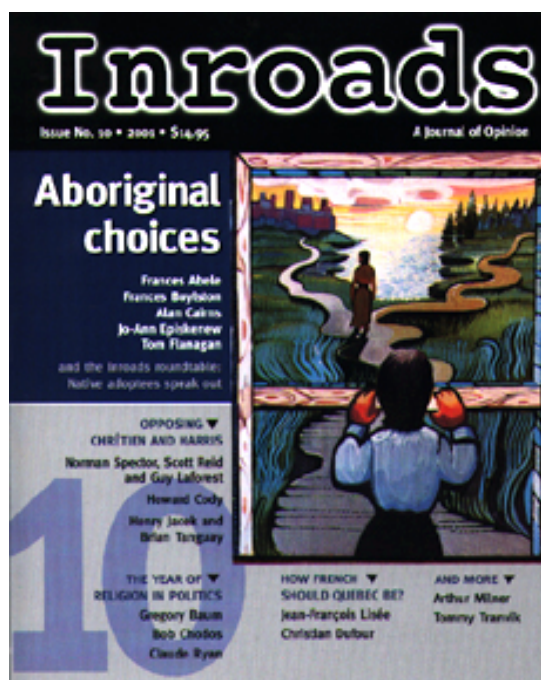


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POLITICS AND RELIGION

Claude Ryan

Claude Ryan has become a regular contributor to Inroads. In earlier issues he has described himself as “an independent observer free from the responsibilities and constraints of office.”

JOURNAL Inroads 10

## Building the “Temporal City”

**C**LAUDE RYAN GRAPPLES WITH THE joint demands of faith and politics, as perceived by theologians ranging from St. Augustine to Cardinal Newman and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He concludes that Christians must live their faith in the temporal world, a world for which the humane conduct of politics is crucial. Emphatically he rejects the relegation of religion to a private sphere: “Freedom of religion becomes in this reductionist perspective freedom *from* religion instead of freedom *for* religion.”

A WORD ABOUT PRINTING THIS ARTICLE: These pages are intended to print on legal (8.5 x 14 inch) paper, two pages per sheet, in a horizontal landscape. Pages can also be printed onto letter sized paper at a reduced size.

I PROPOSE IN THIS ESSAY TO EXAMINE TWO QUESTIONS WHICH COME TO MIND when the subject of religion and politics is raised. First, why should Christians, whose main interest supposedly lies in another world, concern themselves with the troubled affairs of the political world? Second, what specific contribution can Christians make to public life in our time?<sup>1</sup>

In his great work, *The City of God*, Saint Augustine referred fifteen centuries ago to the existence of two cities vying with each other. “Two loves,” he

wrote, “have given origin to these two cities, self-love in contempt of God unto the earthly city, love of God in contempt of one’s self to the heavenly city. The first city seeks the glory of man, and the latter desires God only in the testimony of the conscience, the greatest glory.”<sup>2</sup>

That famous passage of *The City of God* has often been interpreted as referring on the one hand to the communion of saints, whose abode is in heaven but of which the Church is the visible manifestation on earth; on the other hand to the temporal city, of which political society is the most accomplished form. While he was mindful that human societies are infected with sin and thus tend to behave historically as if they were ruled by the spirit of evil, Augustine refrained from identifying the earthly city with the temporal city as if they were two faces of the same reality.

In another passage, Augustine introduced a significant distinction between the earthly city and the temporal city. The latter provides a space where members of both the heavenly and the earthly cities must by

necessity commingle: “The necessities of this life are common, both to the faithful and the infidels, and to both their families.”<sup>3</sup> All human beings must coexist and strive together in matters pertaining to their mortal condition. Members of the Church, Augustine observed,

*willingly obey such laws of the temporal city as order the things pertaining to the sustenance of this mortal life, to the end that both the cities might observe a peace in such things as are pertinent hereunto .... The celestial city, while it is on earth, increases itself out of all languages, being unconcerned by the different temporal laws that are made, yet not breaking but observing their diversity in diverse nations, so long as they tend unto the preservation of earthly peace and do not oppose the adoration of one God alone. And so you see, the heavenly city observes and respects this temporal peace here on earth, and the coherence of men’s will in honest morality, as far as it may with a safe conscience.*<sup>4</sup>

From those observations of Saint Augustine, let us derive a few conclusions which have a direct bearing upon our first question.

