WHICH GOOD? WHOSE GOD? BARACK OBAMA'S POLICY ON POLITICS AND FAITH

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Barack Obama's election in 2008 represented a drumbeat of change on many fronts. One of those changes for the Democratic Party was a more positive attitude toward religion and politics, some might say bluntly, a positive attitude at all. E. J. Dionne, op-ed writer for the *Washington Post* said of Obama's speech on religion and politics in 2006, "[It] may be the most important pronouncement by a Democrat on faith and politics since John F. Kennedy's Houston speech in 1960 declaring his independence from the Vatican."[1] Only time will tell, although with Obama's improbable run to the presidency, time has made Dionne's 2006 statement more telling in the interval.

Nevertheless, not all are pleased, on the right or the left. Dionne himself especially emphasized, "Obama offers the first faith testimony I have heard from any politician that speaks honestly about the uncertainties of belief." This observation unfortunately offers as much criticism of the understanding of faith on the part of faith communities as it offers praise of Obama. In terms of politics, however, some on the left were unhappy that he wanted to bring religion into the public arena at all. On the far right, Christians flinched when he reminded them of the importance of separation of church and state and that "democracy demands that the religiously motivated translate their concerns into universal, rather than religion-specific, values."[2] Even so, theologians who are not at all fundamentalist also thought that the latter stance gives too much away to the public square, leading to a translated but thin and eviscerated faith.

Perhaps it is a sign that Obama is on the right track that he offended both wings; still, he is trying to keep his balance on a ship that is always sailing in troubled waters. For a politician, it is a substantial speech. For philosophers, it raises as many questions as it answers. What I propose in this paper is first to indicate that his basic view can be fleshed out with the aid of other thinkers, philosophers, and theologians, beginning with the more fully developed and tested position of the philosophical theologian Hans Küng on religion and politics. Then I will polish the edges by interweaving this position with alternatives such as the negative position on the left, such as by Sam Harris who denies any place for religion in the public sphere, with the confessional if not sectarian position of the eminent Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas, and also in dialogue with philosophers on this issue such as John Rawls and Jeffrey Stout. Finally, I will bring out some tensions that remain.

Obama's Speech

Journalist Amy Sullivan noted another striking aspect of Obama's speech, "I don't know about you, but I'm not accustomed to hearing politicians admit to making mistakes."[3] She pointed out that he began and ended with an admission of error. The first admission concerned the way he responded to his opponent in the 2004 senatorial race, Alan Keyes,

who said, "Jesus Christ would not vote for Barack Obama." Obama said, "I answered with what has come to be the typically liberal response in such debates—namely, I said that we live in a pluralistic society, that I can't impose my own religious views on another, that I was running to be the U.S. Senator of Illinois and not the Minister of Illinois."[4] Obama went on to say that he felt that he did not respond properly, noting that the largest gap between white Republicans and Democrats had to do with whether they attended church regularly or not. The gap was lessened by 2008, but it is still one of the largest in favor of Republicans.[5] Obama then talked about the way faith motivates many people, including him, to be involved in politics. It is a reality that, he thought, should not be ignored by more liberal Democrats. He called therefore for recognition, allowance, and appreciation for such motivation, pointing to notable figures such as Frederick Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dorothy Day. He even referred to evangelicals, such as Rick Warren, Jim Wallis, and Tony Campolo who appeal to religious faith to motivate fellow believers to be concerned about social issues such as poverty and unjust wars. He cautioned that he did not require everyone to use religious language; it should only be used if sincere. And the point is that, as he says, "if we progressives shed some of these biases, we might recognize some overlapping values that both religious and secular people share when it comes to the moral and material direction of our country."[6]

With this in mind, he then put the requirement that in the public sphere, notwithstanding the religious motivation, positions must be expressed in public, universal terms. He added more fully, as one who taught constitutional law for several years at the University of Chicago Law School, "It requires that their proposals be subject to argument, and amenable to reason. I may be opposed to abortion for religious reasons, but if I seek to pass a law banning the practice, I cannot simply point to the teachings of my church or evoke God's will. I have to explain why abortion violates some principle that is accessible to people of all faiths, including those with no faith at all."

