutional amendment is needed to protect women's rights.	5%	12%	32%	35%	10%

Table 9 shows findings on social issues. Here the respondents reported a mix of conservative and liberal views. The respondents opposed abortion (56 to 25 percent), agreed that moral decay is the principal cause of social problems (52 to 20 percent), and opposed a constitutional amendment to protect women's rights (51 to 17 percent). However, there was also support for gay rights (54 to 22 percent) and affirmative action (44 to 15 percent). Opinion was divided as to whether women with small children should work outside of the home (26 to 28 percent) and whether consumerism is the principal cause of social problems (21 to 28 percent).

TABLE 10. ASSESSMENTS OF FACULTY VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN SOCIETY, THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS, AND POLITICAL VIEWS

	Nearly All Agree	Most Agree	Mixed Opinion	Most Disagree	Nearly All Disagree
Churches are private institutions and thus not relevant to fostering social justice.	1%	2%	10%	31%	58%
Churches should help their members and thus serve as a model for social justice.	50%	38%	8%	5%	1%
Churches should help non-members solve their problems to achieve social justice.	31%	35%	26%	6%	2%
Churches should engage in the political process to achieve social justice.	23%	28%	29%	11%	10%
If enough people were brought to Christ, social ills would take care of themselves.	19%	13%	33%	22%	15%
Social ills will be solved when the structure of society reflects Christian values.	18%	31%	35%	9%	8%

Table 10 reports opinions on the role of the church in society. Overall, the respondents reported support for church activity to foster social justice. There was strong disagreement with the idea that churches are not relevant to social justice because they are private institutions (89 to 3 percent). By similar margins (88 to 6 percent), there was agreement that churches should help their members and serve as models for social justice. The respondents also agreed that churches should help non-members (66 to 8 percent), that churches should engage in the political process to foster social justice (51 to 21 percent), and that social ills will be solved when the structure of society reflects Christian values (49 to 17 percent). However, opinion was divided on the notion that social ills will take care of themselves if enough people are brought to Christ (32 to 37 percent).

Types of Schools by Faculty Opinion

Overall, the respondents reported that their faculty members were conservative in theological orientation, with two-fifths having conservative views; one-quarter, liberal ones; and one-third, moderate ones. A similar distribution occurred for political views. Here, one-third were on the right, one-quarter on the left, and two-fifths in the center.

Overall faculty theological orientation:

Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
5%	20%	35%
20%	20%	21%

Overall faculty political views:

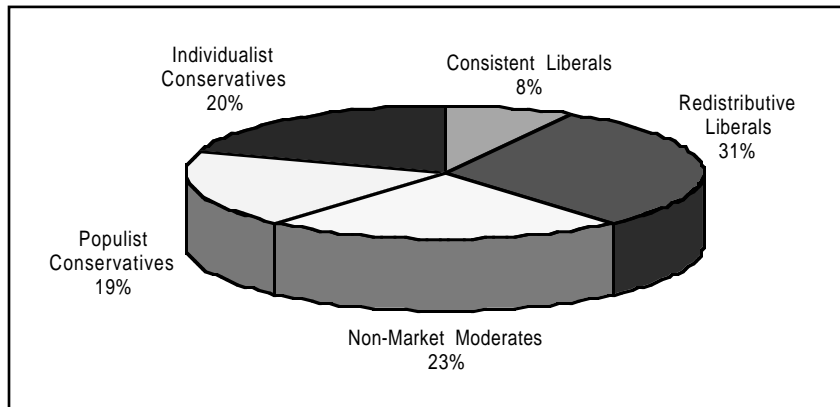
Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
2%	23%	40%
21%	14%	

How do these assessments of faculty opinion fit together? Statistical analysis of the data in Tables 5 through 9 suggests there are five basic types of schools in terms of faculty opinion.⁴ These can be labeled “consistent liberals,” “redistributive liberals,” “non-market moderates,” “populist conservatives,” and “individualist conservatives.” The size of these types of schools and their characteristics are presented in Tables 11 and 12.

