

# PEACE STUDIES JOURNAL

Vol. 5, Issue 1  
January 2012

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## **Occupy Wall Street and Everything Else: Lessons for the Study and Praxis of Religion<sup>1</sup>**

Author: Joerg Rieger  
Wendland-Cook Professor of Constructive Theology  
Perkins School of Theology  
Southern Methodist University  
Dallas, Texas  
E-mail: jrieger@smu.edu

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### **OCCUPY WALL STREET AND EVERYTHING ELSE: LESSONS FOR THE STUDY AND PRAXIS OF RELIGION**

Despite a seemingly never-ending stream of detractors who claim that the message and the goals of the Occupy Wall Street Movement are not clear, there is nothing unclear about the observation of a fundamental tension between the one percent and ninety-nine percent.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it is not hard to see why there is such a pervasive sense that Wall Street and other symbols of economic power need to be occupied.

Wall Street, as the location of the New York Stock Exchange, is arguably one of the most occupied places in the world. It is occupied by the unilateral logic of what is now called the one percent. This logic determines not just economic transactions; the course of politics, culture, the media, and even things traditionally considered as private such as personal relationships and religion, are also shaped by the logic of the one percent. Perhaps the major manifestation of this logic in the realm of the economy at present is the assumption that the prosperity of the one percent and government support in the form of tax cuts and bailouts will lead to the creation of jobs and economic prosperity for all. This logic is backed up by various schools of neoliberal capitalism,<sup>3</sup> and evidence to the contrary or dissenting voices are ignored or systematically ridiculed.<sup>4</sup>

It is against this unilateral logic, which holds Wall Street occupied, that the Occupy Movement protests: this logic does not seem to work, and it has led to the suffering of millions of people. The result is a clash as this unilateral logic seeks to reassert itself when challenged by other forms of logic, a clash that is perhaps best symbolized by the destruction of over 4,000 books of the open library of Occupy Wall Street.<sup>5</sup>

Like the American public, many of us are beginning to see the problems with Wall Street and the economic model of neoliberal capitalism more clearly because we are confronted by them in everyday life. But what about our settings in religious communities and the academy? Are we not different from Wall Street and neoliberal capitalism? In the academy, are we not proud of the fact that we allow and encourage different sets of logic and that we spend much time arguing about them? And even in our mainline religious communities, do we not also seek to allow room for different logics? Still, the question is the same: how many of these different logics support the logic of the one percent and how many support the alternative logics of the ninety-nine percent?

The Occupy Movement invites us to think about what other aspects of contemporary life are occupied, including the religious and even the personal. As Hannah Hofheinz, a graduate student from Harvard who was instrumental in organizing Occupy @ AAR/SBL—an event related to the Occupy Movement at the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature in November of 2011—stated, “I am occupied.”<sup>6</sup> If this is true, the question we will have to ask, both as persons who study and who practice religion, is whether our work is supporting the logic of the one percent, or whether it is supporting the alternative logics of the ninety-nine percent.

### **Binaries, dichotomies, and dualisms**

I am, of course, fully aware that contemporary academics are not supposed to think in binaries, dichotomies, and dualisms any more. In the postmodern academy, a rather diverse range of prominent theoretical models are in agreement on this point. For the record, let me note that I agree with some of the postmodern and many of the postcolonial critiques.<sup>7</sup> So why am I coming back to binaries, dichotomies, and dualisms in this context?

The key insight of the Occupy Movement, that there is a fundamental dichotomy between the one percent and the ninety-nine percent, is new in the public conversation in the United States. Let me suggest, therefore, that we focus on it for now. To be sure, there are other insights of the Occupy Movement that are worth discussing, yet the dichotomy between the one percent and the ninety-nine percent has implications for everything else. Unfortunately, even those who pick up on this dichotomy often fail to understand that it is not merely a matter of economics, and thus move on too quickly to other topics.

For the most part, in the United States we have thought of ourselves as a society where classes do not matter. And even when we have talked about underprivileged groups, like for instance the poor or the homeless, we have not emphasized the class dichotomy that is part of our reality.