Küng's Model

The question is: What does this mean? How can one bring one's faith to the table but require it to be translated into universal, public values? He affirms using religious language but then seems to rule it out. Does the requirement to express arguments in universal terms not preclude religious language, or at least, for good or ill, deform the faith, transform it into something else, and perhaps evacuate it of its own transformative potential? Is he simply expressing a Rawlsian viewpoint, which likely lurks in the background with his language of overlapping values and public reason? If so, can he respond to the sharp criticism of such a viewpoint by many theologians? At this point, Küng's position may be illuminating. After his involvement as perhaps the most influential progressive theologian of Vatican II and the subsequent removal of his teaching office by Pope John Paul II in 1981,[7] Küng turned his attention to the issue of global peace. In a programmatic work entitled in German, *Projekt Weltethos* (published in English as *Global Responsibility*), first published in 1990, he laid out three rubrics:

- One, no survival without a world ethic.
- Two, no world peace without religious peace.

• Three, no religious peace without religious dialogue.[8]

He then had a lengthy account of how dialogue among the religions could proceed. Since that time, his concern certainly has been underscored. In a way that he could hardly have imagined in 1990, the end of the Cold War has brought new problems, especially centered around religious strife.

Based largely on his approach, the Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions affirmed in their first meeting in Chicago in 1993 a global ethic, which was also affirmed in 1996 by a report of the InterAction Council of former Presidents of State and Prime Ministers.[9] UN sponsored reports have also ratified the need of a global ethic in 1995 with support from prominent representatives such as Elie Wiesel, Ilya Prigogine, and Claude Lévi-Strauss.[10]

The key to Küng's proposal then is a distinction between what one might call, in Michael Walzer's terms, a distinction between "thick" and "thin" approaches to ethics.[11] It is likely impossible ever to develop agreement on a thick approach to ethics in our world. Walzer, whose views on this point are similar to Küng's, in fact concludes, "What this also means is that our common humanity will never make us members of a single universal tribe. The crucial commonality of the human race is particularism: we participate, all of us, in thick cultures that are our own."[12] The language is also reminiscent of Rawls' distinction between "comprehensive doctrines" and "political doctrines." This distinction does not mean, however, that agreement cannot be reached in areas that would be exceedingly significant. Küng actually prefers different language than thin and thick morality. He uses the language of "elementary" morality and (culturally) "differentiated" morality. This comes from a later book that he wrote along this line, entitled *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (1997).[13] Whatever the terminology, the important thing is to understand these distinctions and to see their appropriate place without opting absolutely for one or the other. Walzer again: "There are the makings of a thin and universalist morality inside every thick and particularist morality—but the story of these two is not at all like the statue and the stone. They are differently formed and differently related."[14]

Of course, the goal of probably every religion and every philosophy is to reach agreement at the thick level. The problem is, if we have to wait for such agreement, even agreement on a very abstract and theoretical grounding for morality, we will likely have to wait longer than we can survive. What Küng urges is that there is a great deal of consensus already on significant things that are justified, in a broad sense, in many different ways. For example, one might be able to find agreement among a variety of religious groups and political groups in denouncing terrorism, even though it might be justified in a variety of different ways from the Koran, the Hebrew Bible, or Hindu sacred writings. Another example is that significant agreement has been reached about not targeting civilians in warfare, a remarkable change since World War II!

What Küng's (and Walzer's) view clarifies for Obama is the difference between the foundational religious level and the consensual moral level. Earlier approaches often predicated agreement at the moral level on agreement on theoretical underpinnings, whether religious or even philosophical. What Küng suggests is that this is an improbable

task; the best that we likely can hope for is broad, "thin" agreement at the moral level. This thin agreement does not mean that it takes the place of the "thick" elaboration of morality, not to mention the grounding of such ethics in a thick religious perspective—or, as Rawls' points out, in thick philosophical perspectives such as Kantian or Aristotelian. What Obama's call for translation into universal terms could mean then is to find common ground at the ethical level, as thin as it may be, without the necessity of finding agreement on foundations, which are often religious in nature. An example on one side would be King's call for racial equality. He certainly spoke from his religious heart, but he could also appeal to values of the U.S. political tradition and to values shared by the non-religious. On the other side, the rejection of the requirement of teaching Intelligent Design in the Dover public schools was struck down as unconstitutional because its motivation was deemed to be religious without any capacity to be translated into the secular sphere. Federal Judge John Jones III, a Republican appointed by President Bush, concluded with brutal words after weeks of testimony that there was no support in peer-reviewed journals and, in fact, no reputable research at all in backing up ID.[15] Although ID proponents claimed that ID was science and desired to be judged solely on scientific grounds, it failed to find connection with Obama's "universal" reasons.

