

BEYOND INFORMED CITIZENS: WHO ARE 'THE WISE'?

by Thomas Hughson*

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990's, there has been "an explosion of interest in the concept of citizenship among political theorists."¹ Taking for granted a large measure of justice in the basic institutions constituting a liberal democracy, theorists looked to citizens as the key to a successfully functioning democracy.² For, as German philosopher Jürgen Habermas observed, "the institutions of constitutional freedom are only worth as much as a population makes of them."³ Moreover, theorists of citizenship agreed that, "...the health and stability of a modern democracy depends not only on the justice of its 'basic structure' but also on the qualities and attitudes of its citizens."⁴ The 'informed citizen' is an ideal-typical person competent to participate in democratic self-governance. Informed citizens, it seems, are those who not only have acquired enough information on democratic institutions and current affairs to vote deliberately but also those who have sufficient civic virtue to look beyond private interests to a common good.

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¹ Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, "Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory," in *Ethics* 104 (January, 1994): 352-381 at 352.

²See for example, besides Kymlicka and Norman, Gershon Shafir, editor, *The Citizenship Debates: A Reader* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Paul Rogat Loeb, *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in a Cynical Time* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin Press, 1999); Dwight D. Allman, Michael D. Beaty, editors, *Cultivating Citizens: Soulcraft and Citizenship in Contemporary America* (Lanham, MD: Lexington books, 2002); H. Lawrence Zillmer, "John Locke's Social Contract Revisited," Oxford University Roundtable, August 12, 2005.

³ Jürgen Habermas, "Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe," in *Praxis International* 12 (1992): 1-19 at 7, quoted by Kymlicka and Norman, 353.

⁴ Kymlicka and Norman, 352/3.

Not least among concerns was how citizens connect religious convictions with civic duties.⁵ In the period of the United States' founding, a general principle was that institutions of political self-governance depended on citizens having an underlying attainment of moral self-governance. Religion was seen as a moral tutor to the populace. The founders of the American republic, for example, acknowledged that religion could provide the basic moral education of the population. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided for public monies to be paid to schools under religious auspices in expectation that their inculcating of moral values supported the stable functioning of the basic structures of democracy. Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths generally have encouraged active, responsible citizenship as an ethical responsibility.

In broader perspective, Christianity has related to democracy in at least three other ways: 1.) as historical presupposition for specific principles supportive of democracy (e.g. division of temporal from spiritual authority, rule of law not by the arbitrary will of a ruler, consent of the governed as with the Magna Carta, dignity of the person as protected in "the rights of an Englishman prior to American independence); 2.) as impetus to democratization (Protestant: Reformation to present; Catholic: 1970's to present); 3.) as public advocate on behalf of social justice and other aspects of civic morality (19th and 20th c. social teachings by various churches). These relationships all conceive the existence of the state as a creaturely reality subordinate to, and not fully embodying, a transcendent frame of reference that serves as a standard by which to gauge the justice of institutions and policies. For that reason I haven't isolated a separate relationship of Christianity or religion as a critic of government. Some would make this the main task.⁶

⁵ For example, Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997); Nancy L. Rosenblum, editor, *Obligations of Citizenship and Demands of Faith: Religious Accommodation in Pluralist Democracies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Christopher Eberle, *Religious Convictions in Liberal Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Gerald S. Vigna, "Can We Teach for Citizenship? Religiously Affiliated Colleges and Public Virtues," Oxford University Roundtable, August 9, 2005; Andrew J. Waskey, "Religion and Education in American Constitutional Law: Past, Present, and Developing Trends," Oxford University Roundtable, August 11, 2005.

⁶ See for example, in differing ways, Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) and Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

THE TASK OF WISDOM

The question of wisdom begins to emerge in recognition that all of these relationships involve more or less actively considered reference to the end or purpose of human existence. Wisdom orders activities and knowledge to this supreme good and plenitude of being. In launching a liberal democracy, for example, the founders of the American republic, along with political and legal judgments on the constitutional framework and exact institutional procedures of democracy, worked from judgments that related the purpose of the new government to the divine origin and goal of human existence. The Declaration of (political) Independence from the British crown also declared national and individual (religious) dependence on the Creator. Ordering the religious and the political religious and political dimensions of human existence belongs to wisdom. In fact, once Christianity gets underway there is no escaping this task. And so the New Testament already begins to consider how Christians are to live two kinds of citizenship, one earthly, the other heavenly. The starting-point is the clear, practical, and definitive priority of ‘citizenship’ in heaven (Phil. 3:20).⁷ On a theoretical level this will come to mean ordering also the different kinds of knowledge theology and political reflection, involved in understanding God and the state.

