

The European Secularisation of Citizenship

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When secularized citizens act in their role as citizens of the state, they must not deny in principle that religious images of the world have the potential to express truth. Nor must they refuse their believing fellow citizens the right to make contributions in a religious language to public debates.

Jurgan Habermas in Habermas and Ratzinger (2006: 51)

Introduction

The history of citizenship is regularly told by many academics in Europe first and foremost as a discussion of their identity as secular citizens. The story they tell is of citizenship as the primary principle of identity which transcends any identities built on religion. Further, they argue that this European secular identity of the citizen requires nothing but ‘reason’ to ensure progress and liberation. These are of course identities that must embrace an exclusive and exclusionary form of ‘reason’ disconnected from other ways of thinking. Thus, they seek to develop a legal minimum for citizenship whose principles are not derived from faith. These secular self-understandings go on to establish exclusively secular lineages between themselves and the ancient Greeks who they claim originated citizenship. However, claims of affinity between modern secular concepts and practices of citizenship and those of historical forms should always be approached with caution, for citizenship has been an unstable and relative concept in history. Religious and secular identities are also intertwined in complex ways and have been inextricably linked throughout European history. Nevertheless, in contemporary Britain there is little academic discussion within education of religion and its role in shaping meanings of citizenship. Many of the works of Derek Heater (2004) and Bernard Crick (2000) make no reference to the Judaeo-Christian tradition in what they believe to be the foundations

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of Western citizenship. Crick, who is a secular atheist, made his position explicit when he declared at a British Humanist Association Conference at the University of London, in October 2006, that 'Citizenship is secular, on historical and philosophical grounds'. Can it be true that the historical sources of citizenship are purely secular?

Many contemporary political scientists portray Christianity as a force that has hindered the progress of citizenship and therefore consign it to a bygone age. They undervalue the power of religion among the mass of people in the past and instead concentrate their attention upon the politics of the secular elites in society, past and present, in an attempt to free their historical understanding from what they believe to be theological notions, beliefs or bias. The result is a highly selective and abstract idea of citizenship which is secured by pre-selecting concepts that they believe shape citizenship whilst ignoring others. In short, they are so influenced by contemporary political debates and a secular mentality that their accounts of citizenship are simply insufficiently embedded in the wider historical context. As Bryan Turner (2007, 259) says, there is an assumption that the rise of secular citizenship requires the 'erosion of the authority of institutional religion'. These observations minimise the importance of religion in the political context denying religion a legitimate role. Consequently, accounts of citizenship generally omit positive references to religion and fail to appreciate the complex interaction of politics, religion and the multi-dimensionality of the historical record in relation to citizenship and religion. One could say that there is a secularist bias in current political theory which easily judges citizens as too religious, but never too secular. Benjamin Barber (2003, p. 183) calls this 'intolerant secularism. . .' We need to ask how did the ideal of citizenship 'endure' through the 2,000 years of Christian Europe that these authors omit or consider irrelevant in their accounts? With this lack of historical treatment, together with the underlying secular assumptions, some might say secular extremism, behind such an absence, it is not surprising that religious faith and citizenship are widely not seen by European political elites as complementary. I would argue that some modern political scholars in Europe have a myopic vision of the historical origins of contemporary ideas of citizenship.

Secularisation

Secularisation is a controversial concept with academics divided concerning whether the process of secularisation is reducing the role of religion in everyday life. At the most basic level it can mean either (1) the decline of religious belief and practice among a particular population or (2) the retreat of religion from influence on the public sphere. Whilst the world remains as religious as ever, Europe has become less religious, however unevenly, and the marginalisation of religion in public life has led some to believe that the main factor in the decline of belief and practice is definition (2). However, Charles Taylor (2007, p. 18) believes that secularisation is not the result of definitions (1) or (2) above, but arises out of the flood of plausible self-understandings available to citizens in liberal secular democracies. As he says:

'I would like to claim that the coming of modern secularity in my sense. . . has been coterminous with the rise of a society in which for the first time in history a purely self-sufficient humanism came to be a widely available option. I mean by this a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing. Of no previous society was this true.' Whilst secularisation is a contested concept it is clear that in Western Europe industrialisation and urbanisation, together with rising levels of education and wealth have weakened the influence of religious institutions in society. In addition, science has developed as an autonomous secular perspective; education is concerned with competence and skill and has abandoned a religious–literary formation; the economy has lost any religious ethos, politics and medicine have been 'rationalised'; art and culture claim autonomy from religion and even in the area of spiritual and moral guidance there is a rejection of the idea that religion can have any overarching claim over them. Consequently, the formation of European identities is not confined to one set of value orientations, but is rather more diffuse and can even be chosen. It is not therefore surprising that we are all to a greater or lesser degree secular citizens as the secular is so much part of our modern life. This is true to such an extent that some believe that the secularisation process is not only irreversible, but interpret it as normal and progressive – something to be welcomed. The result has been the privileging of European secular identities and secularist self-understandings which result in religion being viewed as fundamentally irrelevant to the politics of the citizen. In this essay secularisation is understood as a change in the role of religion in notions of citizenship, not in the religious tendencies of people.