Küng's approach thus allows for people to have religious motivation and to use religious language without watering it down, so to speak, even in the public sphere. At the same time, when it comes to law, the crucial thing is not the religious foundation but the moral consensus and public arguments that can be found. These agreements may well be ad hoc and cobbled together; they do not spring from some philosophical calculus but arise out of the hard work of discussion and public debate—but a debate in which all resources are brought to the table.

Objections

How does this help deal with the objections to Obama's approach? And how do these objections aid in further clarification of Küng's proposal? First, how does it deal with those of the political left who want no part of religion in the public sphere, and perhaps even in the private sphere? Sam Harris, the best-selling writer of *Letter to a Christian Nation* and *The End of Faith,* forcibly expresses this in arguing that tolerance of religion is a bad idea and that religion should certainly be kept out of the public arena.[16] As he says in *The End of Faith*, "I hope to show that the very ideal of religious tolerance—born of the notion that every human being be free to believe whatever he wants about God—is one of the principal forces driving us towards the abyss."[17] Lest one think he would be open to more reasoned, liberal moderates in religion, he particularly castigates them for providing a cloak for fundamentalists. He says, "We can no longer afford the luxury of such political correctness."[18] Besides the fact that it is unlikely that the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights will be overturned and that critics like Harris are unlikely ever to be mollified, one can say that Küng's approach does respond to Harris's apoplexy about everyone being free to say "whatever he wants about God." In terms of making public policy, as we saw with the ID issue, one can speak openly about religious motivation but cannot rely on religious arguments for law. Despite what Harris says, such cases show that the principle of separation of church and state actually does function to limit blanket

tolerance in the public arena in that it restricts the warrants for public policy. Of course, on the other hand, it allows for freedom of speech—and motivation—outside of such warrants for legality, as in the Civil Rights movement. In fact, there actually is much criticism of religion in the public arena, including that of Harris, Dawkins, Hitchens, and others—and there has been for some time. Perhaps there has not been enough criticism, a point on which some religious people would concur, but it is difficult to imagine a prohibition of religious discourse short of the kind of restrictive society denying free speech that Harris otherwise mocks and deplores in the Muslim world.

From the other extreme, someone who fits the fundamentalism that Harris fears is Al Mohler, equally unhappy with the Obama position, who is president of Southern Baptist Seminary and oft-appearing as the religious right wing voice on Larry King. Mohler responds:

> When the senator demands that any policy proposal be couched in an argument from secular principles—"some principle that is accessible to people of all faiths, including those of no faith at all"—he is institutionalizing secularism. This is the same kind of argument heard from academics like Robert Audi and the late John Rawls.
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> But this is also demanding the impossible. Sen. Obama seems to believe in the myth of a universal reason and rationality that will be compelling to all persons of all faiths, including those of no faith at all.

He adds, "This is secularism with a smile—offered in the form of an invitation for believers to show up, but then only to be allowed to make arguments that are not based in their deepest beliefs."[19]

Again, recognizing that there is little chance of making headway with Mohler, Küng's model, and Obama's, specifically does not rule out but actually encourages anyone making arguments that are "based in their deepest beliefs." What it does mean is that legal warrant cannot rest *solely* upon such arguments and that one needs to make connection with wider ethical values, shared by a wider pluralistic society. As Jeffrey Stout points out, this is not necessarily based on a Rawlsian requirement of a few universally-agreed upon principles but is the *de facto* reality of a pluralistic society. Even within one religion such as Christianity, there is no simple consensus about warrants or conclusions.[20] The distinction between thick and thin reasoning reminds us that in most cases, such public warrants are not going to represent adequately the deeper tissue of support for views and should not be expected to do so. In other words, public agreement is unlikely to rest upon ideological foundations but on cobbled together agreement at the level of values.

In order to make this point further, let us consider a more sophisticated but similar argument from a widely respected theologian at Duke University, Stanley Hauerwas.[21] Hauerwas starts from a sectarian place but ends up close to Küng in a way that helpfully refines Obama's thought. Hauerwas casts a wary postliberal eye on any attempt to found religious values on universal premises as did the Enlightenment and much nineteenth liberal theology. Hauerwas co-wrote a book with Will Willimon called *Resident Aliens,*