Talking about class as social stratification, one form in which class discourse appears to be acceptable in the United States, also tends to lack a deeper sense for class dichotomy.<sup>8</sup>

At first sight, proclaiming a dichotomy between the one percent and the ninety-nine percent may look overly simplistic and perhaps even ignorant. Could its insistence on this dichotomy be the Achilles Heel of the Occupy Movement? Nevertheless, if we look at the numbers, this dichotomy appears to be quite real. After all, the notion itself was introduced by a respected economist and Nobel laureate, Joseph Stiglitz, and the problem to which it refers has been noted by many others.<sup>9</sup> One percent now own more than half of the wealth in the United States and, what is more important, this wealth puts them in a position of incredible power. To be even more specific, in the United States, 400 individuals have more wealth than sixty percent of all Americans.<sup>10</sup> Things have changed dramatically in the past decades. While in 1962 the wealthiest one percent of households averaged 125 times the wealth of the median household, in 2009 the wealthiest one percent of households averaged 225 times the wealth of the median household.<sup>11</sup> As Jared Bernstein reports: “Between 1979 and 2007, incomes grew by 275 percent for the wealthiest 1 percent of households, 37 percent for the middle 60 percent of households, and 18 percent for the poorest 20 percent of households.”<sup>12</sup>

Rather than being a classless society, even the most basic numbers show that the United States is more divided by class than any other country in the so-called First World, including China. In terms of income inequality, the United States is peer with Cameroon, Madagascar, Rwanda, Uganda, and Ecuador.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the often-invoked notion of class struggle is an everyday reality, although it is waged mostly from the top down rather than from the bottom up. This class struggle is what has created and exacerbated the dichotomy between the one percent and the ninety-nine percent, clearly visible today in a situation where the one percent have consistently gained even in times of economic crisis, while the ninety-nine percent are gaining less and less even in times of economic progress.<sup>14</sup>

Not only the wealth but also the influence of the one percent is quite real. We know this at various levels. We all know, for instance, that politics is heavily influenced by the interests of the one percent. We also know that the boardrooms are controlled by the interests of a small minority of large shareholders.

But what does this mean for religious communities and the academy? In my book accessed on January 2, 2012 *No Rising Tide* I have shown how the dominant logic also shapes the way we think and what we believe.<sup>15</sup> Images of God prevalent in religious communities, for instance, are commonly shaped by dominant images of power and might. In the past, God was often envisioned as a heavenly patriarch or monarch. Today, God is often envisioned, consciously or unconsciously, more like a heavenly CEO, who controls the fate of the world just like a CEO controls the fate of the company. In the academy, the mentality of corporate America is at work as well. Top administrators function increasingly like CEOs and are remunerated accordingly, while faculty find themselves more and more regulated and controlled. One of the latest trends is the introduction of outcomes evaluations in teaching. In addition, much research is driven by the interests of the one percent, which provide funding through corporations and donations.

What would change if religious scholars and members of religious communities were to identify with the ninety-nine percent, to which we belong, instead of the one percent? This question, rather than the misguided but common urge to blame the one percent for ethical or moral shortcomings, is at the heart of my inquiry. As I show elsewhere, this newly emerging sense of solidarity—I now call it deep solidarity—can help us deepen our understanding of the religious traditions, which we study or practice. Jesus's parables, for instance, acquire fresh layers of meaning when read from the perspectives of the common people, and so do many others of our religious traditions.<sup>16</sup>

Some may wonder why I am not calling for the reconciliation of the ninety-nine percent and the one percent at this point. Is it not the role of religion to bring the factions back together again? This appears to be the position of Katharine Henderson, president of Auburn Theological Seminary in New York. She notes: “There’s so much polarization in our country now, and demonization of one side of the other. ... As religious leaders, we want to be ‘repairers of the breach’ ... So the question is how we can come together, Wall Street and Main Street, to come up with solutions that are going to work for all of us?”<sup>17</sup> To Henderson’s reference to the prophet Isaiah, one might respond with a quote from the prophet Jeremiah: “They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). While demonization is wrongheaded, true reconciliation can only happen, when we understand the “wound” of the ninety-nine percent, and that there is no neutral ground in the middle, not even for religious leaders or experts.