I believe that citizenship can only be defined as a secular legal status in a narrow way – as consisting of certain reciprocal rights, duties and privileges e.g. the right to own land, to hold public office, to vote, to pay taxes and to serve on a jury. Citizenship clearly arises between the State and the individual when each is fully accountable to the other. The rights and duties of each citizen are upheld by the State and indeed the State has the right to enforce these duties. Legal citizenship is not dependent on religious affiliation, but in the secular project of the European Union, secular liberalism is deeply engrained in the self-understanding of most European elites and especially in the interpretations of most scholars of European politics. These exclusively secular notions of citizenship separate religion from other legitimate and important spheres of life and tend ideologically to favour naturalistic worldviews whilst at the same time refusing to grant any validity to religious worldviews. The secular European liberal State does this of course by purporting to be impartial in relation to particular worldviews and in so doing demonstrates that the secular State is in fact not neutral between competing claims. And yet citizenship that encourages active public engagement and responsibility in a democracy cannot be a wholly secular concept for it involves social attachments and allegiances to other citizens as well as the nurturing of certain civil virtues which must in turn involve prior religious motivations and reasons.

Secular States are dependent upon a degree of solidarity among their citizens since the operation of citizenship is embedded in civil society. Active citizens in a democratic State are supposed to make effective use of their participation rights

not simply to pursue their own private purposes, but to promote public good. Since the liberal secular State cannot legally enact virtue in its citizens, it is clear that the virtues, and above all, the motivations required to sustain and promote a democratic polity often draw on religious sources or what Jürgen Habermas (2006, p. 101) calls 'pre-political foundations'. Religion can have a functional contribution to the reproduction of desirable motives and attitudes since the modern State is not the only repository of civic virtues and moral authority. The long history of Christianity in Europe has moulded our thoughts and feelings and these ideas have so deeply penetrated our very being that we no longer recognise the origin of certain secular ideas in relation to citizenship as stemming from fundamental Christian concepts. For example, distinctly Western ideas of human equality, dignity and rights partly originated in Christian doctrine, but have been transformed into a mechanistic natural law in modern times. It is why secularists sometimes welcome religion's role in fostering public virtues especially when such announcements are restricted to the general welfare and common good of all in society. In this process the Christian goal becomes identical with the secular goal: the process is one of secularising originally Christian values and practices. The secular academic simply superimposes their own prior intellectual preferences on Christian concepts and in this way the secular dimensions of our citizenship status and participation within a democracy can often be presented as an exclusive tie. Christianity thereby runs the danger of identifying too closely with Western European liberalism and as a result unconsciously supplies the temporary motivational backdrop for a particular set of relative and unstable political preferences.

Scholars invariably begin with reference to ancient Greek definitions of citizenship and then proceed directly to Enlightenment notions of citizenship as if nothing useful developed in between. They often attempt to secularise our understandings of citizenship by exaggerating the religious influence in earlier eras while underestimating the relevance of religious ideas today. Certainly the Enlightenment philosophers, encouraged by the French Revolution, prepared the way for the first concrete expression of hostility to religion. This made it easier to begin the eradication of traditional Christianity from public life. It began with a retreat of religious ideas, beliefs and symbols from the public sphere. This process of secularisation has moved on to such an extent that modern political culture in Western Europe often fails to acknowledge ideas of the sacred and holy and human relations are voided of religious virtues. Society as a whole is not seen as having any divine origin or anything beyond itself – what Charles Taylor (2004, p. 93) calls 'radical secularity'. The goals many people have in ordinary life are purely immanent and no account of the transcendent is considered. This is not a conscious process for most, but at the political level it is often the deliberate intention of those in government. During the debates in 2003 over mentioning the Christian roots of Europe in the Preamble to the European Constitution renewed hostility emerged to Christianity's presence in the European public sphere. The fact is that for the majority of us religion has disappeared from our social context and as Taylor (2008) says we have gone from a 'society in which it was impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others'.

Europeans who adopt liberal secular positions generally argue that religion and politics are two distinct activities and that religion has little contribution to make to citizenship. Consequently, they advocate that those who have religious beliefs should keep them private and that they should not allow their religious beliefs to shape their conduct or judgements as citizens engaged in the public sphere. It follows, from this line, that citizenship is a political and secular legal status and religious people should therefore 'bracket' out their religious beliefs if they want to participate in society's political order. John Rawls (1997, p. 781) has asked the question 'How is it possible for those of faith, as well as the nonreligious, to endorse a secular regime even when their comprehensive doctrines may not prosper under it, and indeed may decline'. He answers that religious people should only argue for particular policies or laws by providing secular reasons for them and Robert Audi (2005, p. 217) has gone even further by advocating the 'principle of secular jurisdiction' in which a religious person should exclusively think in secular terms when they vote in democratic elections. This is an explicitly secular definition of the role of religion in political life and it renders any public deliberation as an inherently secular process. It is supported and advocated by many politicians who often attempt to assimilate Christianity to the secular present. If accepted as a principle it would entail that a person of faith would presumably have to think in two different realms – the secular and the religious, which are somehow unconnected in their minds.