which came out about the same time as Küng's *Global Responsibility*, that espoused a quite different model.[22] They emphasized the importance of giving witness from a faith community to an unaccommodating, even hostile, society. The subtitle is suggestive: "Life in the Christian Colony." In a book published about the same time in 1991 called *After Christendom: How the Church Is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas,* Hauerwas emphasizes the role of the church as "the politics of witness."[23] Rather than trying to find common ground with the state, the church should be itself. He says, "The question is not whether we have freedom of religion and a corresponding limited state in America, but whether we have a church that has a people capable of saying no to the state."[24] This does not seem to represent an attitude of someone open to translating religious concerns into Obama's "universal values"! In fact, Hauerwas's concern is that Christianity has tried for too long to identify itself with democracy.[25] In that sense, it is not difficult to find common, universal ground between Christianity and democracy. This is what Hauerwas deplores, however, because he sees that Christianity has for too long compromised itself in order to make itself palatable to the liberal state.[26] He would rather that Christians speak a distinctive word from the "alien Christian colony" than amalgamate themselves with secular society—which he sees as not having enough of a foundation even to argue about an ethic, much less to provide one.[27]

There is little guidance here, however, for the way in which society may receive such witness short of adoption of a particularist viewpoint. In a pluralistic society, one cannot expect wholesale conversion to the thick community life of a particular group—as in this case a particular group even within Christianity. That is, one cannot even expect all Christians to go along with, say, Hauerwas and Willimon on the church, much less on the implications of their views for national life. Küng's view is not in opposition to such sectarian emphasis, as one might expect, but actually encourages and draws upon the ethic arising from such incarnational faith. As he adamantly argues, "No universal ethic, but only religion, can communicate a specific depth dimension."[28] It does not require that the thick undergirding is sloughed off, only that such thin commonality that is possible actually be sought—and should be sought at the ethical level.

In a later essay published in 2000, Hauerwas actually moves close to the Küng position; at the same time, he offers a caution about any utopian or optimistic reading of such a goal. He acknowledges that he is offering some correctives and is not writing in his "normal mode" where he is often accused of being a "sectarian, fideistic tribalist."[29] He nevertheless begins by rejecting the tendency of Christians to find some "mediating language" such as natural law or Rawlsian theory. [30] This is part of the tendency of the American church to meld with society in any case. As he says in commenting on the decline of mainline denominations, "It is by no means clear why you need to go to church when such churches only reinforce what you already know from participation in a democratic society."[31] His concern therefore is to show how the church can be herself, first of all, and only secondarily, how she might make a contribution to society. The latter can only happen if the church does not mimic the faults of that society.

What can be missed in these emphases, however, is that what he rejects especially is

trying to find common *foundations* for public life. In this article, he clarifies that he is open to finding common ground in practice, wherever it is possible. In drawing on some Rawlsian criticisms by Nicholas Wolterstorff, Hauerwas says:

> We must learn to carry on in a politics without a foundation. We shall have to conduct our political deliberations without a shared political basis—that is, without a neutral or coherent set of principles sufficient to adjudicate conflicts. Which means, according to Wolterstorff, our best strategy is to move from one set of deliberations to another, employing whatever set of considerations we think may be persuasive for the person with whom we are in conversation."[32]

This suggests just the kind of strategy that fits Küng's appeal, that is, sufficient agreement that enables common action without pressing for agreement on foundations or ultimate justification. Where Hauerwas is helpful is emphasizing more strongly how important it is *not* to insist on common foundations and even how much thick, sectarian foundations should not and need not be compromised. In fact, he points out how they provide the thick backdrop on which richer conversation may occur.[33] Stout likewise appeals against Rawls for consideration in public debate of what the "actual reasons" are for people's views.[34] Such dialogue will at least lead to greater understanding and may lead to more accord than one might have thought. In fact, there has often been surprising cross-fertilization between religion and politics, such as the issue of separation of church and state and democratic church and political government.

What Hauerwas does not recognize here is the point that Obama implies about legal warrants, again speaking perhaps from Obama's standpoint of teaching constitutional law, namely, they cannot be justified *solely* on religious grounds lest they violate the separation of church and state. This means that some wider basis at some point must necessarily be sought. Hauerwas interestingly points toward another means besides agreement on common ethical principles in emphasizing the importance of shared American stories. These, he says, "have the potential to take account of aspects of American life that are morally richer than any account liberal theory can provide."[35] Especially with regard to common political stories such as those of the founding of the nation and of other major crossroads such as the Civil War and the civil rights movement, there is a wider, shared narrative basis for common values that may also be rooted deeply in religious and philosophical traditions.