## **Class**

In the coming years, we will need to pay more attention to the dichotomy between the one percent and the ninety-nine percent not only in economics but in all other areas of life all the way down, as it were, including the study and praxis of religion. This brings us back to the topic of class, which is perhaps the most neglected topic in American society, as well as in the study and praxis of religion. When we do talk about class in these contexts, we usually do so in terms of social stratification. Yet, as I have noted above, talk about social stratification tends to avoid talk about the relationship between the classes.

When we talk about the dichotomy between the one percent and the ninety-nine percent on the other hand, we are talking about a relationship. This relationship is marked not only by differentials of money but also, and perhaps more importantly, by differentials of power. The notion of class can help us to think about these kinds of relationships. It helps us to think more clearly about questions like, Who wins and who loses? And, Who is in control and who is not? Raising these questions in non-moralistic fashion helps us understand better what is going on and what the possible alternatives might be. In this context, a clearer understanding of class might help us avoid another danger, which has to do with moralizing on these topics.

Before I continue, let me emphasize that the purpose of addressing the notion of class is not to demonize anyone; the opposite is the case. If we begin to understand that the challenge we are facing has to do with structural class relationships, we can stop demonizing individuals. In terms of the old Christian saying, we can learn to hate the sin but love the sinner, although the notion

of hate is not really helpful here either, because what we are after is the redemption of sin. The problem of which dichotomy of the one percent and the ninety-nine percent ultimately reminds us, is not the greed of individual CEOs or bankers. To the contrary, the problem is precisely that CEOs or bankers have little choice in this matter as individuals. When this is clear, it makes sense that even individual members of the one percent occasionally join in with the concerns of the ninety-nine percent; a small movement of the one percent supporting the ninety-nine percent is already under way.<sup>18</sup>

The big news when talking about class is that ninety-nine percent of the population appears to be in the same boat. While there are, of course, significant differences within the ninety-nine percent, we share in common that the economy is working less and less to our benefit and that our voices matter less and less in all areas of life, including religion. This insight is especially important for those who have traditionally considered themselves middle class. Our current economic and political reality shows that there is no safe place in the middle. While the economy keeps going in cycles, the fortunes of more and more people do not. Even in the context of the most devastating economic crisis since the Great Depression, some have gained while almost everybody else has lost. These losses can be expressed in terms of people's net worth, their retirement accounts, the quality of their jobs and benefits, but most importantly in terms of the power they hold both at work and in the public realm.

In this context, considering the reality of the working class helps us deepen our understanding of the ninety-nine percent. In the current economic climate, workers are treated as disposable and expendable, exposing the enormous gap between their interests and the interests of big business. This gap also finds expression in U.S. law, according to which the CEOs of corporations are accountable to the interests of their stock holders rather than to the interest of their workers. CEOs, beginning with Henry Ford, have been successfully sued by their dominant stockholders if they showed too much concern for their workers.<sup>19</sup>

This dichotomy between CEOs and workers finds expression not just in terms of the levels of income (the differentials of which are staggering), but also in terms of the levels of power, which these respective groups hold not only at work but also in many other areas of life. The fate of the middle class resembles more and more the fate of the working class; the savings and stock holdings of the middle class are rather small and the quality of their conditions of work as well as their influence continue to erode.<sup>20</sup>

To avoid confusion let me add that this relation of the one percent and ninety-nine percent also throws light on global relationships. Considering the subject of class from the perspective of financial stratification, some have argued that inhabitants of the so-called First World all belong to the one percent when seen from a global perspective. This argument, however, overlooks the fact that class is not just a matter of money but also of power and relationships. Members of the working class in the United States, who may own a house and a car, have fairly limited amounts of power, and their power is further undermined by concerted attacks on unions and other organizations, which represent their interests. Workers in Latin America, on the other hand, may be better organized in trade unions and may have more rights.