From the side of Christianity, revealed divine wisdom provides truth by which to order other kinds of knowledge. One truth that becomes an ordering principle is that the content of faith exceeds, fulfills, and may correct what can be known from reason based in human experience. The font of wisdom for Christianity is Christ and the Holy Spirit, their missions, and New Testament witness to them, as well tradition coming from them. What many consider the chief contribution of Christianity to the political order was precisely the religion/state differentiation that was the heritage out of which issued First Amendment no-establishment, to become known later as ‘separation of church and state’. This proceeded from the surpassing reality of God’s Kingdom. Christ’s whole reality and communicable wisdom led into a central wise judgment ordering the religious and political dimensions of Christian existence. It was a new dualism: Caesar was not God, Christ is Lord; obligations to the state and government are subordinate to God and gospel. There were two chief authorities in this world, not one all-encompassing political authority that amalgamates relations with the divine into governance of the Empire, kingdom, duchy, etc. In the church Christianity introduced a new social yet not territorial presence of divine authority, with a claim to freedom, an assertion of

⁷ “For Paul and the early church, the Christian’s true citizenship belongs in the kingdom of God.” Walter E. Pilgrim, *Uneasy Neighbors: Church and State in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999): 33.

independence from political authorization, and ready to make moral or spiritual judgments on aspects of political governance.⁸

Though far from the advent of democracy, in principle this spelled the end of theocracy. Whether it was an Egyptian Pharaoh, some Hellenistic kings, Caesar Augustus, or the Zealot ideal of a restored Jewish kingdom, Christianity was incompatible with a supreme governing authority that was received and revered as the central representative of the divine to people in a society.⁹ The central representative of God was Christ. His ambassadors, or apostles, shared his sovereignty. Their pastoral authority to govern within the churches did not stem from a source outside Christ, such as existing religious or civil authorities.¹⁰ The effect of this was to limit monarchy to the political realm, though clarity on the political/religious border was historically gained from experience, trial and error. Nonetheless, it has to be admitted that from Constantine on, there have been Christian rulers who have understood their governance as a God-given sovereignty extending to at least some elements of religion if not all of it.

It would seem that Christianity and democracy have in common a principle of opposition to organizing the political life of a people in a theocratic way. Christianity prolongs Christ's unique claim to sovereignty outside and above all political claims, including any professing to represent God. Democracy opposes theocracy because it assumes that the divine is accessible to all the people ruled as well as to the ruler: *vox populi vox Dei*. This has not been self-evident in all contexts.¹¹ Can autocracy or theocracy have legitimacy if there is general belief that *vox populi vox Dei*? Christianity's eventual

⁸ Edward Schillebeeckx points out that the New Testament churches had an interest in the transformation of social structures toward love and justice, but had no practical position of influence on the institutional structures of the Roman Empire and so built up the church as an alternative society animated (not perfectly) by the values of the gospel. Internal focus was appropriate until such time as Christians gained influence in political society. *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, translated by John Bowden (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1981): 561 ff.

⁹ Oscar Cullmann's *The State in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1957) emphasizes, indeed overemphasizes, Jesus' opposition to the Zealots.

¹⁰ Pilgrim, ch. 3.

¹¹ This includes reverence for autocracy as an indivisible share in divine sovereignty. Ivan the Terrible of Russia (1533-84), for example, abhorred the Latin West for its principle of the consent of the governed. "Their rulers do not rule, they follow the directions of their subjects. Russian rulers by contrast do not follow the whim of their nobles and aristocrats, they are sovereign." More, failure to practice indivisible sovereignty was a sign of Western Godlessness. Sergei Filatov and Lyudmila Vorontsova, "Russian Catholicism: Relic or Reality?" in John Witte, Jr. and Michael Bordeaux, editors, *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia: The New War for Souls* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999): 93-107 at 95. This stark alternative to the Western tradition of the Magna Carta is best understood in light of Constantine.

secularization of political authority as the ‘temporal power’ has had the consequence that Christians, above all in democracies, have to think about how to relate religious and political life. This includes relating, ordering, the different ways of knowing that pertain to the temporal, political realm and to ultimate, comprehensive principles from faith. That relating of different kinds of knowing in light of the ultimate end of human existence, communion with God, is a task that Thomas Aquinas located within the purview of wisdom. It is a difficult task, which may be why even churches and all of us may stumble in carrying it out.