Within a State which actively promotes 'secularity' among its citizens, religious believers could find that their deepest convictions and most comprehensive worldview are legally divorced from the political life of society and replaced with an undefined or unstated secular humanism. The implications of adopting liberal notions of the 'secular' are to have nothing to do with religion or becoming completely autonomous of religion. In the most extreme form, this secularist approach is positively antagonistic to religious belief. Jeffrey Stout (2004, p. 93) has observed that: 'There is a sense in which the ethical discourse of most modern democracies is *secularized*, for such discourse is not 'framed by a theological perspective' taken for granted by all those who participate in it. But secularization in this sense is not a reflection of commitment to *secularism*. It entails neither the denial of theological assumptions nor the expulsion of theological expression from the public sphere.' For Stout, the historical processes of secularisation results in a plural society in which it can no longer be assumed that there is a theological perspective that is more or less shared by all. Secularism, in contrast, makes the normative claim that theological assumptions and expressions ought to be expelled from the public sphere altogether. The advocates of this secularism see such expulsion as a precondition for citizenship in the modern liberal State.

The religious believer could find themselves anaesthetised into accepting that liberal secular society alone provides the objective and superior intellectual vantage point and therefore become effectively coerced into accepting secularism as providing the basis for the values in citizenship. The Christian can accept the 'secular' when it is still open to being Christian in ethos – in other words, the doctor has a secular vocation but this does not mean that his or her vocation is not influenced by his or her faith. In the same way, the voter can decide on secular grounds but this

does not mean they seek to promote ‘secularism’. Indeed, religious forms of identification can and do represent legitimate motives for political action. Pope Benedict XVI (2005) has called this a ‘positive secularity’ that omits any kind of hostility between religion and the State and guarantees to each citizen ‘the right to live his own religious faith with genuine freedom, including in the public realm’. In this positive secularity the State respects the prior religious commitments of its citizens. The attempted severance in the mind between theology and political philosophy is, at the very least, problematic as discourses in politics are often intimately bound up with and permeated by religious modes of thought and action. The secular view is not value-free and when it becomes excessively secular in orientation it transforms into an ideology, but one that is not a complete worldview. This incompleteness enables secularists to claim neutrality because they do not have a detailed blueprint for what society should do on all particular points. Moreover, those who promote a wholly secular vision of the citizen usually employ the ‘truth and illusion argument’ – ‘We are neutral, you are biased’ whilst obscuring the real implications of their actions by the appearance of ‘balance’.

Habermas (2006) believes that this mental dualism would be impossible for any human being and that it denotes a ‘narrow secular consciousness’. Secular elites assume that religion is essentially a question of beliefs and doctrines, but religion has public manifestations. Habermas (2007, p. 113) agrees that a shared public language is needed between citizens who are religious and those who are not, but whilst he also agrees that this public language should be open to justification on secular grounds, he explicitly states that all citizens should be open to the rational context of religious contributions. As he argues: ‘Secular citizens, in their role as citizens, may neither deny that religious worldviews are in principle capable of truth nor question the right of their devout fellow-citizens to couch their contributions to public discussions in religious language. A liberal political culture can even expect its secular citizens to take part in the efforts to translate relevant contributions from religious language into publicly intelligible language’. Habermas recognises that it is not legitimate for the modern secular liberal State to exclude religious reasoning from the public sphere and he argues that there is a need for religious and secular rationalities to engage with each other in a mutual process. Habermas proposes a revised concept of citizenship which restores freedom of religious speech and reasoning to the European public sphere. Secular elites have represented themselves as almost the sole defenders of ‘reason’ against irrational religious believers who they claim rely on arguments that turn out to be unsound. This kind of secular thinking inevitably assumes that there is something deeply wrong with the reasoning processes of religious citizens.

Religion and Citizenship

The idea of citizenship holds a prominent place in the history of European political thought. Nevertheless, the relationship between religion, specifically Christianity, and notions of citizenship has been historically problematic, indeed, it has been

characterised as 'very complex, confusing and changing' (Niebuhr, 1952, p. 1). There is no doubt that religion is and has been a key factor in determining someone's character, moral norms, idea of duty and has provided many with a sense of national identity. We are well acquainted with the idea that the practice of political citizenship originated in ancient Greece, but are perhaps less aware that biblical religion also had an important influence on the development of the meaning of citizenship in Europe. The citizen in Greek City-States lived in an age when religion and the State were coterminous, and when civic duty became nearly identical with religious obligation. The temple was the civic centre, priests were public officials, and religious festivals were public events which meant that participation in the religious community was an essential aspect of citizenship. Citizenship meant having the responsibility and privileges of membership in the political community, but this smaller political community of active male citizens was also an integral and leading part of the larger religious community.