In any case, the pressures that workers in the United States experience show increasing family resemblances to pressures experienced in the so-called Third World; not only are there parallels in the exploitation of work, as work is more and more commodified and the benefits and rights of workers are slashed, there are increasingly also parallels in the experience of being expendable, as twenty-three percent of the workforce in the United States are currently unemployed.<sup>21</sup> Some of these differentials can, of course, also be addressed in terms of money. The average CEO in the United States makes 300 or 400 times more than a worker, while top investors earn as much as 20,000 times as average workers.<sup>22</sup> These differentials are far greater than the difference that separates working people in the United States and in the so-called Third World, including the casually employed: U.S. workers hardly make 300 or 400 times more than workers who make \$5 a day in a Mexican maquiladora (if they did, they would earn somewhere between \$375,000 and \$500,000 a year), let alone 20,000 times as much. Add to that rising poverty rates—29 percent of all children in Dallas County, for instance, live in poverty—and the parallels between the common people become even more striking.<sup>23</sup> In addition, keep in mind that the wealthy one percent exists elsewhere as well. After all, the richest person in the world at the moment is Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim Helú.

This insight that ninety-nine percent of the population may be in the same boat is of particular importance for academics who study religion and for the many members of mainline religious communities, most of which belong to the middle class. This opens the door for what I am calling deep solidarity. Whereas solidarity in the past for the middle class has often meant a decision of the will to side with those less fortunate, now we are beginning to understand that solidarity cuts deeper. Rather than understanding those less fortunate in terms of ourselves, we are now beginning to understand ourselves in terms of those whom we used to consider less fortunate. Without denying the differences, their fate is our fate.

In the past, members of the middle class have often felt that we were benefiting from the wealth and the power of the one percent. Even if we have not consciously reflected on it, we have considered ourselves to be in closer proximity to the ruling class than to the workers. We have intuitively agreed with the often-repeated but never proven mantra of neoliberal capitalism that a rising tide will lift all boats.

The ways in which we have studied and practiced religion have often reflected this unspoken alliance with the one percent, who often fund our academic projects and our religious communities. In academic circles, this problem can be seen in terms of the strange absence of certain topics that are otherwise vital to everyday life. It is no accident, for instance, that there has been virtually no sustained reflection on class and economic inequality. And in the rare cases when class has been the subject in religious studies and theology, it is discussed without much attention to the relationships and tensions between classes.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, in the world of religious praxis, there are growing efforts to organize religious communities like corporations. Even theology has provided support for these efforts, for instance when the Lordship of Jesus Christ is considered in terms of the power of a CEO.<sup>25</sup> And even if this implication is not developed explicitly, there is a striking absence of reflections on how the theological notion of the Lordship of Jesus Christ might support alternative power in both church and world.<sup>26</sup>

## **What we are up against**

The Occupy Movement has helped us develop a clearer sense of what we are up against, thus broadening our horizons in much-needed directions.

Sensing that something is not right, many Americans have taken to criticizing the government. When something goes wrong, even in the economy, the government gets blamed. But if government control is the root of all evil, as many Americans believe, why is the influence that the one percent exercise over the government so rarely addressed? While there are indeed problems with American democracy and the role of the government, the Occupy Movement reminds us of the fact that we can only get to the bottom of these problems if we consider the power of the one percent. While government officials are at least elected and vetted to some degree by the public, the members of the one percent have no public mandate.

While conservative Americans criticize the government, others often blame what they see as misguided cultural developments. Consumer culture, in particular, is frequently lifted up as a problem. In this context, the solution is seen as taking a countercultural stance. What is overlooked here, however, is the fact that culture, and consumer culture in particular, is not natural but produced by the powers that be. Much of the desire that drives consumerism is not a natural human instinct, but has to be produced and reproduced through advertisement and the media.<sup>27</sup> So while there are indeed problems with American culture, the Occupy Movement reminds us of the fact that there are hidden interests that drive our culture, linked not to the interests of the ninety-nine percent but of the one percent. Without this deeper analysis, becoming countercultural is not really an option.