EXPANDING MURRAY’S ANSWER TO A QUESTION ABOUT WISDOM

In turning to John Courtney Murray (1904-67) I’d like to raise a question about whether or not, and how, Christianity can be a source of wisdom for citizens in a democracy, and not only a wisdom influential in the original shaping of democratic institutions.¹² This heads in a direction opposed by some today, most notably perhaps theologian Stanley Hauerwas, who do not want Christianity or the churches reduced to American democracy’s aide-de-camp. And that is right. However, and contrarily, I don’t think respect for the state and for offering Christian perspectives that assist its greater fidelity to a God-given purpose of securing the temporal common good reduces Christianity or a church to the state’s lackey, or leads Christians to become uncritical cheerleaders for a given state or a given policy.¹³ This is also to say that I don’t interpret the current condition of American democracy amid an unjust war to pose a simple either/or to faith obliging it to a wholesale “no,” as if the invasion of Iraq put churches in a *status confessionis* like the Third Reich did in Germany. Were that the situation only a resounding “no” to the government would express the fundamental obligation of the churches to their own independence in forming an ethical judgment on the invasion of Iraq. A concern for the wisdom of citizens would then be superfluous to resistance.

Murray was an American Catholic theorist on church-state and religious liberty themes, most known for assisting the production of the Declaration on Religious Liberty at Vatican II, and for a 1960 book, *We Hold*

¹² One of the best introductions to Murray remains Donald E. Pelotte *John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976). For a bibliography of Murray’s writings, see “Works by John Courtney Murray, S.J.,” in J. Leon Hooper, S.J., editor, *Bridging the Sacred and the Secular: Selected Writings of John Courtney Murray*, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994): 343-355.

¹³ If Romans 13: 1 ff. has been taken by some Christians to demand unquestioning compliance with any and every government and policy, contemporary exegesis removes the possibility of perpetuating that mistake. See Pilgrim, and Richard Horsely, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997) that situate Paul’s affirmation of civil authority within conditional not absolute acceptance.

*These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition.*¹⁴ Martin Marty, prolific analyst of American religion and Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, refers to Murray as “one of the great theorists of republican existence.”¹⁵ Murray raised the question about wisdom in analyzing how citizens applied basic morality to complicated new situations.¹⁶ Most grasped basic moral norms in their recurrent applications. But complex, new moral questions demanded increased knowledge and subtle reflection. Those citizens capable of this were, when moved by a dispassionate love for truth and an interest in the common good, ‘the wise’. Most people and citizens appreciated the prohibition against theft, for example, but relatively few were able to move from basic justice to a just settlement of a wage dispute in a modern economy. That was the province of the wise.

Who were they? Murray’s answer was less helpful than his question. He looked to the academy, the legal profession, and top journalists, to experts in economics, law, government, and public consensus. In the illustrative case of a wage dispute, he did not look to the workers or their union representatives. Nor did he expect wisdom on national affairs or economic justice from churches. Their province was the deposit of faith; their wisdom pertained to the gospel as a means of personal salvation not of social order. But this fairly secular, top-down, experts-only approach ignored a source of wisdom known to the ancient Greek tragedians, and developed by Black and liberation theologies. The Greek axiom had been, *pathos esti mathos*, that is, suffering is or brings understanding. Black and liberation theologies have identified what is often spoken of as the hermeneutical privilege of the poor. A person’s or a people’s suffering from poverty, marginalization, or other vulnerability is an experiential ground for the insight into justice or injustice of societal arrangements not as easily accessible to those more favorably placed. Christopher Rowland remarks, “The oppressed call into question assumptions about the character of human relationships, both local and international, in a suffering and unjust world.”¹⁷ James Cone’s Black liberation theology addresses systemic racism in American culture whereas most white Americans see only isolated, disconnected, sporadic incidents springing from overt prejudice in specific

¹⁴ John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1960).

¹⁵ Martin Marty with Jonathan Moore, *Religion, Politics, and the Common Good: Advancing a Distinctly American Conversation About Religion’s Role in Our Shared Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000): 16.

¹⁶ Murray, “The Origins and Authority of the Public Consensus: A Study of the Growing End,” in *We Hold These Truths*, 97-123.

¹⁷ Christopher Rowland, “Introduction: the theology of liberation,” in Christopher Rowland, editor, *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 1-16 at 7.

individuals. Insight into the systemic presence of racism comes easily to those burdened by its effects.¹⁸

Who, then, are the wise? Liberation and Black theologies have given reason to think that the voices of the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable are a potential source of wisdom about public policies and institutions, especially those that affect them. Duncan B. Forrester, Professor Emeritus of Theology and Public Issues at the University of Edinburgh, has come to a view open to this conclusion. He expresses it in a negative form stating that, “It is dangerous to believe that people from the academy, from the civil service, and from the educated elite are able to read the Christian tradition with objectivity, and decide what is good for the people.”¹⁹ Forrester’s remark directs attention to a reading of Christian tradition in relation to society that has some connection with the lives and views of those least able to exert political influence. He did not include the churches among those deciding what’s good for people over their heads. In fact, most churches have a heritage of grass-roots contact with the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable among their own membership and their fellow citizens. This, together with teaching on the social implications of the gospel, qualifies the churches to speak from, with, and to some extent for, those with least political voice.