In contrast, the Jewish people in Israel structured themselves not as a City-State but as the covenanted people of God. All Jews were members of God's people and the community of which they were a part was more profound and historically far-reaching than a Greek City-State. This produced a larger concept of human society than the Greek City-State. The Jewish tradition emphasised family, friendships, charity, voluntary associations and traditions that together made up and formed the basis of civil society. Members of this society were linked by a bond of kinship which obliged its members not only to love their neighbour, but also to love and respect the stranger. Indeed, love could not be translated in civic and constitutional terms for this duty to love is laid upon human beings by religious commitment in a manner which cannot be articulated as constitutive of the State or as a matter of public policy. Love was seen as primary whilst laws, rights and contractual obligations were secondary. This Judaeo-Christian synthesis understood that a moral relationship that is more fundamental than one that is contractual exists between human beings. The combination of both the political order (institutions, States, governments and political systems) and the social order (family, friendships and voluntary associations) inevitably resulted in tensions as one order tended to be predominant at any given time.

During the first three centuries the Christian Church lived in an ambivalent relationship with the Roman Empire, which alternated between persecution and a degree of tolerance. Christians generally isolated themselves from the political and religious structures of Roman society which led to the accusation from the hostile crowds in Thessalonika that, 'These men all act against the edicts of Caesar, saying there is another King, Jesus' (Acts 17:7). The Church saw itself as an association of human beings trying to live the Christian life, whilst it viewed the State as another association of human beings organised under a government. There was a strong idea of separation that developed early in Christian thought in which the pure Christian life and community, governed by religious authority, was separate from the sinful and often hostile world that was governed by political authority. Nevertheless, Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, in the late second century wrote that secular authority had its origin in God's design.

A *universal* idea of membership and belonging, so important to notions of citizenship, were concepts that developed early and Clement of Alexandria (200AD) expressed this when he said; ‘Both slave and free must equally philosophise, whether male or female in sex. . . whether barbarian, Greek, slave, whether an old man, or a boy, or a woman. . . And we must admit that the same nature exists in every race, and the same virtue’. From this it followed that all Christians are moral equals, at least theoretically, and consequently enjoyed equality in a form of world citizenship as baptised Christians. This universalistic thinking laid the important ideological foundations for a definition of citizenship not based on blood or kinship. The anonymous *Letter to Diognetus* (1978) describes Christians as ‘aliens’ for whom ‘every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land since. . . [their] true citizenship is in heaven’. Whilst an idea of ‘alien citizenship’ is suggested, the letter actually admonishes Christians to ‘live in their own lands. . . have a share in everything as citizens and. . . obey the established laws’. This letter nevertheless insists that the Christian’s first commitment is to Christ and speaks of Christians being ‘resident aliens’ – a stress on ‘resident’ when society is more Christian and on ‘alien’ when society is less Christian. However, it was St. Ambrose of Milan (340–397) who began the development of a Christian theory of temporal and spiritual relations. He emphasised the independence of the Church, denied absolute power to the civil authority, whilst at the same time protesting respect for the civil power in matters exclusively temporal. There was a conditional acceptance of secular political authority as having the right to exercise authority, but only in a particular restricted sphere. There were clearly several important religious and political developments between the fall of the Roman Empire and the 1500s that inevitably influenced understandings of citizenship as being simultaneously a religious and political status.

Augustine and Aquinas

This developing theological theory of citizenship in two realms made the important connection between civic citizenship and divine citizenship explicit. An important principle of this developing Christian notion was St. Augustine’s [1984] conception of the world, in his *City of God*, as divided into the metaphors of the City of God and the City of Man. Augustine was responding to the fall of Rome which many Christians, according to him, had wrongly confused with the City of God whilst pagans accused the Church of being incompatible with the morals of citizenship. The pagans argued that the Church weakened the Empire by teaching not to return evil for evil and to turn the other cheek. Augustine’s response was that Christians lived as citizens in two kingdoms, and the people and institutions within the City of Man remain imperfect. Two contrasted forms of citizenship were presented – spiritual citizenship and profane citizenship. He rejected the claim that Constantine had established a Christian State, even though Catholic Christianity had become the official religion of the Empire. The State, however Christian it may appear, can only be a community of saints and sinners for the City of Man, Augustine wrote, is flawed

because of wars and corruption. Politics was therefore conducted in a fallen world in which all individuals fall far short of perfection. The City of Man is a passing Kingdom and therefore offers only a temporary and secondary level of citizenship whilst the City of God is an eternal kingdom and ought to provide the Christian with their primary anticipatory citizenship.

This articulation of a 'dualism', of the world divided into the secular realm (government of temporal affairs) and the spiritual realm (government of men's souls) became a keynote of European culture. These two sources of authority in human affairs was therefore an integral part of the worldview of medieval man, but the Church maintained and taught that God's authority is the source of all power, secular and religious. Nevertheless, in practice an important distinction was drawn between ecclesiastical authority and political authorities. This theory of 'two powers' was explicitly stated by Pope Gelasius I in 494 in a letter to the Emperor, 'There are two chief powers by which the world is governed, August Emperor: the sacred authority of the prelates and the kingly power' (Carlyle, 1930, p. 191). This statement was premised on the Christian belief that spiritual and ecclesiastical considerations have a more authoritative claim than do material ones. This thinking reached its zenith in the bull *unam sanctam* of 1302 in which Pope Boniface VIII claimed the superiority of the spiritual power over the secular in all matters. This theocratic mentality tended to subordinate all political institutions to the Church. There was certainly conflict and tension between the political and religious authorities, but it was a time in which the political community was religious and the religious community political, membership of the latter involved membership of the former. In a sense, everything was conceived as religious in the dominant worldview of the period and the personnel who ran the political community were practically the same as those who ran the religious community. There was no practical conception of the secular as somehow divorced from religion and the question of the Christians' duty to God and their duty to Caesar was not a question of alternatives, but of adjustment.