III. A TYPOLOGY OF SCHOOLS BASED ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC VIEWS

TABLE 11. TYPES OF SCHOOLS BASED ON ASSESSMENTS OF FACULTY OPINION

Types of faculty opinion (as percentage of sample):



Components of Typology:†

	Consistent Liberals	Redistributive Liberals	Non-Market Moderates	Populist Conservatives	Individualist Conservatives	ALL
Social problems are caused by moral decay.	3.9*	2.7	3.0*	1.7*	1.7*	2.5
Poverty is caused by personal inadequacies.	4.7*	4.1	4.4*	3.6*	2.4*	3.8
More environmental protection is needed.	1.9*	2.5	2.7	2.6	3.8*	2.8
The tax system benefits the rich.	1.8*	2.5	2.4	2.5	3.4*	2.6
Government should fix minimum salary.	2.3*	2.7*	3.5	4.0*	4.0*	3.4
Justice requires income redistribution.	2.0*	2.8*	3.0	4.0*	4.4*	3.3
Justice requires free markets.	3.6*	2.7	2.8*	1.8*	2.0*	2.4
Property rights are absolute and sacred.	4.1*	3.1	3.9*	1.7*	2.0*	2.9
Other Views:						
Faculty theological conservatism	2.1*	2.7*	2.9*	4.0*	4.6*	3.3
Faculty political conservatism	2.2*	2.7*	2.8*	4.0*	4.3*	3.2
Church should enter politics to foster justice	1.7*	2.2*	2.2*	2.8	3.6*	2.6
Bring people to Christ, solve social problems	3.8*	3.3	3.9*	2.5*	1.9*	3.0

* Difference from sample mean is statistically significant.

† Entries are mean scores; see Tables 5–10 for specific items.

The consistent liberals made up 8 percent of the sample and were the most distinctive group. This label comes from the fact that they held liberal positions on all the major dimensions of opinion included in the study. This can be seen with the second set of entries in Table 11 (“Components of Typology”), which gives the mean scores for some of the items used to create this typology. On all the issues listed, the consistent liberals held significantly more liberal positions than the sample as a whole.

The redistributive liberals accounted for 31 percent of the sample. This label comes from the fact that they held strong liberal positions on redistributing income. For instance, they supported a minimum salary and agreed that income redistribution was needed to achieve social justice. However, on most other issues, these schools resembled the sample mean. Although not as far to the left

as the consistent liberals on income redistribution, there were issues on which their views were even more liberal (such as abortion).

The non-market moderates made up 23 percent of the sample. This label comes from their skepticism about the institutions of a market economy. For instance, they disagreed with the notion that social justice requires free markets and private property. They also disagreed with the idea that private property is sacred and absolute. Although rarely as far left as the consistent liberals, the non-market moderates were also characterized by liberal views on individual behavior and responsibility, such as the items on moral decay and personal inadequacies as a cause of poverty. However, on other issues, such as environmental protection and minimum salaries, they took stands close to the sample mean.

The populist conservatives made up 19 percent of the sample. This label comes from the fact that they held moderate positions on governmental economic intervention, such as environmental protection, and on notions of class bias in public policy, such as in the tax system. However, on most other issues, this group held conservative positions, especially on market institutions, where their opinions were farthest to the right.

The individualist conservatives made up 20 percent of the sample. This label comes from their strong support for individual freedom and responsibility. They tended to have strong conservative views on social issues, including the idea that social problems are caused by moral decay and that poverty results from the personal inadequacies of the poor. They strongly opposed redistribution of income. However, they were not as far to the right on governmental intervention in the economy and, especially, in their support for market institutions.

The last set of entries in Table 11 further illuminates these types of schools, with items not used to construct the typology. A consistent pattern appeared on faculty theological orientations, political views, and the notion that the church should participate in politics. The consistent liberals were always farthest to the left, the individualist conservatives always farthest to the right, and the other three groups were arrayed between those two. The last item on that table—solving social ills by bringing people to Christ—showed a modified version of this pattern, with the non-market moderates most opposed and the individualist conservatives most supportive.