1. The true vocation of the Christian is eternal life in the City of God but this vocation has its beginning in the here and now of his mortal condition on earth.

2. In matters pertaining to their mortal condition, all human beings, believers as well as nonbelievers, are jointly responsible for ensuring within the framework of the temporal city that everyone shall have access to a just share of goods and services, that laws enacted in the name of all shall be obeyed by all, and that concord and peace shall reign among them.

3. Because they partake in the mortal condition of their fellow human beings, Christians must shoulder their just share of responsibility in the temporal city. They are also entitled to their just share of the rights and benefits which derive from life in society. Like other citizens, they must obey laws, subject however to three limitations, namely that such laws tend to the preservation of peace, that they not oppose the adoration of one God alone, and that they not offend honest morality. In practical decisions of this nature, they must be guided in the last analysis by their conscience.

4. The heavenly city and the earthly city are in constant opposition. The struggle between the two conflicting loves which animate them is at the heart of human experience. It is so deeply embedded in our nature as a consequence of original sin that it will last until the end of time. Notwithstanding this profound opposition, the two cities must observe a peace in matters relating to the sustenance of mortal life.

It is a mark of Augustine’s genius that the vision he proposed fifteen centuries ago

remains a leading source of reference for those who want to understand the role of Christianity in human affairs in our time. That vision, however, needs to be adapted by each generation of Christians in order to take into account new situations and new insights, obtained through the exercise of reason, the progress of the sciences and the evolution of spirituality.

In the early Christian centuries, for example, belief in an early return of Christ was widespread among Christians. Temporal tasks were considered in consequence as instrumental and transitory in the economy of salvation. Many Christians were inclined to limit their participation in temporal affairs to a minimum. For many centuries, withdrawal from the tasks of this world was portrayed in Catholic education as the ideal form of Christianity. A Christian whose calling was to serve his sovereign or make a career in the military or in business was considered to have chosen a less perfect way of life. The greatness of the principles enunciated in *The City of God* lies in the fact that they transcend time and place.

John Henry Newman, for instance, was deeply influenced by Augustine’s writings. In no way was he an unconditional idolizer of worldly pursuits. He nonetheless insisted that the Christian is to bear witness to his faith not by seeking refuge in the tranquility of the sanctuary, but through active accomplishment of his duties in the world. Some Christians, he wrote, “come to fancy that to lose taste and patience for the businesses of this life is renouncing the world and becoming spiritually minded.” But in the absence of a clear call from God, Christians should, Newman continues, stay where they are and remember “that Jesus Christ our Saviour is best served, and with

the most fervent spirit, when men are not slothful in business but do their duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them.”<sup>5</sup> Newman was a forerunner of new theological orientations and new forms of spirituality emphasizing the positive significance of engagement in the affairs of this world.

The great tragedies which marked the 20th century remind us that few developments in the economic and political life of societies are neutral, in a sense that Christians might abstain or remain indifferent. Let me cite two familiar examples to illustrate this. In the judgment of many historians, the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe in the second quarter of the previous century might more effectively have been countered had Christians in the affected countries been more concerned at the outset in defending the rights of man and less concerned in protecting narrow confessional interests. A similar observation can be made concerning the impact of economic

**While economic freedom is a necessary dimension of liberty, unbridled liberalism is not conducive to a rational and orderly use of the limited resources of our planet.**

neo-liberalism in our time. While economic freedom is a necessary dimension of liberty, unbridled liberalism is not conducive to a rational and orderly use of the limited resources of our planet. In the absence of adequate public controls, it tends to favour the rich to the detriment of the poor.