Consequently, Augustine believed that his two cities were distinct but not separate; Christians had a stake in the earthly City and politics and religion necessarily overlapped. Augustine discusses the ideal secular State by emphasising that the City of God exists within the City of Man, within separate individuals or in communities of believers so that it was possible to see within the City of Man an image of the City of God. So whilst the ultimate citizenship is in the next world, Christians should not withdraw from the City of Man, but ought rather to work within it. They had to engage in the political community, not because politics is ultimate, but because Christians are commended to love both God and their neighbour – in other words they had important responsibilities to both Cities. Augustine presented a case for Christian citizenship which entailed that you could be a good Roman citizen as well as a good Christian by working for the good of society. So whilst for Augustine civic citizenship is a subordinate end, it is ordered to a higher end, but this did not mean that this subordinate end could not be pursued, in fact it was unavoidable. He raised the classic notion of civic citizenship to the level of a religious duty and admonished Christians to assume the obligations of civic citizenship. Christians were to give themselves completely in two directions: the 'upward' (vertical relationship

with God) and the 'forward' (horizontal relationship with their neighbour) and each direction should not hinder the other, but on the contrary further it. Christianity therefore did not disable civic virtues, but provided a force to realise these virtues through public engagement. This developed, by the fourteenth century, into a strong tradition which positively affirmed human community. Christian faith was therefore not at odds with civic identity, except if obedience to the secular authority was destructive of the Christian's relationship with God.

Whilst this Christian theory explicitly recognises public jurisdiction, it limits the power of the State over the individual. The State is not the individual 'writ large', for the State concerns only part of the individual. This teaching has been of utmost importance in the history of Europe, for it leaves to the Church or the individual's conscience the final judgement about whether obedience to the State is spiritually and morally acceptable. In short, the Church provided its members with the criteria to assist them as citizens in judging whether secular orders are permissible. Augustine rejected the idea that it was within the City or State that individuals reach their highest state. Political engagement for Augustine was not something that justifies society's existence or expresses its highest purpose. The individual does not live for the State and the political order does not provide a reason for being for society or the individual (see Dyson, 2001, p. 183–184). Since Christianity considers humanity to be inherently flawed, no individual, and no human agency, ought to have unlimited power. Augustine was primarily concerned with the character of the Christian citizen, not with the political institutions of his time.

It is important to remember here that Augustine's *City of God* is a theological work and that political interpretations of it start with his political prescriptions and often fail to see the theological sources of these prescriptions. It is true that in Augustine's [1984] thought political engagement is relegated to the status of a worldly necessity, that which must be done to survive and keep order; he is essentially pessimistic about human progress, but his theology provides us with important insights into notions of citizenship. The difference between the two cities, as described by Augustine, is an eschatological rather than political one. Augustine is primarily concerned with those who are and are not intended for eternal life with God. He did not elaborate a philosophical theory of politics which is why we must approach his writings with care. Nevertheless, he affirmed the practical value of civic citizenship for the common good of society and individuals. Ultimately, politics for Augustine was about coercion and conflict between sinful beings and he made the distinction between the religious and secular which resulted in the continuing tension of simultaneously accepting and rejecting the world.

Whilst Augustine spoke of the theological foundations of citizenship, Thomas Aquinas [1966] thought of citizenship as a natural aspect of human life in his *Summa Theologica*. He provides a political theory which adheres closely to the writings of Aristotle, but takes as his starting point the theological foundations established by Augustine. Aquinas believed that human beings were by nature social and political animals and that since all things natural are part of God's creation, so is the political order which is both natural and sacred. Aquinas did not believe that civil government was a necessary evil, but rather that it is a positive force for the promotion of

man's welfare. The function of government was to promote the virtues of the citizens. Therefore it is a mistake, he believed, to approach the issue of Christianity and public life as if they were two realms that we have to relate to each other. According to Aquinas and Augustine the public realm for the conduct of one's civic citizenship was already related to faith because it was created by God. Consequently, in addition to loving God, a person needs to feed their children and build for them a safe community and these activities do not direct them away from God, but rather, as Aquinas insists, points them to God.

Commenting on Aristotle's (1981) *Politics* (ST: Q105 reply to objection 2) Aquinas provides a definition of citizenship which he divides into two kinds: 'simple' and 'restricted'. The 'simple' citizenship is the full exercise of political rights whilst 'restricted' citizenship denoted *membership* of a community which involved certain rights and social obligations. The 'restricted' citizenship includes almost all the population residing in the territory of the City or State including women and children. It is an 'anagraphical' citizenship defined on a simple territorial basis. Simple citizenship is attributed by the City or State, whilst 'restricted' citizenship is a more inclusive form of belonging conferred on the basis of residence and the minimal territorial unit which attributed it was the parish and the parish priest through compulsory baptism. It was a notion of citizenship that was bestowed only on Christians, based on their confessional status, and conveyed on them from a source lying outside of the material world. Aquinas saw each sphere of human activity as enjoying its own autonomy. In matters regarding civic goods he said it was better to obey the secular authority even when it was controlled by non-Christians. Indeed, Aquinas developed a theory of natural rights which clearly stipulated that the treatment to which all human beings are entitled is derived from their status as human beings rather than as members of the Christian community.