TABLE 12. TYPES OF SCHOOLS BY FACULTY OPINION, CURRICULA TYPE, AND STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

	Consistent Liberals	Redistributive Liberals	Non-Market Moderates	Populist Conservatives	Individualist Conservatives	ALL
Religious Affiliation of Institution						
Evangelical	10%	28%	23%	50%	84%	40%
Mainline/ecumenical	60%	52%	37%	29%	12%	38%
Catholic/Orthodox	30%	20%	40%	20%	4%	22%
Type of Curricula						
Incidental	20%	21%	27%	71%	76%	42%
Extensive	20%	44%	27%	4%	12%	24%
Intensive	60%	36%	46%	25%	12%	36%
Moral vs. Economic Principles †						
	2.7*	2.4*	2.1	1.8	1.6	2.0
Number of Topics Covered						
	8.7*	8.6*	7.4	6.5	4.2*	7.0
Student Characteristics ††						
Interest in social justice	2.1*	2.6	2.7	3.2*	3.4*	2.8
Theological conservatism	2.8*	3.4	3.4	4.0*	4.6*	3.7
Political conservatism	2.9*	3.3	3.3	4.2*	4.3*	3.6

* Difference from sample mean is statistically significant.

† These numbers are averages derived from the responses in Table 4. For instance, a 1.0 would mean that all schools with faculty of that type answered "Mostly Moral Principles," while a 5.0 would mean that all schools answered "Mostly Economic Principles."

†† These numbers are averages derived from the responses in Tables 1 and 2. For instance, a 1.0 would mean that all schools with faculty of that type answered "Very Interested" in social justice, while a 5.0 would mean that all schools answered "Not Very Interested." A higher number for interest, then, means less interest, while a higher number for theological or political conservatism means more conservatism.

Table 12 reports some additional characteristics of these types of schools. In terms of religious affiliation, three-fifths of the consistent liberals were mainline/ecumenical Protestants; nearly one-third, Catholic/Orthodox; and just one-tenth, evangelicals. The mainline/ecumenical schools also made up a majority of the redistributive liberals, with more than one-quarter evangelicals and one-fifth Catholic/Orthodox. Catholic/Orthodox schools were the most common among the non-market moderates, at two-fifths, but mainline/ecumenical schools were almost as numerous, and one-quarter were evangelical. Evangelical institutions accounted for up to one-half of the populist conservatives, with mainline/ecu-

menical schools accounting for more than one-quarter, and Catholics/Orthodox, one-fifth. The individualist conservatives were dominated by evangelical schools, at more than four-fifths, with other traditions a small minority.

A similar pattern was obtained for the types of curricula. The percentage of incidental programs increased steadily from one-fifth of the consistent liberals to three-quarters of the individualist conservatives. The percentage of extensive and intensive programs shows a largely opposite pattern, with a few exceptions, particularly the redistributive liberals and non-market moderates.

The rest of the items showed a steady left-to-right pattern across the five groups. The consistent liberals were the most likely to have a mix of moral and economic principles in their programs, and the individualist conservatives were the most likely to stress only moral principles. A similar pattern held for the number of topics covered in the program: The consistent liberals had the most, and the individualist conservatives had the least. Consistent liberals had students with the most interest in social justice, and were the most liberal in theological and political terms. In contrast, the individualist conservatives had the students who were the least interested in social justice, and who were the most conservative in theological and political terms.

NOTES

1. A study released in 2001 demonstrates that most Americans desire an increased role for religion in American life. See Steve Farkas, et al., *For Goodness' Sake: Why So Many Want Religion to Play a Greater Role in American Life* (New York: Public Agenda, 2001).

2. This typology was created in two steps. First, the items on emphasis, effectiveness, and content were analyzed by means of two factor analyses (principal components analysis with varimax rotation). This analysis produced five underlying dimensions (eigenvalues > 1), as follows: first factor (overall emphasis, specialized classes, field experience, overall effectiveness); second factor (individualized study, conferences, part of other classes); third factor (extracurricular activities, preaching); fourth factor (other scholars, conferences, books); and fifth factor (Bible, church teachings, religious authorities). These three factors were then subject to cluster analysis (K-means) to produce the three categories. Other cluster solutions were neither as parsimonious nor as intuitively appealing.