Of all the causes of seditions, Aristotle once wrote, the first in order of importance is the unjust distribution of wealth. This

wise observation should help us realize that aggravated inequality among classes of citizens or among nations is not conducive to peace and concord. The general orientation underlying government decisions must be subject to moral scrutiny. Many such decisions are in themselves morally neutral. But the orientation from which they proceed is not neutral. Too often, decisions are more favourable to those who are equipped to make their voices heard than to those who have no voice in society. This creates an inescapable challenge for the Christian conscience. The enlarged role which governments now play in areas directly affecting human dignity is an additional reason that the orientation of politicians be subject to critical examination.

**CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE** field of theology and religious sciences have given a more dynamic perspective to the temporal order in the Christian economy of salvation. An excellent illustration of this is in the teachings of the second Vatican Council and among modern theologians. In the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, it is clearly affirmed that “Christ’s redemptive work, while of itself directed toward the salvation of men, involves the renewal of the temporal order. Hence the mission of the Church is not only to bring to men the message and grace of Christ, but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the spirit of the Gospel.” The decree also stated in clear terms “that the laity must take on the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation.”

Why this strong emphasis upon the laity’s special responsibility? “The apostolate of the social milieu,” says the conciliar decree, “the effort to infuse a Christian spirit

into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which a person lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be properly performed by others.”<sup>6</sup> The teachings of Vatican II owed much to the writings of theologians like Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, John Courtney Murray and others, who, after having long been suspect in the eyes of the Roman Curia, had been invited to participate as experts in the work of the Council. They also owed a great deal to the practical experiences of Christians involved in various forms of the lay apostolate and more generally in temporal pursuits.

To put this in still more concrete terms, let me invoke the testimony of the German Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose fidelity to his faith cost him his life in the last days of Hitler’s dictatorship. In a letter to a friend a few months before his execution in 1945, Bonhoeffer noted the gradual displacement of God from the public sphere, a result of the increased faith of men in their own ability to resolve their problems.

“Faith,” he wrote, “has been relegated to the sphere of the ‘personal,’ the ‘private,’ the ‘inner.’” Bonhoeffer refused to accept this separation of faith from real life. He maintained that such a distinction between the “outward” and the “inward” is not contained in the Bible. “The heart in the biblical sense,” he explained, “is not the inner life, but the whole man in relation to God.” But while many saw in the displacement of God from modern culture a tragedy to be repaired by a restoration of institutionalized religion, Bonhoeffer perceived the advent of “the world’s new autonomy” as an irreversible development calling for a radical renewal not so much of formal religion as of Christian faith:

*The world which has come of age is more godless, and perhaps for that very reason nearer to God, than the world before this coming of age. I discovered later, and am still discovering to this moment, that it is only by living completely in this world that we will learn to have faith. One must completely abandon any attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be a saint, or a converted sinner, or a Churchman, a righteous man or an unrighteous one, a sick man or a healthy one. By this-worldliness, I mean living unreservedly in life’s duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously not our own sufferings but those of God in the world, watching with Christ in Gethsemane.*<sup>7</sup>

If Christians must learn to live their faith in the midst of the world, then, of all forms of engagement in the temporal order, politics is perhaps the most important. As Pope Pius XI once said, “politics has to do with the interests of the whole society; from this angle, it is the domain of charity in its largest sense, of political charity, of the charity of the City.”<sup>8</sup>

To interest Christians in politics, we must first rehabilitate that form of engagement. It has become commonplace to speak of politics with cynicism or indifference, to impute the darkest motives to politicians and to insinuate that they are all corrupt. Having spent 16 years in active politics, I can testify that elected officials are neither more nor less virtuous than those who elect them. I am also of the view that federal, provincial and municipal civil servants in this country are generally competent and honest. Much of what we hear about the

allegedly corrupt political class and bloated bureaucracies is dangerously exaggerated. I firmly believe in the freedom of the press and have always opposed burdening it with legal restrictions. But a systematically negative press can cause irreparable harm. By systematically pouring scorn on the holders of office, it may well discredit not only politicians but also democracy. The best safeguard against this danger lies in a well informed and vigilant public opinion. The churches can make a great contribution in this respect. In 1998, in the midst of acute public morosity in Italy caused by a wave of public scandals, John Paul II made a strong intervention, imbued with Christian realism, denouncing demagogical attacks upon political leaders and institutions:

*Members of governments, parliaments, the ruling class, and political parties are often accused of being overly ambitious, obsessed with power, selfish, and corrupt. However, neither those accusations nor the rather widespread opinion according to which politics is an occupation fraught with moral danger, in the least justifies the abstention of Christians from public life.<sup>9</sup>*

Historical conditions may require Christians to unite in order to prevent a grave and imminent danger. A relevant example is the experience of Christian Democratic parties in France, Italy, and West Germany, in the aftermath of World War II. Many Christian leaders urged concerted political action to prevent communist parties from grasping power, to facilitate an orderly return to democracy and avoid narrow nationalist views. With the undisguised support of the Church, the experience was positive on three counts: the return to orderly democracy, economic recovery, and political stability were all achieved.

However, prolonged stays in power had a corrosive effect upon Christian Democratic parties. Some, like the Mouvement républicain populaire in France, were realistic enough to join with other parties before being irreparably rebuked by the population. Others, in particular the Christian Democrats in Italy and Germany, were either destroyed or gravely discredited by their abuses while in power. While Christian Democracy played a key role in post-war Europe, this role is now finished. There is little talk of a return to explicitly Christian forms of political action. In Europe as elsewhere, Catholics fully accept that they live in societies whose public institutions will generally be secular. As the Commission on Social Affairs of the French Bishops' Assembly put it, "[Catholics] participate with others in the continuous edification of their city, their region, their nation, Europe, the community of nations, and the entire human family."<sup>10</sup>

In the absence of extraordinary circumstances, Christians who wish to serve in politics do so on their own responsibility. It is a highly demanding field. Politics, like any other field of endeavour, has its own intrinsic value and he who enters must be prepared to serve "without the slightest detriment to its own proper laws."<sup>11</sup> "By the very circumstance of their being created," said Vatican II, "all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws, and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual arts and sciences."<sup>12</sup>

One law of politics is that a person in whatever capacity be prepared to serve on a basis of equality, and in a spirit of mutual respect and collaboration with citizens holding views which may differ from his own on moral and religious matters. A Christian



Detail from a French illuminated manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, depicting Saint Augustine.

in politics should neither seek undue privileges nor passively suffer any discrimination, on account of his faith. A second law is that one must first be a good politician, i.e. be a politician who strives to be competent, close to the people, dedicated, productive, knowledgeable, honest, truthful, and electable. A person who wants to succeed in politics must first establish his or her presence at the level of the moral virtues. A third law is that, despite fiery talk, there is little room for absolutes in the making of political decisions. Politics is the art of the possible: so many interests and opinions must be taken into account before a decision is reached. The end result is most often a compromise which leaves even one's friends less than completely satisfied. Society needs, above all, politicians who are not dogmatists but who are professionally capable and morally strong. Were I to choose between a candidate who displays his religious faith in public but is insensitive to the needs of his constituents and hence is rather ineffectual and, on the other hand, a candidate who is not explicitly religious – while not being anti-religious – but who is competent and committed to the public interest, I would ordinarily give my vote to the latter.

A corollary is that the Christian in politics is the ultimate judge of his decisions as long as he enjoys the trust of his fellow citizens. He must be prepared at all times to oppose a law which is not in his judgment conducive to peace, which forbids or unduly restricts the adoration of God, which is objectionable from the standpoint of honest morality. In order to arrive at just decisions, he must have solid notions about what laws can achieve. He must understand why the best is often the enemy of the good. The object of laws, according to Thomas

Aquinas, is neither to make citizens instantly virtuous nor to eradicate all forms of evil from society. Laws must aim to facilitate the practice of virtue. But they must do so gradually and by taking into account established customs and habits. They must be tolerant of certain imperfections and not impose unattainable norms of conduct upon the population. In our time, lawmakers must also take into account the basic rights and freedoms whose enjoyment is constitutionally or legally guaranteed. Severe laws risk not being obeyed, and laws which are disobeyed breed contempt, warns Saint Thomas with his usual wisdom: “That is why man-made laws cannot prohibit all that is prohibited by the natural law which is of God.” That is also why, as opposed to the natural law which is immutable, human laws remain subject to change.