At the same time, British theologian and Canon of Manchester Cathedral, John Atherton is surely correct to emphasize the political as distinct from economic aspect of concern for the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable.²⁰ This is the meaning of that concern as expansion of the inclusiveness of democracy, that all voices not only those of the powerful, well educated, etc. are heard.²¹ It does not amount to denying the urgency, that is, of economic development requiring skills, knowledge, and principles of activity other than solidarity with the poor. In a parallel way, Black liberation theology’s critique of systemic racism has to incorporate attention to the complexity of individuals’

¹⁸James Cone, *The Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

¹⁹ Duncan B. Forrester, “The Scope of Public Theology,” in Elaine L. Graham and Esther D. Reed, editors, *The Future of Christian Social Ethics: Essays on the Work of Ronald H. Preston 1913-2001* (London: Continuum, 2004): 5-19 at 12. Special issue of *Studies in Christian Ethics* 17, 2.

²⁰ In the context of the liberation theology movement Jose Comblin does not hesitate to assert that, “[t]he greatest flaw in Latin American nations is the lack of citizenship. Only a minority follows the life of the nation...Transforming inhabitants into citizens—that is the challenge.” *Called for Freedom: The Changing Context of Liberation Theology*, translated by Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998): 123.

²¹ John Atherton, *Public Theology for Changing Times* (London: SPCK Press, 2000).

lives. British author and expert in education Robert Jackson makes a valuable point:

It also needs to be recognized that minority cultures, religions, and ethnicities are themselves internally pluralistic, and the symbols and values associated of their various constituent groups are open to negotiation, contest, and change. Moreover, individuals from any background may identify with values associated with a range of sources and may draw eclectically on a variety of resources in creating a new culture.²²

James Cone tackles this with his analysis of the diverse stances on racism among African-Americans, with some inclined toward Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. socio-political dream, and others attracted to the militant struggle against cultural racism initiated by Malcolm X. For Cone the two tendencies are compatible and mutually enriching. So correcting Murray's narrowness in answering the question— who are the wise?— does not entail rejecting those he identified as 'the wise', just widening the circle to include the poor, marginalized, vulnerable, and the churches.

THE CONDITION FOR A CONTRIBUTION

I propose that the churches can contribute wisdom in three ways to citizens in a democracy. However, their contribution depends on prior comprehension gained from social analysis that the churches as a whole or singly are not in a position to mold the basic institutions of modern or post-modern Western societies. This possibility may be available where nation building is still underway, as in Nigeria and other nations in Africa, and possibly in Russia. But the processes of secularization already have pre-defined the public space churches can occupy in, for example, the US or Europe. According to Jose Casanova's *Public Religions in the Modern World* the differentiation of the major activities of human life into autonomous zones has the consequence that either churches acquiesce in structural pressure to become zones of privatized religiosity without interest in or impact on public life, or they adopt a prophetic role.²³ Casanova's originality lies in distinguishing the tendency toward privatization of religion from the larger hypothesis that proposes a gradual extinction of religion as modernity advances. He endorses the former and remarks on the lost credibility of the latter. He accepts the tendency precisely as

²² Robert Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004): 130.

²³ Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

that, a drift, and a structural orientation toward limiting religion to domestic and personal privacy. But this is not a matter of removing an option for public influence placed before religions. Churches confront a crossroads not anything inevitable. The processes of secularization and modernization do not squeeze out of existence all possibilities for the public influence of Christianity in democracies. An option for a prophetic public role remains.

This is to abandon the central, legitimating role of the churches in Christendom that underwrote the moral legitimacy of basic institutions. It is to take up a role of bearing Christian witness to the Godward purpose of human existence. This consists in publicly challenging an absolutizing tendency in any or all of the spheres differentiated by modernity into autonomous realms—the state, economy, science, and education-- to represent and direct the totality of human existence. True, in this condition religion, Christianity, and the churches, is one among the spheres rather than being the fullest source of truth, meaning, and value authorizing all institutions. Modernity has bracketed the major activities of life from their sacred center and spiritual depth. But the center and depth exist in individual persons, and have social visibility in the churches. In this sense churches are public witnesses to the center and depth of human persons and to the orientation of all created reality to the Creator. In the modern and post-modern context religion is like the core of a circle, one space among many, yet central. Prophetic participation in public life by the churches means entrance into the deliberative processes of democracy instead of direct jurisdiction over the political or economic orders. Of course, there is no guarantee of success, as the White House's dismissal of the nearly unanimous condemnation by church leaders in the US of the plan to invade Iraq shows.