Others yet blame religion as the core of all deception. The so-called new atheists, for instance, accuse religion of indoctrinating people and misleading them. Yet religion as such may not be the problem. While religion has indeed been used and shaped many times by the forces of empire, there are also examples of religion joining the resistance and providing alternatives. In the history of the United States, for instance, religion has been deeply involved with progressive movements at their core, most recently the Civil Rights movement, the peace movement, and the labor movement. The Occupy Movement's sense of the differential between the one percent and the ninety-nine percent also throws new light on the phenomenon of religion. Like politics and culture, religion also needs to be seen in the context of the clash between the one percent and the ninety-nine percent.

As we begin to understand what we are up against in terms of the dichotomy between the one percent and the ninety-nine percent, we are not proposing to instigate class struggle. This is, of course, one of the most popular accusations against the Occupy Movement in the United States. But what this accusation overlooks is the fact that class struggle has been waged for a long time, mostly from the top down, and against both workers and the middle class. Today we see such struggles, for instance, when the right of workers to unionize is challenged more strongly than in most other capitalist economies, or when the employed and the unemployed are intentionally played off against each other in order to maximize the profit of the corporations. We also see

class struggle in the discussions on the topic of taxes, as any reduction of the tax burdens of the wealthiest individuals and corporations implies significant additional burdens for the rest of society, that is, for the ninety-nine percent.

The study and the praxis of religion have much to learn from these reflections. As we study and examine distorted forms of religion, we need to ask deeper questions as to the cause of these distortions. What is behind idol worship and idolatry, which is so prevalent in mainline religion?<sup>28</sup> Recall that already in the biblical narratives of the Exodus, idols were never mere religious symbols. The golden calf was an expression of wealth and power that rivaled the power of the liberating divinity of the Exodus (see Exodus 32).

## **Alternatives**

Understanding what we are up against cannot be a goal in itself. The goal is to be able to develop alternatives. The Occupy Movement embodies some of these alternatives, however imperfect. Perhaps the most important issue of all is that the emerging power of the ninety-nine percent does not seek to duplicate the power of the one percent. In addition, the emerging unity of the ninety-nine percent differs from the unity of the one percent. This has implications for solidarity as well.

Let me explain what I mean. The unity of the one percent might be described in terms of uniformity. It is the uniformity of economic theory (the belief that a rising tide lifts all boats), it is the uniformity of politics (the single-issue politics of tax cuts to the wealthy), and it is the uniformity of religion (God as unilaterally controlling top-down power). Solidarity in this context means to support others who are exactly like oneself.

The unity of the ninety-nine percent, by contrast, can only be unity in diversity. Even if we tried, uniformity is not an option here. In terms of economic theory, the unity of the ninety-nine percent is the acknowledgment of the existence of a variety of people-centered economic theories. In terms of politics, it is the acknowledgment of more substantial forms of democracy, and in terms of religion is the acknowledgment of a multiplicity of popular traditions that preach not only concern for the least of these but a reversal of power according to which all can participate in the production of life. The traditions of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible and of Jesus in the Gospels exemplify such popular traditions. Solidarity in this context means deep solidarity, the support of others who are different yet experience similar predicaments.

By the same token, the power of the one percent is a sort of unilateral power. It is the power that moves from the top down, from one of the many. In the boardrooms of the corporations, CEOs make the decisions considering the interests of the major stockholders, backed up by executive boards that they themselves have appointed. In politics, the power of the one percent is readily visible in campaign financing and the host of lobbyists that congregate in Washington DC. This is, of course, merely the tip of the iceberg, as the influence of money in politics goes much deeper. In religion, the unilateral power of the one percent can be seen in structures that show no respect for the concerns of the people. This is not only a problem of some of the classical

hierarchical traditions, but it is also a common mode of operating in those contemporary church formations that mimic the corporations.