Let me illustrate with the question of abortion. In conformity with his Church's teachings on the inviolable sacredness of life, a Christian politician will normally be opposed to abortion – not merely in private but also in public. But, confronted with a piece of legislation dealing with abortion, he will have to study it in collaboration with colleagues holding divergent views. From conversations among parliamentarians, compromise solutions – which nobody had originally imagined – may emerge that will tend to reduce the incidence of abortion while not totally banning it. Hence the dilemma which the Christian politician must resolve. Should he oppose any policy short of a total ban? Or should he support a solution which, while not ideal, may appear to a sincere lawmaker as the best possible? I am not advocating any particular course of action. I only wish to stress that, in such a situation, a politician should ultimately be guided by his conscience, not by outside

pressures. I also think that the Christian politician who sincerely follows his conscience serves more effectively the principles which he has at heart than the one who makes his decisions on the basis of opinion polls or the number of petitions to reach his desk. It also seems to me that Christian voters, when invited to choose their representatives, should in all fairness judge the merits of the candidates on the basis of their ability to serve the long term interests of society as a whole, as Edmund Burke put it, not the particular interests of a given constituency.

It is to be hoped that our politicians become more transparent in stating their religious opinions. The last presidential campaign in the United States provided an illustration of what I would like to see. Joe Lieberman has long been known for his faithful adherence to the precepts of the Jewish Orthodox faith. On the occasion of his selection by Al Gore as Democratic candidate for Vice-President, Lieberman, rather than looking embarrassed by his faith, reaffirmed his conviction that religion makes an important contribution to political society. Endless debates followed and will continue to arise as to the practical implications of Lieberman's utterances. But the senator rendered a service in claiming a more generous place for religious and moral values in the public discourse.

So too did Canadian politicians like J.S. Woodsworth and Tommy Douglas, who saw a direct link between the teachings of the Gospel and the fight for social justice and who, while often unsuccessful at the polls, left an indelible mark on Canadian social policy. I do not question the sincerity of a politician who keeps his religious opinions to himself. But faith need not remain exclusively private. I believe, as Newman did,

that I owe it to my friends to let them know exactly who I am and what I think. This having been stated clearly, I am also of the view that God's name should not be invoked in vain or for political motives either in private or in public. To witness to one's faith is a duty, but that duty must be accomplished with competence, tact, discernment, good judgment, and good manners. What matters most is not the number of times a politician invokes the name of God in public,

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but the way in which he accounts for his faith and, still more important, the care he takes to try and do God's will in his work.

Human rights is a second area in which Christians can intervene in public debates. Christians should be strong supporters of human rights. In general, such rights have their historical origin in the fundamental dignity and equality of all human beings before God, as proclaimed in the Gospel. Particularly important among human rights are those which relate to the dignity of the individual and the pursuit of social justice. Christian politicians must interest themselves in the integrity of public institutions, starting with political parties, the sacred character of human life, the fundamental rights of citizens, the just balancing of opportunities and responsibilities in fiscal matters, the quality of public services (in areas like health, social services and education), the defence and promotion of the

family, the achievement of a sound measure of solidarity among the members of society, the rights of minorities in a pluralistic society, the cohesiveness and unity of the body politic and, on a larger scale, the pursuit of justice and peace in the world.