BRINGING MORAL WISDOM INTO PUBLIC DELIBERATIONS: A PROPHETIC ROLE

From a position of prophetic presence, then, churches can make a difference in the public life of a modern democracy by introducing the moral wisdom that comes from judging policies and institutions in light of God as origin and goal of all finite, created existence, and in light more particularly of the Incarnation in which God made a lasting new covenant with creation, including nature, family life, economic activities, political life, cultural and artistic activities, etc, as John Atherton emphasizes in *Public Theology for Changing Times*. Churches have a tradition of doing just this in Britain and in the US. But the contribution most often occurs in the form of moral judgments on specific public problems or issues, and so the aspect of wisdom identified by Murray goes unnoticed. A pastoral letter on economic justice, for example, performs an office of wisdom by challenging the impression that economic activity does not depend on human decisions and value judgments but instead simply adheres to a cost/benefit calculus accepted as the immanent norm for sound economic decisions. The wisdom consists in clarifying the options built into an economic system as well as its cultural and moral premises, and relating the goal of

economics to the goal of human life rather than submitting to a regime in which the economic system has such autonomy and absoluteness that no one dare modify it in a more human, Christian direction by introducing an option for the poor for example.

It would be an advantage to public discussion and to the credibility of the churches if their moral statements more clearly identified the multiple sources of information, knowledge, and principle actually woven together in public moral positions. In a recent essay, Atherton comments on the importance of religious communities learning how to “express...religiously informed convictions in increasingly plural public contexts.”²⁴ One approach is to think through the components—strictly religious principle, experiential knowledge, scientific understanding, other secular sources—entering into a moral judgment on a public matter. Robert Audi argues in a book co-authored with Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate*, that the virtue of civility asks that religious arguments identify where possible the secular or scientific or common sense grounds that also help form a moral conclusion, in addition to its deductive derivation from a religious authority.²⁵ This does not bar religious language and argument from the public square but it does take account of the fact that the political community is not a religious community, that not all will understand particular beliefs or values, that making discourse accessible to a heterogeneous public is appropriate to the deliberative processes of democracy.

Being forthright about the complex nature of moral judgment would be a way to lift the wisdom aspect of the churches’ contribution to the level of explicit recognition. In fact, since wisdom orders various kinds of knowledge in reference to the goal or purpose of human existence, it belongs to wisdom to be clear about the presence of many kinds of knowledge co-present in an astute moral judgment on a public policy. To put it another way, and in traditional language, since most morality combines faith and reason, it behooves churches to be clear that, and to communicate that, they have consulted both. Unless this is articulated, a public not sharing the churches’ beliefs most likely will receive pronouncements from religious sources in a fideistic way that assumes the language of faith has nothing in common with what reason can arrive at. Post-modern awareness of the particularity in all meta-narratives, including that of progressive secular rationality, dovetails with traditional Christian affirmation of the complementarity of faith and reason. Atherton remarked that it is

²⁴ Atherton, “Marginalisation, Manchester, and the Scope of Public Theology,” in Elaine L. Graham and Esther D. Reed, editors, *The Future of Christian Social Ethic*, 20-36 at 32.

²⁵ Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

objectionable to assume that, “faith or reason alone is necessary for understanding of the contemporary situation and problems.”²⁶

CONTRIBUTING INTERPRETATIVE WISDOM

Bearing witness to the social ethics of Christianity and the gospel, for example, is a way of contributing wisdom to the public life of democracy. This helps keep the deliberative processes of democracy accountable to the larger human purposes of the state that coincide to a significant degree with the demands of human rights. Churches as well as individuals have the freedom and right to speak on public policies from a religious perspective and to recommend the advantages of their perspective for the common good. Usually this amounts to persuasion for or against a particular law or policy. This is to advocate a specific regulatory effect. This can leave churches open to the reproach of seeking to impose their beliefs.

Yet, there’s another way churches can contribute wisdom to democracy. They can nurture wisdom in their members.. This means reframing issues and problems so that their own members see the fuller significance. This is not so much to instruct consciences in moral wisdom as to undertake a more fundamental interpretation of the correlation between religious ideas and socio-political institutions and ideas. This puts members in a position to initiate an entrance into the deliberative processes of democracy on their own and to provoke inquiry into more than what’s right or wrong. At present a realistic way the churches can take on the task of reframing issues is to listen to their own public theologians. The testing question of a practical sort is, what are the lay ministers, the clergy, the pastors, the bishops, and other church leaders reading? Have they engaged the thought of public theologians like Murray, Reinhold Niebuhr, Kenneth and Michael Himes, John Atherton, along with European political theologians like Jürgen Moltmann, Black theologians like James Cone, and liberation theology? All examine correlations between the religious ideas and the socio-political institutions of a given era and cultural context.