Pre-Enlightenment Thinking

To understand these developments we need to recognise that theology and politics became fused in early European Christian society. There was also a free and dynamic political debate among the medieval philosophers in European universities concerning the distinction between the two main sources of authority in human affairs. John of Salisbury (c. 1115 – 80), who was influenced by Ciceronian republicanism, taught that a true society is both a natural entity and a spiritual entity. Human society is both a confederation of men and a congregation of Christians where the natural and divine work together. Henry de Bracton (d. 1268), began to liken kingship to God and believed that this royal office is the minister or vicar of God. John of Paris (c.1250 – 1304), argued for a separation of politics from theology by insisting that civil authority was autonomous and sovereign in the realm of temporal property, free of ecclesiastical coercion. Marsilius of Padua (1275 – 1342) expressed what was to become the accepted Western view in that it was the State and not the Church that guaranteed civil peace and that it was reason, not revelation, to which appeal must be made in all matters of temporal jurisdiction. However,

Marsilius also believed that no one could be trusted not to be corrupted by power and denied any divine authority to political power. It is remarkable that many of these intellectuals in the medieval period offered strikingly similar ideas to those that were later offered in the so-called Enlightenment. These medieval thinkers demonstrate that more weight should be given to the general politico-religious background to the Enlightenment.

As civic society sought appropriate political forms, one model of political association that was available to Europeans was the City. The City represented a public space where citizens deliberated and decided their common affairs. However, active citizenship was viewed as the prerogative of the propertied and of the male. Citizenship in the modern sense began to emerge with the creation of these independent cities in medieval Europe. At the Reformation, a series of Protestant City-States were founded by the Swiss reformers Calvin, Zwingli and Beza, these states were based on what they personally thought to be the ideas contained in Augustine's *City of God*. They saw the Church as simply one institution among the organising forces of society which God had ordained. Christian duty was seen in the wider context of civic citizenship. It was the evolution of Cities along the lines of State formation that gave citizenship in Europe its full institutionalised and formalised character and that eventually made nationality a key component of citizenship. Protestant ideas, some would say Protestant theories of citizenship, tended to conflate the Church with the surrounding culture and the emerging idea of the nation began to displace the Church and secure for itself the primary identity and allegiance of the people within its territory. What divided people rather than what united them was the primary emphasis of this new nationalism. Linda Colley (1992) has demonstrated the absolute centrality of Protestantism to the foundation of British identity and citizenship in the eighteenth century. It was thus the Reformation that aided the rise of the modern nation-State by separating out the heavenly kingdom from the earthly, with the earthly dominant in the meantime.

This medieval inheritance began to gradually separate out the powers of the State and Church, but the secular and religious were still understood as being directed by God. The Church was far more universal than any State and possessed many of the functions that today we would regard as essentially political. A minority of intellectual thinkers during the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance and on through the eighteenth-century 'Enlightenment' wanted to secure political authority entirely for 'the people.' There also arose the idea that the State is morally autonomous, meaning that its actions cannot be judged against any external standards. A minority of these elite thinkers assumed that religious behaviour is a result of religious belief and that such 'irrational behaviour' would cease if the religious belief was refuted. This purely secularist approach required that political freedom and responsibility of citizens would be impossible to achieve as long as people appealed to God or the Church for help. Other 'Enlightenment' thinkers adopted a critical and sceptical attitude towards religion and this became a fundamental feature of their understanding of citizenship. There was from this point onwards a clear emergence of a process of constitutional secularisation in which the State or temporal authorities were no longer defined or understood in religious terms. As the influence of

religion declined, people reached for a rival source of membership and a kind of secular national identity offered an answer to this need. Religious criteria gradually ceased to be the chief means to regulate society and so religion and secular power began to disengage from each other. Whilst the Church accepted the separation of Church and State, it has never accepted the separation of religion from public life. It is important to remember that the 'Enlightenment' was the preserve of a small intellectual elite and did not, for most of them, involve the conscious abandonment of Christian belief. Nevertheless, the 'Enlightenment' marked a continuing process, begun in the Middle Ages, that separated out the secular and religious in notions of European active citizenship. Secularisation, for many academics, was consequently raised to a law of historical development as inevitable and irreversible.