The power of the ninety-nine percent, by contrast, can only be diversified power. One of the most interesting features of the Occupy Movement that is much discussed currently, is that it has not been driven by a small number of easily identifiable leader figures. This is not a weakness, it is rather a strength which has to do with alternative forms of power. In economics, providing room for the diversified power of all that are involved in production is a new model, which has produced some success in various contexts.<sup>29</sup> In politics, power is based on the concerns of the community. The Occupy Movement has practiced this power, for instance, in its assemblies and the so-called stacks, where all who seek to speak line up and get to express themselves; some of the stacks have gone one step further by giving priority to the voices of underrepresented groups. Decisions are made using the consensus model of participatory democracy, organized by discussion facilitators rather than leaders.

What would the diversified power of the ninety-nine percent look like in religion? A time-honored model can be found in the Latin American base communities, where people read the Bible together in the context of everyday life. These communities include people from all walks of life, and there are no privileged interpreters, despite the fact that trained theologians are often part of these groups as well. In the context of the Occupy Movement, religious faith has also played a role. Members of the clergy have been involved as chaplains to the movement, workshops have been conducted on religious topics, and books on religion have found their ways into the libraries of the movements.<sup>30</sup> Yet religion does not seek to dominate, but becomes part of the larger quest for liberation. As such, it can find its own voice and contribute its distinct insights without falling into the trap of seeking to achieve one-percent-like control.

## Conclusions

Let me conclude with a personal report. After almost twenty years of membership in the American Academy of Religion, I participated in an event called Occupy @ AAR/SBL. Unlike any of the hundreds of events that took place at the annual meeting in San Francisco in 2011, this event was organized by students at short notice. Word was spread by e-mail and Facebook, bringing together about eighty people who took time out of their busy schedules and canceled other commitments. The conversation began not with theoretical reflections but with reports from people involved in the various Occupy Movements throughout the United States and Canada. In a second part, five short statements were presented, addressing the need to deal with the Occupy Movement not as if we were able to observe it from the outside but from the inside, located within the dichotomy of the one percent and the ninety-nine percent.

In both the presentations and the conversation, there was no pretense of academic neutrality or objectivity, as is often the case in such meetings. Most of the participants seemed to be clear that sides needed to be taken, and so the academic task of critical reflection dependent became self-critical reflection. This is perhaps the biggest challenge that the Occupy Movement presents not only to the study of religion but also to the praxis of it.

In response to one of the questions directed at my presentation, part of which is formulated the current article, I noted that not taking sides in life also means to take sides. In situations of great power imbalance, even those who choose to stay neutral and objective become part of the problem. This is one of the lessons of the Christian churches in Nazi Germany, where we learned in hindsight that the declared neutrality of some churches supported the status quo, and this is one of the lessons we have to learn again today. Nevertheless, nothing is ever predetermined. Even the members of the one percent can choose to join the ninety-nine percent.

The bigger question, however, has to do with the ninety-nine percent: will they understand what side they are on, and shape their theory and praxis accordingly, or will they continue with business as usual, which tends to support the interests of the one percent? The question of class presents us with these issues in a new way, picking up old religious and political traditions, including the self-understanding of the early Americans as “We, the people.”

What was perhaps most impressive about the Occupy @AAR/SBL event was that the usual posturing of powerful individuals and their respective schools was kept to a minimum. And even the graduate students made little effort to imitate the behavior that they see many of their professors engage in. The conversations were shaped by an awareness that we are dealing with something bigger than individual positions and schools.

Here lies one of the major lessons of the Occupy Movement for the study and praxis of religion. Our work, if it is to provide genuine alternatives, can no longer be done in isolation. For the study of religion this means, that we need to understand not only how our work is always already shaped by the scholarly community, and how it contributes to it; we also need to understand how our work is shaped by the larger tectonics of power as they shape up in religion, politics, and economics. In other words, our work is shaped in the dynamics of the tensions between the one percent in the ninety-nine percent, and contributes to this situation in one way or another. For the praxis of religion this means that we need to understand how religious communities are embedded in this larger context and what differences are being made. The question is not 1st of all what religious communities should or ought to do, but what is happening and what the viable alternatives are, based on observation and real-life praxis.