I suggest that public theology also can be understood to be an exploration of the lived synthesis of faith and citizenship on the basis of the primacy of the spiritual. It recognizes that in the West most people, even in a secularized Europe, believe in God and a spiritual dimension in life, though smaller percentages may be regular churchgoers.²⁷ That means most are believer/citizens. Public theology remembers whatever in Christian tradition—Scripture, Church Fathers, worship, preaching, theology, example of holy persons, art, practice, cultural mores—illuminates the lived simultaneity of being

²⁶ Atherton, *Public Theology for Changing Times*, 85.

²⁷ See Andrew M. Greeley, *Religion in Europe at the End of the Second Millenium* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2004).

a believer and being a citizen. This approach, an initial development of which was given in *The Believer as Citizen: John Courtney Murray in a New Context*, moves theology from the realm of theory into the realm of interiority.²⁸ An objection to this approach as individualistic can be sustained only on the individualistic assumption, not made here, that persons are not inherently relational but atomistic, as if relationships were not part of interiority but only external realities acquired by deliberate choice.

An approach to faith and citizenship through the realm of interiority is to follow Bernard Lonergan's analysis, outlined in his *Method in Theology*, of progress in understanding from the realm of common sense to that of theory and on to that of interiority.²⁹ Common sense describes the world as it affects us. Scripture is primarily common sense in describing events and realities. Theory advances to an explanation of how elements in reality relate to each other. This occurred in the early Councils that settled disputes on the divinity and humanity of Christ and the persons in the Trinity. Interiority is self-appropriation, analysis, and articulation of the conscious activities that underlie theory and common sense. Those activities are essentially paying attention, inquiring into the meaning of what experience brings to attention, coming to careful judgments of truth and value from the ideas and hypotheses generated by inquiry, and responsible decision in light of truth and value. This is, so far, methodological rather than substantive.

FROM CHURCH AND STATE TO FAITH AND CITIZENSHIP

Let me conclude by providing a substantive example of a turn to interiority in the relationship of Christianity to democracy. This amounts to reframing public, external norms for church/state relations in terms of their interior reality as principles in self-understanding. Church/state relations evoke images of past powers-that-be in relationship to the topmost levels of churches' authorities: struggles between popes and emperors or kings, bishops or pastors with princes; collaboration between these highest levels in legal establishment. But since in a democracy the primary public office is that of citizen, from the viewpoint of democracy the primary point of contact between church and state occurs in the consciences and self-understandings of believer/citizens. Each believer/citizen is a church/state relationship. The relationship exists as a result of simultaneous participation in Christian faith and in a democratic state. Public theology inquires into how believer/citizens coordinate both participations. It can help identify and articulate that coordination of faith and citizenship while keeping it accountable to Christian sources. The state, with law, coercive

²⁸ Thomas Hughson, S.J., *The Believer as Citizen: John Courtney Murray in a New Context* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993).

²⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972).

power, and prepossessing public presence usually keeps citizens accountable to democratic institutions and principles.

Four theoretical principles distill modern Catholic understanding of church/state relations. In explaining these to graduate students from other Christian traditions I have found that they find them congenial in general yet wish to reformulate them. So I present the principles in an ecumenical spirit for dialogue, not unilaterally as if self-evidently compelling as formulated. The first principle is that there is an irreducible difference in the respective origins, activities, and purposes of state and church. The state originates immediately in created human nature and its capacity to devise reasonable modes of cooperation and decision-making, and through that the state ultimately springs from and expresses the wisdom of the Creator. In Lutheran terms the state belongs to God's work through the law, not the gospel. In Reformed terms the state or political order is an order of creation.

The now divided Church of all the baptized originated in the missions of Christ and the Holy Spirit that introduce a reality over and above the best capacities of creation and that can redeem their fallenness. The interior reality is that faith is a divine gift underived from any political regime, heritage, or authority and therefore independent of them. Faith, conversion, and baptism are also a liberation from slavery to personal and original sin. No political authority or institution brings about this fundamental reconciliation with God and other human beings. Moreover, faith is part of what the Holy Spirit communicates and another element is Christian freedom in the mode of love for God and neighbor as well as a desire to communicate the gospel. Evangelization continually arises from a divine gift not from a state's directives or authorization. This grounds the personal and ecclesial demand for freedom to evangelize realized, but only partially, through the human right to religious liberty. The state does not have, nor can it legitimately acquire from the religious convictions of its citizens, a religious mission. The flourishing, or not, of Christianity stems from the vitality, or not, of the churches. It does not fall to the state to act as an instrument or advocate of faith by seeking means to promote a Christian nation-state, for example.