Citizenship

Today, notions of citizenship are being discussed at a time of uncertainty and doubt within European societies. These notions of citizenship are often variously defined because citizenship itself is contested and is often reduced to a basic language of rights. The outcomes of teaching built on this kind of content are largely based on a worldview of humanity as a marketplace of autonomous and competing individuals. Such notions of citizenship may refer to ideas of community involvement, solidarity, belonging and other forms of fraternity, grounded in a discourse of freedom and equality, a combination which forms the basis of an understanding of a rights-orientated model of citizenship, but this fails to describe the richness of human cooperation and obligation. It fails to persuade people that they ought to trust and love each other. This secular worldview fails to provide adequate descriptions that are compelling for people to be moved to action, indeed, it fails to reach the heart. Michael Ignatieff (2000, 23) recognises the limited nature of rights language for defining citizenship. He writes: 'Codes of rights cannot be expected to define what the good life is, what love and faithfulness and honour are. Codes of rights are about defining the minimum conditions for any life at all. So in the case of the family they are about defining the negatives: abuse and violence. Rights can't define the positives: love, forbearance, humour, charity and endurance. We need other words to do that, and we need to make sure that rights talk doesn't end up crowding out all the other ways we express our deepest and most enduring needs.' The idea that we are all, more or less, becoming modern and that as we become modern we will become more alike, and at the same time more homogenous and more reasonable, is a product of the secularisation of citizenship. It is merely part of a secular ideology of progress that has faith in humanity's ability to evolve towards a universal civilisation based on liberal democracy. This secularisation fails to recognise that, at the very least, echoes of their religious heritage continue to resonate with citizens and are often responsible for the way they demonstrate such qualities as altruism, compassion and love of their neighbour.

In this context, there appears to be a dual calling of citizenship and faith within the competing obligations among those who profess a religious faith. What is needed

is a language of participatory citizenship that can be shared by those with faith and those with none. This cannot be done by ignoring religion. Citizenship programmes in Western Europe often make explicit appeals to inclusiveness, tolerance, equal rights in an attempt to foster unity and even a collective identity. If we understand citizenship as a legal status within a particular territory in which the State enforces legal requirements and bestows entitlement to certain services and basic rights then this 'minimal' or 'formal' citizenship may be seen as a secular construct, but one, I would argue, that is not completely disconnected from religious origins. Nevertheless, the responsibilities of this kind of citizenship for promoting the common good are minimal as it can simply be understood at the level of passive membership of a community. However, if we expand this definition to include the public practice-engagement of the responsible citizens, or public-spirited citizenship, and seek to promote this, then we are promoting a 'maximal' or 'substantive' definition of active citizenship which makes it more problematic to recognise as a wholly secular conception. Such a conception of citizenship, especially republican and communitarian notions of citizenship, have regard for the quality of an individual's response to membership in a community and understand the citizen as a political being who should not only act, but should desire to act and be disposed to act, in a way that fosters and maintains the main goals of the community. The State, in this conception of citizenship, adopts a formative educative role in seeking to produce a certain type of citizen with particular standards of conduct. It speaks of a citizen having certain kinds of virtues – citizens who are publicly spirited, who can discuss, cooperate and compromise with each other and above all can trust one another and undertake public responsibilities when called upon. In this way of understanding citizenship, the good citizen acknowledges obligations towards other people who are not known to them.

The State therefore is not neutral for it extends itself into more far-reaching areas of morals and social meaning. Secular self-understandings cannot pretend to be neutral: that they are somehow above the substantive battle about how a citizen should live their lives. Rather than act as a neutral arbiter, it can be argued, that the liberal secular State has some of its own particular understandings of how people should live and what is in the interests of the common good. As William Galston (2002, p. 17) says: 'The more demanding the conception of citizenship, the more intrusive the public policies needed to promote it. . . the more our conception of the good citizen requires the sacrifice of private attachments to the common good, the more vigorously the state must act (as Sparta did) to weaken those attachments in favour of devotion to the public sphere'. We live in an age in which the meaning and scope of citizenship is ever widening. As a result, the State moves from the regulation of public life (paying taxes, regulating voting, obeying the law, etc.) to the regulation of private life (the way in which citizens interact with themselves, expressing views and associating with others of their own choice etc). The justification for this more expansive formative role for the State is to create a society which holds certain core values dear and to use the law to educate people to transform the culture of citizenship to make it more active, open, tolerant and inclusive. It leads to State policies of social engineering, attempting to encourage a public feeling of moral uplift, especially in relation to 'community cohesion'.

Such a formative role for the State moves beyond simple citizen participation and sees its purpose as forming the moral character of its citizens. If therefore behaving and acting like a citizen involves acquiring a range of dispositions and virtues, which help us to actively seek justice and promote human rights, then the more we ask of the citizen the more religion impacts on the exercise of their citizenship. Weithman (2002), drawing on empirical research, has shown how Christianity functions in politics and how Christians contribute to democracy by being good democratic citizens. Weithman argues that religion enriches political debate and aids political participation through developing political skills, especially among the poor and minorities. Christianity can certainly motivate people to get involved in their communities and many Christian values are, at the operational level, compatible with the secular values of the liberal State. It could even be said that in the very identity and virtues of the Christian there is a stress on citizen action. Christianity can and does provide the motivational force for much active citizenship in practice. However, should the State celebrate one set of values over another whilst assuming the rhetoric and symbols of the neutral public sphere? Citizenship education is not a wholly secular process for it must also address and understand the significance of religious beliefs for an individual citizen's participation in society. As Brian Gates (2006, p. 589) says: '...citizenship depends upon beliefs and values, and these are both religious and moral. Therefore, citizenship education which pays scant attention to the process and content of both moral and religious believing is likely to stumble, for therein lie the springs of active participation'.