In conclusion, an understanding that unless we take sides, our sides will be chosen for us, creates new forms of unity and solidarity. We have not seen such unity and solidarity in a long time, as unity and solidarity are usually produced by the status quo, which suggests that we are all the same. Yet if it makes any sense to talk about the unity of the ninety-nine percent, it can only be unity in diversity. Rather than trying to re-create the unity of the one percent, the ninety-nine percent become only stronger when they respect the various diversities in their midst, in terms of the full gamut of ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, and other markers of difference. This is the deep solidarity about which I was talking earlier: understanding that we are all in the same boat, it is imperative that we take each other more seriously in our differences while working together toward the alternatives that provide life for everybody.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a short presentation at “Occupy @ AAR and SBL,” American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature, San Francisco, November 20, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> For very moving personal introductions of people of the ninety-nine percent and their stories, see <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/Introduction>.

<sup>3</sup> I discuss this logic in both its economic and its religious forms in my book *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> In this context, the charge of socialism is frequently leveled against any opponent, not as a description of a serious economic alternative, but as a boogey man.

<sup>5</sup> Cassandra Garrison, “Occupy Wall Street says NYPD destroyed 4,000 books,” *Metro Boston* (November 23, 2011), on the web: <http://www.metro.us/boston/local/article/1032300--occupy-wall-street-says-nypd-destroyed-4-000-books>, accessed 12/7/2011.

<sup>6</sup> Hannah Hofheinz, “Occupy Privilege,” presentation at “Occupy @ AAR/SBL,” American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature, San Francisco, November 20, 2011. Hannah also described Harvard as a place for the reproduction of the one percent.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, my articles “Theology and the Power of the Margins in a Postmodern World,” in: *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology*, American Academy of Religion, Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion, ed. Joerg Rieger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and “Liberating God-Talk: Postcolonialism and the Challenge of the Margins,” in: *Postcolonial Theology: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> On October 19, 2011, the Wall Street Journal posted a percentage calculator, titled “What Percentage Are You? On the web: [http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2011/10/19/what-percent-are-you/?mod=wsj\\_share\\_facebook&mid=549](http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2011/10/19/what-percent-are-you/?mod=wsj_share_facebook&mid=549), accessed 12/7/2011.

<sup>9</sup> According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Joseph E. Stiglitz of Columbia University talked about income equality in the United States as a matter of a wealthy one percent versus the remaining ninety-nine percent in a Vanity Fair article in May of 2011. Dan Berrett, “Intellectual Roots of Wall Street Protest Lie in Academe,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 21, 2011, A 8. See also economist Michael Zweig, *The Working Class Majority: America’s Best Kept Secret* (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR, 2000), who estimates that in the United States 62 percent belong to the working class, 36 percent belong to the middle class, and two percent to the ruling class, *ibid.* 10, 34-35.

<sup>10</sup> These numbers have been verified by PolitiFact fact, on the web: <http://www.politifact.com/wisconsin/statements/2011/mar/10/michael-moore/michael-moore-says-400-americans-have-more-wealth-/>, accessed 12/7/2011.

<sup>11</sup> These numbers are from a report by the Economic Policy Institute. See Sylvia A. Alegretto “The State of Working America’s Wealth, 2011,” EPI Briefing Paper #292 (March 23, 2011), page 7. On the web: [http://epi.3cdn.net/2a7ccb3e9e618f0bbc\\_3nm6idnax.pdf](http://epi.3cdn.net/2a7ccb3e9e618f0bbc_3nm6idnax.pdf), accessed 12/7/2011.

<sup>12</sup> Jared Bernstein, “Inequality Growing, and Government Doing Less About It,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, October 27, 2011. On the web: <http://www.offthechartsblog.org/inequality-growing-and-government-doing-less-about-it/>, accessed 12/7/2011.