Citizenship, then, does not ground Christian freedom. But it does institute the basis for legal protection of citizens' human rights, including the right to religious liberty. Citizenship, though, has an ultimately divine origin in the created order and is a human ordering of social existence that, whether acknowledged as such or not, reflects the relationship of humanity to the Creator. That would seem to preclude anarchism from among political options compatible with Christian faith. Also, because citizenship specifies a universally human political attribute, its meaning exceeds the particularity of a national society and state. The universality of the human always has only particular political arrangements but none of them eclipse the reality of a common humanity. It seems to be a distorted understanding of citizenship that produces nationalism. An understanding of citizenship in light of faith does not

forget the universality, even if formulations of it have to be tried before the bar of post-modern suspicion of false (Western) universalisms.

Likewise the democratic state does not derive from the churches or from faith but from created human nature and human reason, and so it has an independent finality not conferred by or able to be revoked by any ecclesial authority. The implication of significance is that faith and citizenship can be correlated and synthesized in thought and practice but no attempt at a complete identification of the two respects the difference between them. Fusions of God and country, faith and nationality, etc. run contrary to the nature of both and usually absolutize the state. God and Caesar, faith and citizenship, are not the same in the economy of salvation, though as Romans 13 points out, Caesar's rule is under God and for divine purposes of peace and order, though certainly not for purposes of salvation. I wonder if pronouncements from US political authorities that define the significance of the life and death of US military personnel does not overstep the difference between citizenship and faith by taking over a religious duty of defining the ultimate meaning of a fallen soldier's death.

The second principle is that the spiritual, including church mission and ministries, has a non-judicial priority in relations with temporal authority in matters of a spiritual kind. This simply accepts the novelty of the Incarnation and mission of the Spirit and the divine authority inherent in them as a guideline for Christians relating to the state. The authority of faith is superior to the duty to the state if the two should fall into irreconcilable conflict. As Peter and John said, "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 4: 19-21). Apart from the kind of conflict exemplified by the Confessing Church and the Barmen Declaration, faith enlightening reason always offers the most comprehensive light in which to evaluate the actions of a state. The twentieth century's totalitarian governments of the right and left made a point of policies that subordinated faith to citizenship. Dietrich Bonhoeffer witnessed to the priority of faith. In less conflictual conditions, faith still offers the perspective within which to understand citizenship, and does not exclude the role of reason in this task. Here I think a mistake is to assume that the priority of faith typically means asserting a moral judgment without taking account of opposite moral judgments offered with equal integrity and the same religious liberty, and without adverting to the complex content of the judgment .

Third, the state, the political order, enjoys independence from the official jurisdiction of any church or institutional religious authority. The state is not an arm of the church or an instrument of evangelization, is not charged with defining beliefs as valid or invalid, and is not the arbiter of religious values. This means that full fidelity to the priority of faith does not overrule the independence of the duties of a citizen. It is not part of faith to make political decisions that seek to cast the state with its coercive power in the role of an instrument or advocate of Christianity. Christian citizens who do so reproduce the same error made by governments that have sought to enforce religious beliefs. I would add that it is my opinion that this means bishops in my

communion who use the public language of command to members of their flock in regard to a moral aspect of public policy blur the difference between faith and citizenship. I don't think any church authority can command any political decision, though teaching is always appropriate.

The fourth principle, and possibly the most controversial ecumenically, is that church and state, faith and citizenship, have an inherent finality toward some manner of cooperation or harmony so that believer/citizens can fulfill their dual responsibilities. Worthy authors from Stephen Carter to Stanley Hauerwas insist on the importance not of harmony but of readiness to dissent from, challenge, and refuse to cooperate with any government policy or action not in line with Christian faith and morality. I agree, and yet think that this negative moment is precisely for the sake of just policies and actions that people of faith can cooperate with. The principle of harmony is not passivity or abject submission to the state. It too accepts Revelation 13 on the latent possibility that any political authority may become oppressive and so anti-Creator in one respect or another, no less than it holds to Romans 13 on all political authority coming from God. So I would say that faith seeks a way to cooperate with the best of citizenship, criticizes the worst, and does so in the redemptive prospect of correcting the fallenness of the political order rather than in arrival at a final condemnatory judgment in an apocalyptic perspective. That is to say that faith can connect with citizenship in a spirit of Christian hope for harmony between faith and citizenship.