There is a dominant view that only a secular State, in which public decision-making processes are based exclusively on secular arguments, is compatible with the principles of a liberal European democracy. This is simply a form of secularism: an ideology which seeks to exclude the influence of religion. Christianity makes the distinction between political rule and social life, with the latter counterbalancing the former. Many States make no such distinction. Habermas (2006, p. 17) has commented that, 'As long as secular citizens are convinced that religious traditions and religious communities are to a certain extent archaic relics of pre-modern societies that continue to exist in the present. . . religion no longer has any intrinsic justification to exist . . . In the secularist reading, we can envisage that, in the long run, religious views will inevitably melt under the sun of scientific criticism and that religious communities will not be able to withstand the pressures of some unstoppable cultural and social modernization'. Habermas believes that those who adopt such a view of religion cannot take religion seriously in the public realm and are guilty of adopting a 'narrow secularist consciousness'. Habermas recognises that the restrictions that Rawls (1997) and Audi (2005) would place on the role of religion in public discourse would not work in practice, because they place an intolerable psychological burden on religious citizens. The separation of the private sphere from the public sphere or the separation of knowing and doing is not tenable. Habermas (1984 & 1987) suggests that secular minded citizens should adopt a more self-critical attitude towards the limits of secular rationality and be more open to the power of religious reasons. However, it is unlikely that secular rationalists will abandon the belief that secular 'reason' should take precedence over other means of acquiring understanding.

Conclusion

It has been the argument in this article that European concepts of citizenship in their origin are intimately bound up with distinctively theological concepts. Thus, the contention that the principles which underpin our notion of citizenship are based upon wholly neutral and 'rational' grounds is an illusion. From the beginning of the Church's history in Europe its mission has included a 'political dimension', but one understood through the eyes of theology. From Constantine and on through the Middle Ages, Christendom (Europe) had simultaneously an ecclesial and a political form since religion was interconnected with secular government in complex ways. Both aspects were continually woven into each other and tensions and struggles inevitably arose. However, these two aspects began to break down at the Reformation, as the temporal power of the Catholic Church began to be challenged by nation-States which demanded total loyalty from their citizens. The Church compromised to some extent, but refused to accommodate itself completely to the growing secular ideology of these new nation-States. Christianity not only survived, but learnt to accommodate itself to diverse socio-political arrangements through the Roman Empire, medieval feudalism, Italian City-States, absolute monarchies, nation-states, liberal democracies, and, at least at the level of basic survival, communist atheistic States. The reason for this long durability is that the Church is more interested in announcing the City of God, than providing a political code. The Church's theology never attempted to impose a particular political model on political associations nor, theoretically at least, is identified with any political community or bound to any political system. The Church considered humanity to be flawed and thus in need of governance, whilst the Enlightenment thinkers thought humanity to be good and therefore in need of liberation. It is therefore ironic that secular authorities continue to advance into every aspect of people's lives in modern States unbalancing the distinction between the political and social orders.

It is constitutionally recognised within most European States today that citizenship is not dependent on adherence to any religion and therefore that religion is not, it seems, a constitutive element of citizenship. The liberal democracy that underpins such States, John Gray argues, is itself a 'religious' faith and Gray (2007, p. 1) concludes that 'modern politics is a chapter in the history of religion'. Certainly, a kind of 'religious belief' in moral perfectibility and indefinite progress has replaced the Christian faith in the life of the world to come as the final goal of human effort. As Taylor (2007) notes, secularisation interpreted simply as the separation of religion and politics and the rise of scepticism miss the deeper and more enduring residues of religion. It is also the case that the uncritical acceptance of the division between religion and politics has led historians to underestimate the importance and extent of the impact of historical understanding upon the formation of citizens. Whilst the Christian Church today gives a certain endorsement to representative democracy John Rist (2008, p. 285) warns that it 'should not be divinized . . . it can easily reduce to a cocktail of egalitarianism, ignorance and hedonism: giving opportunity for unrestrained individualism and universal pleasure-seeking rather than a vision of happiness as active engagement and the pursuit of goodness'. In conclusion, Rowan

Williams (2005) has argued that Christian heritage teaches that political power is always provisional and impermanent. As he says: ‘Western modernity and liberalism are at risk when they refuse to recognize that they are the way they are because of the presence in their midst of that partner and critic which speaks of ‘alternative citizenship’ – the Christian community. . .the distinctively European style of political argument and debate is made possible by the Church’s persistent witness to the fact that states do not have ultimate religious claims on their citizens’. He warns that if States do not recognise this ‘dual citizenship’ they eventually stumble towards either state totalitarianism or religious theocracy. Citizenship in the new pluralist Europe does not necessitate abandoning religious reasons for acting as a citizen, nor does it mean that the modern citizen has to adopt a secular self-understanding and identity. Democracy depends on engaged citizens, including religious believers, who argue for their beliefs in the public square without apology. Engaged and effective citizenship does not depend on an exclusive secular mentality, but flows directly and indirectly from faith.

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