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<sup>13</sup> Max Fisher, "Map: U.S. Ranks Near Bottom on Income Inequality," *The Atlantic*, September 19, 2011. On the web: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/09/map-us-ranks-near-bottom-on-income-inequality/245315/>, accessed 12/7/2011.

<sup>14</sup> Already in the 1990s, when the global victory of capitalism was declared, the global market no longer benefited the workforce of the so-called first world automatically, as it had done for some time. This is discussed in William Wolman and Anne Colamosca, *The Judas Economy: The Triumph of Capital and the Betrayal of Work* (Reading, Mass.: Addison--Wesley, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> See note 3, above.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, my reinterpretation of Jesus's parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Matt 18:23-34. Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 112-11.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in: Jay Lindsey, "Religion claims its place in Occupy Wall Street," AP Press Report (Oct. 24, 2011), on the web: <http://news.yahoo.com/religion-claims-place-occupy-wall-street-171204904.html>, accessed 12/7/2011.

<sup>18</sup> "We are the 1 percent. We stand with the 99 percent." On the web: <http://westandwiththe99percent.tumblr.com/>, accessed 12/7/2011.

<sup>19</sup> In a court ruling of the Michigan Supreme Court in 1919 (*Dodge v. Ford Motor Company*), the brothers John Francis Dodge and Horace Elgin Dodge, owners of 10 percent of Ford stock, challenged Ford's decision to cut dividends in order to invest in new plants and grow production and numbers of workers, while cutting prices. The court ruled in favor of the Dodge brothers, arguing that a corporation is organized primarily for the profit of its stockholders, rather than for the benefit of its employees or for the community. See the brief entry in *Wikipedia*, "Dodge v. Ford Motor Company," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dodge\\_v.\\_Ford\\_Motor\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dodge_v._Ford_Motor_Company), accessed 12/7/2011.

<sup>20</sup> There's a lot more to be said about the reality of the working class. See, for instance, the studies that are done under the heading New Working Class Studies. See, for instance, John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon, eds., *New Working-Class Studies* (Ithaca: ILR, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> For some of the unemployment statistics that back up these numbers see: [http://www.shadowstats.com/alternate\\_data/unemployment-charts](http://www.shadowstats.com/alternate_data/unemployment-charts), accessed on 12/7/2011.

<sup>22</sup> In 2006, the average CEO made 364 times more than an average worker in the United States. However, there is another number that is perhaps more telling and much less known. The difference between the salary of an average worker and the top twenty private-equity and hedge-fund managers in the United States is in a different league altogether: on average, members of this latter group earned 22,255 times the pay of the average worker. Sarah Anderson and others, *Executive Excess 2007: The Staggering Social Cost of U.S. Business Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies and United for a Fair Economy), 9, on the web: [www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org), accessed 12/7/2011.

<sup>23</sup> "Study finds growing child poverty among Dallas' prosperity," *Dallas Morning News*, November 18 2011, on the web: <http://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/editorials/20111118-editorial-study-finds-growing-child-poverty-among-dallas-prosperity.ece>, accessed on January 2, 2012. This number is up from 19.2 percent in 2000.

<sup>24</sup> In religious studies see Sean McCloud, *Divine Hierarchies: Class in American Religion and Religious Studies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); in theology, see for instance Tex Sample, *Hard Living People and Mainstream Christians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

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<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus, CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership* (New York: Hyperion, 1995).

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, my reflections on the ancient confession that Jesus is Lord in Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), chapter 1.

<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, chapter 4.

<sup>28</sup> This is one of the key questions that let American liberation theology has raised, most recently Jung Mo Sung, *The Subject, Capitalism, and Religion: Horizons of Hope in Complex Societies, New Approaches to Religion and Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> A well-known example is the Mondragon Corporation, which is a Spanish federation of worker cooperatives, which are owned by their workers and governed democratically. At present, it is the seventh largest Spanish company, employing more than 80,000 people at the end of 2010. For more information see: <http://www.justpeace.org/mondragon.htm>, accessed 12/7/2011.

<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, <http://occupyfaithnyc.com/>, and <http://www.occupyfaith.com/>, accessed 12/7/2011.