A valuable task for public theology is articulating the kinds and nuances of this hope. It may envision that state as serviceable to revealed, redemptive ends. For example, as far as I can tell, in Britain, unlike the US in this regard, there is no obvious millenarian backdrop to political hopes for a more just future. Still, Jürgen Moltmann has argued that millenarian hope for Christ's earthly reign animated the energetic origins of European modernity.³⁰ This would mean that a diffuse millenarian hope entered Britain too. I don't know if or how that is so. How might those presuppositions have influenced the horizon of modernity within which economic and political progress in Britain was conceived?³¹ At the least Moltmann's argument leads to realization that postmodern critiques of the Enlightenment as the source of an untenable modern idea of unilinear progress toward an earthly utopia are incomplete until they come to grips with millenarian presuppositions.

³⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology*, translation by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1999).

³¹ See the presentation by Robert John Arias, "Teaching the End, and the Ends of Teaching: Problems Surrounding Theological Instruction on the Apocalypse," Oxford University Roundtable, August 11, 2005 on the impetus to scientific and technological innovation from apocalyptic and millenarian expectations. Also, on the compatibility of millenarianism and technology, see Victoria Rosenholtz, "American Fundamentalism in the Independent Baptist Tradition: Sectarian Education in a Globalized World," Oxford University Roundtable, August 12, 2005.

FORMAL EDUCATION: A THIRD CONTRIBUTION TO CITIZENS

Finally and most briefly, churches contribute wisdom to citizens in a democracy by furnishing means whereby they may seek wisdom. Support for, encouragement of, and sponsorship of formal education is one of the most significant means. To disconnect the churches from formal education is to forego access to an avenue toward wisdom by acceding to a false antithesis between faith and reason. To stand behind education, quite apart from programs designed to foster civic virtue or responsible citizenship, is to keep the diverse fields of knowledge in at least a minimal reference to God as origin, goal, and supreme good of created existence. And that represents wisdom.

Programmatic, institutional embodiment of the search for wisdom is a topic for discussion. Generally, I tend to agree with Jackson that learning about religions fosters citizenship education. I am not competent to judge how appropriate and feasible his recommendations for religious education in Community schools in Britain may be. However, his intriguing proposal on the advantages to citizenship education from students' engaging in study and discussion of a plurality of religions has a paradoxical application in the US.

Multi-religious study would seem most apt as content for courses in a public-school curriculum not pre-committed to a religious tradition.³² Yet, hyper-sensitivity to the First Amendment no-establishment clause has seemed to occlude this possibility from sight, despite the constitutionality of teaching about religion, without proselytizing, in public schools. So, and this is the paradox, it is more likely that Jackson's idea could be put into place in faith-based schools. And to my knowledge some have tried to do just that. He points out how productive teaching about religion in British publicly funded common schools can be for citizenship in a pluralist society. He notes that, "...the skills of listening, negotiating and formulating a position that are part of dialogical approaches to R[eligious]E[ducation]," are "...essential to good citizenship."³³ He adds that, "the skills of dealing with difference, interpreting unfamiliar religious language, constructive criticism of another's stance, and personal reflection all contribute to education for citizenship..."³⁴ I concur, and might wish to add that this could be internal to the considerations of wisdom seeking to order religious and political dimensions of life, and the kinds of knowledge appropriate to each.

³² See Joan J. Early, "The Positive Aspect of Secularism," Oxford University Roundtable, August 8, 2005, and responses to questions for a similar perspective. Also, Olfat El-Mallakh, "In Search of a Religious Curriculum for the Global World," Oxford University Roundtable, August 8, 2005, and Garrett C. Kenney, "Why Religion Matters: Perspectives on Huston Smith's *Why Religion Matters...*," Oxford University Roundtable, August 8, 2005.

³³ Jackson, 141.

³⁴ Ibid.

His observations, though, provoke a concluding, comparative question. In the United States have all of the First Amendment constitutional and legal instruments, along with Supreme Court decisions, that protect religious liberty produced a maximum scope for its free exercise? Parents who exercise their religious liberty by sending their children to religiously-affiliated schools at their own cost in addition to dutiful payment of taxation for state-sponsored school systems might pause. More bluntly, have the de jure protections of free exercise in the United States brought about a de facto condition of free exercise that exceeds that of Britain (or Canada)? Could it be the case that somehow cultural rather than legal resources might have enabled Britain, with an established church and without a First Amendment, to attain a de facto condition of protection for free exercise in a religiously pluralist society? Have the First Amendment religion clauses maximized the human and civil right to religious liberty in a pluralist society, or secured a lesser but permanent threshold to it? Does American exceptionalism in regard to the First Amendment pertain primarily to legal instruments rather than to social conditions? Do British and Canadian citizens have less religious liberty than American citizens?