RELIGION AND THE OBLIGATIONS OF CITIZENSHIP

In *Religion and the Obligations of Citizenship* Paul J. Weithman asks whether citizens in a liberal democracy may base their votes and their public political arguments on their religious beliefs. Drawing on empirical studies of how religion actually functions in politics, he challenges the standard view that citizens who rely on religious reasons must be prepared to make good their arguments by appealing to reasons that are "accessible" to others. He contends that churches contribute to democracy by enriching political debate and by facilitating political participation, especially among the poor and minorities, and as a consequence, citizens acquire religiously based political views and diverse views of their own citizenship. He concludes that the philosophical view which most defensibly accommodates this diversity is one that allows ordinary citizens to draw on the views their churches have formed when they vote, and when offering public arguments for their political positions.

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For Maura, with love

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Preface and acknowledgments

Philosophical problems about the proper role of religion in democratic decision-making are problems I have been thinking about for a long time. I wrote this book because I became interested in rethinking them by asking questions which I believed philosophers had not investigated sufficiently: questions about the role churches actually play in preparing people for citizenship and in furnishing them with religiously based political arguments and religious reasons for political action. It is surprising that philosophers have not attended more closely to these questions. Recent years have seen a resurgence of scholarly interest in civil society across the disciplines. They have also seen a great deal of interesting philosophical work on the formation of citizens by other institutions, most notably public schools and, thanks to feminist critics of liberalism, the family. Contemporary political philosophy is deeply indebted to those who have produced this work. They have reminded us that citizens are made not born and that how they are made is of great philosophical interest. This book would not have been possible without those compelling reminders.

I began this book hoping to make room in the theory of liberal democratic citizenship for saints and heroes of the religious left, such as Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King. I was troubled by theories which seemed to imply that such people violate their civic duties by engaging in religiously motivated activism or by putting forward exclusively religious arguments. I was also troubled by the thought that theories which do seem to accommodate them do not do so in the right way. Much to my surprise, I felt driven to different answers about religion's role in democratic politics than those I had previously accepted and to a much less moralized view of citizens' proper relations to one another. I put my conclusions forward with some trepidation, mindful that the answers I am rejecting are powerfully defended in the contemporary literature. I also recognize the preliminary character of the book. Much empirical

work still needs to be done on the political role of churches and other secondary associations, both in the United States and in other liberal democracies, before an argument of the sort I have made here can be regarded as complete. Finally, I recognize that there is also an increasingly large and interesting body of literature on the artifactual character of secondary associations, and on the extent to which it is legitimate to shape them for democratic purposes. Regrettably I have been unable to take full account of that literature here.

In writing this book, I have incurred a number of debts which it is a great pleasure to acknowledge. Early work on the book was supported by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. Much of the final draft was written at the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. There I held the Walter Hines Page Fellowship, endowed by the Research Triangle Foundation of North Carolina. The entire staff of the center deserve my thanks for their provision of warm hospitality and ideal working conditions. I have benefitted from invitations to a number of conferences, at which I was able to work out some of the ideas for the book. I am grateful to Robert Audi for an invitation to speak on religion and politics at a conference at the University of Nebraska, to Christopher Wolfe for an invitation to participate in a session on public reason at the American Political Science Association, and to the Philosophy Department at St. Louis University for inviting me to a Henle Conference on religion and democracy. I am grateful as well to Michael Perry for his invitation to speak at a conference at the Wake Forest University Law School, to Thomas Schmidt for his invitation to speak at a conference at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt-on-Main, and to Brad Lewis and William Wagner for their invitation to speak at a conference that was jointly sponsored by the Department of Philosophy and the Columbus School of Law at the Catholic University of America. Parts of the book appeared in the published proceedings of the conferences at Wake Forest and St. Louis University: some of chapter 1 appeared in my "Religious Reasons and the Duties of Membership," *Wake Forest Law Review* 36 (2001): 511–34 and some of chapter 7 appeared in my "Citizenship, Reflective Endorsement and Political Autonomy," *Modern Schoolman* 78 (2001): 135–50. I am grateful to the editors of both journals for permission to reprint small portions of these articles. The Chicago Law and Philosophy Group has been a source of philosophical stimulation for some years. I am grateful to the members of the group, and especially to the convenors Martha Nussbaum and

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Finally I would like to thank Maura Ryan, my wife and constant companion, whose keen mind and discerning heart summon me to higher things and whose presence in my life makes all good things possible.