3. For purposes of this presentation and analysis, missing data on the opinion items were treated as a mixed opinion. Analysis of the individual responses suggests that this decision does not significantly alter the patterns in the data and allows for the employment of all the cases.

4. This typology was created in two steps. First, all the issue items in Tables 5 through 9 were analyzed by means of factor analysis (principal components analysis with varimax rotation). After considerable experimentation, it was determined that there were four intuitively appealing dimensions underlying these data (two minor factors were excluded because they were substantively similar to

the first and second factors generated). Four factors were produced, as follows: *individual behavior* (women with children, gay rights, moral decay, humane culture, abortion, poverty and personal inadequacies, and unequal wealth); *welfare/regulatory policy* (taxes and justice, environmental protection, affirmative action, corporations and poverty, free trade, consumerism, welfare spending, business regulation, taxes and the rich, and corporate regulation); *redistribution of income* (cap on income, minimum salary, wage/price controls, moral standards, Marxism, justice and redistribution, women's rights, and poverty and lack of opportunity); *market institutions* (corporations and human development, justice and markets, sacredness of property, capitalism and justice, government and the economy, and capitalism and environmental stewardship). These factors were then subjected to cluster analysis (K-means) to produce the five categories. Other cluster solutions were neither as parsimonious nor as intuitively appealing.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from our study that social justice, broadly construed, is an important facet of the education at many seminaries in the United States. The nature of that education, however, appears to differ markedly from school to school. Moreover, at a significant number of schools, teaching about social issues is not a key part of seminary training. Still, a few general conclusions can be made with respect to the overall character of the teaching of social ethics at seminaries.

Moderation. On social issues, including attitudes toward capitalism and governmental intervention, faculty tend to be moderate. Few respondents identified their faculty's views as being either strongly in favor or strongly opposed to the operation of the market or the economic/social activities of government. On most of the socio-economic issues polled, in fact, faculty were reported to be of "mixed opinion," indicating a variety of views among the faculty at individual institutions.

Scripture. The Bible is the most popular source of teaching on social issues. It appears that the centrality of Scripture as a guide for social thinking cuts across not only the lines of denominational affiliation but also those of theological and political leanings (liberal/conservative).

Economics. Economics, as a discipline distinct from social ethics, receives scant attention in the curricula of most seminaries. While it is only reasonable to expect that seminary training would involve an emphasis on moral principles in any treatment of social issues, it is significant that economic analysis of social problems seems to play only a marginal role in addressing those issues.*

In addition to these general conclusions, the study points to an interesting phenomenon that should prompt some further thought and investigation. Most cogently stated in the final table of the study (Table 12), survey responses indicate a curious divide on social justice teaching along the lines indicated by the typology presented in Tables 11 and 12. Those schools whose faculty were more sympathetic to governmental intervention in the economy and less likely to trust market forces were also those that dealt with more social issues, included socio-

economic teaching as a more integral part of the curriculum, and reported much interest in these issues among their students. In addition, there was a strong correlation between mainline Christian affiliation and identification with this group, with Catholic schools also significantly represented.

Those schools, on the other hand, that tended to the right of the spectrum on economic issues (more trust in markets, less in government), also reported fewer social topics covered, less socio-economic material in the curriculum, and less interest among students. Evangelical Christian seminaries tended to fall in this category.

These findings suggest that in those places where there is the most interest in social and economic issues and where they are being most comprehensively addressed, there is also the most skepticism toward market activity and the most advocacy of governmental regulation and other limits on that activity. In those places where there is more skepticism about governmental regulation and more advocacy of market activity, there is also less interest in social issues and less focus on them as part of theological training.

* Supplemental to the survey instrument of this study, we examined the course catalogs for approximately 175 seminaries and graduate schools of theology. Forty-five showed courses in which the words *economic* or *economics* were mentioned in the course description. Of these, most dealt with *economic justice*; only nine appeared to contain any explicit treatment of economics as a distinct discipline.

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