The freedoms of religion and of conscience are among the most important human rights from a Christian point of view.<sup>13</sup> According to modern secular thinking, freedom of religion should be confined as much as possible to the private sphere. Such thinking tends to eliminate religion from any visible presence in the public sphere. Freedom of religion becomes, in this reductionist perspective, freedom *from* religion instead of freedom *for* religion. In a speech addressed to the President of the Italian Republic a year ago, John Paul II stated firmly that the Church accepts the pluralist state to the extent that it takes a positive, not an agnostic, view of the values which religion represents in the life of political society: “A pluralist state must not mean an agnostic state.”<sup>14</sup> According to a more inclusive view of pluralism, organized religion must be allowed a place in public life, on account of its unique contribution to the formation in man of dispositions, virtues which are important for the vitality of society. Organized religion may legitimately benefit from recognition in political society to the extent that no undue advantages are extended to the members of one religious faith to the exclusion of others. For example, religious organizations are generally exempt from certain forms of taxation. There can also be a place for the teaching of religion in public schools and for the provision of religious services in the armed forces, hospitals, and detention centres.

There is room here for constructive debate, even for honest differences. But a

genuine debate can only take place if religious voices are heard. In this country in particular, Catholic lay people have traditionally been reluctant to discuss matters relating to religion in the public place. They have abandoned this role to religious leaders. But the latter have less clout nowadays. When they publicly address the religious or moral aspects of social or political issues, they can no longer be assured of the cohesive support of their often dispersed and distracted flock. Hence, lay people should take a more active role in debating the public place for organized religion and, in general, in debating moral and spiritual values.

Thomas Aquinas used to say that the solution to a problem lies to a great extent in the way in which it is defined. The elements of a fair solution are usually contained, in germ, in a good *status quaestionis*. Since modern administrators increasingly resort to quantitative methods in their approach to social problems and are generally inclined to overlook the non-measurable aspects of reality, other ways must be found to introduce into public policy the spiritual and moral dimension.

Economist Amartya Sen provides an excellent example of this.<sup>15</sup> He convincingly demonstrates the need to enlarge the criteria used to guide governments and international development agencies in their decisions. Policies based exclusively on national income accounting overlook the key role of “capacity deprivation” in areas like health and education. Poor health and education services – and an unequal distribution of them among the population – are themselves indicators of retarded development. He also observes that, in India, programs promoting literacy have been more effective in lowering the birth rate than artificial birth control programs imported from the

United States. Sen describes himself as an agnostic in religious matters. But his writings may be more conducive to better development policies than simple condemnations by Christians of morally objectionable programs.

The French periodical *La documentation catholique* has been for nearly a century an incomparable source of information on Catholic teachings. It recently published two remarkable papers which directly relate to our topic. In the first, a speech by Jacques Delors, the former president of the Executive Commission of the European Union described how significantly the construction of Europe was influenced by leaders for whom Christian values were important.<sup>16</sup> Recalling the first meeting, which took place at The Hague shortly after the end of World War II, Delors stressed that Christians – Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans – formed a majority among those pioneers. They were united by their common commitment to the values of liberty, responsibility, and solidarity which are largely grounded in the Christian view of man.

In the second, a speech by Michel Camdessus, the former Director General of the International Monetary Fund listed a series of major problems having grave moral implications and requiring the attention of developed nations. Among them are the existence of off-shore fiscal havens allowing the rich to evade payment of taxes in their country of origin, the reduction in the volume of international aid, the emergence of renewed isolationism in some countries, the unbridled mobility and increased power of capital, the proliferation of corruption in international financial transactions, the increased gap between rich and poor countries. He vigorously deplored the absence of the poor nations in the centres of deci-

sion of the world, and called for a more humane globalization. Finally, he called for a renewed sense of responsibility at all levels of society, for increased solidarity between the nations of the world the better to fight poverty, and for the development of a new sense of world citizenship. He concluded with these words:

*Let me add just a word to say that all through those years of service with the International Monetary Fund, the words of the Church were a source of enlightenment for me. The*

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*Church has a strong and coherent message to help mankind overcome its fears in order to build a unified world on a basis of solidarity. It has no blueprint to offer for the organization of a unified world based on solidarity but many leaders involved in the search for a more humane world have found guidance in its social teachings. More than ever it has a role to play in the search for a more humane globalization.*<sup>17</sup>

Those were two truly Christian messages on the part of men well known across the world for their competence and integrity. Helping enlarge the way in which social, economic and political problems are perceived by governments and the people who elect them, so that their moral and spiritual dimensions may be taken into account in the search for solutions, this may be the most important contribution which Chris-

tians can make to the development of public policy.

Finally, I turn to the properly evangelical dimension of the contribution Christians can make towards the development of a more just and humane society. “To be a Christian,” Bonhoeffer writes from prison, “does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to make something of oneself (a sinner, a penitent, or a saint) on the model of some method or other, but to be a man, not a type of man, but the man that Christ creates in us.... It is not the religious act that

**According to modern secular thinking, freedom of religion should be confined as much as possible to the private sphere. It becomes, in this reductionist perspective, freedom *from* religion instead of freedom *for* religion.**

makes the Christian,” he continues, “but participation in the sufferings of Christ.”<sup>18</sup> A sound way to participate in the sufferings of Jesus, according to Bonhoeffer, is to draw inspiration from His actions among the people of His time. As examples of the way Jesus acted in this world, Bonhoeffer mentions the shepherds who followed the star, the call to discipleship, the table-fellowship with sinners, the act of the woman who was a sinner but who nonetheless offered water to Jesus, the acceptance of children, the centurion as a model of faith, the love of Jesus for the rich young man, Nathaniel, in whom there was no guile, and finally Joseph of Arimathea and the women at the tomb. He could well have added Jesus’s answer to his disciples who had been arguing which of them was the greatest: “If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all

and servant of all.” (Mark 9,36)

“The only thing that is common to all these persons,” Bonhoeffer observes, “is their sharing in the suffering of God in Christ. That is their faith. There is nothing of religious method here. The religious act is always something partial: faith is something whole, involving the whole of one’s life. Jesus calls men not to a new religion, but to life.” Political life provides numerous opportunities for behaviour proceeding from the spirit of the Gospel. With a colleague, a rival for power, an ordinary citizen in need of assistance, a delegation of citizens, a superior, a staff member, a volunteer worker, a political organizer, a contributor to my fundraising campaigns, a journalist who justly or unjustly criticized me, a person seeking a favour, I will ordinarily be inclined to react in a functional, administrative, or partisan way. But if I appreciate that behind each of these people is the invisible presence of Jesus, I will be more respectful, more attentive, more understanding, more disposed to help, more forgiving, more humble, less impatient, less inclined to draw attention to my person, more desirous of serving than of being served, more tolerant of differences. I will in a word act differently and that may ultimately be what it means to be a Christian in public life. ■

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## Notes

1. This is a revised version of an address given at Waterloo, Ontario, the 27th October 2000, under the auspices of St. Jerome’s Centre for Christian Experience and the joint sponsorship of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board and St. Jerome’s University, to mark the inauguration of the John Wintermeyer Lecture.
2. Saint Augustine. Vol. 2, p. 58.
3. Saint Augustine. Vol. 2, p. 254.
4. Saint Augustine. Vol. 2, pp. 254-55.
5. Newman. pp. 1657-58.
6. Vatican IIa. pp. 495, 498, 504.
7. Bonhoeffer. pp. 319-25.
8. Chenu. p. 615.
9. John Paul II. 1998.
10. Commission sociale de l’Épiscopat de France.
11. Vatican IIa. p. 498.
12. Vatican IIb. p. 234.
13. The University of British Columbia Law Review recently devoted a special edition to the subject of religion and the law. The Review pointed out that the freedoms of religion and of conscience are interpreted more or less restrictively, according to personal philosophy.
14. John Paul II. 1999.
15. See Sen.
16. See Delors.
17. Camdessus.
18. Quotations here and in following paragraph from Bonhoeffer, pp. 322-23.