Summary and Problems

I would argue therefore that Obama does point to a better basis for the relationship of religion and politics than the polarized options of the religious right wing of the Republican party who almost seem to desire a theocracy on the one hand and the left wing of the Democratic party who wants to eliminate any mention of religion. What Obama does not do well, however, is to deal with the justified concerns of both. Here is where, as I have argued, a more nuanced position such as Küng's offers needed clarification. At the level of what Hauerwas calls "foundations," there should be allowance and even encouragement for rich discussion, even in the public sphere. This provides greater "footholds," so to speak, for dialogue and is an arena where every argument should be allowed, in terms of free speech, but also every argument should be

contested. At the same time, legal public policy cannot be established on that broad a basis. Rather, there must be correspondence with the American narrative and legal tradition in terms of warrant, while at the same time recognizing that this a thin basis that must be cobbled together as best as possible and that it cannot provide the more robust basis for a religious or even an atheistic way of life. The important thing is not to expect more of such a "thin" basis than it can provide.

Having said all of this, it is probably salutary at the end to remind us of the limits even of this proposal. When Hauerwas spoke of allowing for a pluralist discussion wherein each group can draw deeply from their wells in order to talk with one another, he reminded, "Of course, 'talk with one another' may be a far too innocent way to put the matter in the light of controversies such as those about abortion and assisted suicide."[36]

In these cases, it is undeniable that religious motivations play a dominating role. Even though there is a tradition of public policy on these issues, it does not provide a clear basis for consensus at this time. Of course, the same could have been said of civil rights for African-Americans and women at an earlier time. The California rejection of gay marriage in the 2008 election reminds us that sometimes religious issues get translated not so much into arguments as votes. Unlike the ID case, such a vote has not yet widely been ruled as unconstitutional in denying equal rights to gays, even though it was later overturned in California and has been appealed to the Supreme Court. It may in the future. Despite the heavy religious dimension of the issue, the precedent in the past allows the rejection of gay marriage to be seen as constitutional. At this point the matter has been settled by voting, ironically in part because opponents framed it as a violation of their children's religious freedom in school by claiming that teachers would be obligated to teach a different meaning of "marriage" than their religious tradition supports.[37] In this issue, arguments both "universal," in Obama's terms, and religious were involved, but there is no easy solution in sight. Küng recognizes that his approach points to a progressive way forward beyond entrenched positions paralyzed by trying to find common foundations, but he also recognized that it does not solve all problems. Such a framework points to the hard and painful work involved in finding consensus on highly disputed issues. Obama's speech, understood in this way, does the same. In allowing for religious reasons to be brought to the table, it actually, as Hauerwas implies, opens up more starting points for bridges, not fewer. It recognizes that in any case, the religious reasons will be at the table. It is more honest, and more productive, for them to be openly engaged, while at the same time making it more possible for consensus at the public policy level since it is not based on agreement at the religious level. It is not utopia, but neither does it foster polarization.

NOTES

1. E. J. Dionne, Jr., "Obama's Eloquent Faith," *Washingtonpost.Com* 30/06 2006, 02/01/2009 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/29/AR2006062901778.html>.

2. Barack Obama, "'Call to Renewal' Keynote Address," Best Speeches of Barack Obama through His 2009 Inauguration, 28/06 2006, 10/08/2009 < http://obamaspeeches.com/081-Call-to-Renewal-Keynote-Address-Obama-Speech.htm>; Albert Mohler, "Secularism with a Smile," *Albertmohler.Com*, 30/06 2006, 31/12/2008

<http://www.albertmohler.com/2006/06/30/secularism-with-a-smile>.

3. Amy Sullivan, "In Good Faith: The Real Meaning of Barack Obama's Speech on Religion and Politics," *Slate* 03/07 2006, 02/01/2009 <http://www.slate.com/id/2144983/>.

4. Obama, "Call to Renewal Keynote Address."

5.The difference in 2008 between those who attend at least once a week was 43 percent for Obama vs. 55 percent for McCain. This contrasts to 2004 with 39 percent for Kerry and 61 percent for Bush. With regard to white evangelicals, the spread actually worsened in 2008. Twenty-six percent of white evangelicals voted for Obama compared to 75 percent of the religiously unaffiliated, for a gap of 49 points. "This gap is slightly larger than the 46-point gap in 2004, when 21% of white evangelicals voted for Kerry, compared with 67% of the unaffiliated." "Voting Religiously," *Pew Research Center Publications* 10/11 2008, 07/11/2008 <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1022/exit-poll-analysis-religion>.

6. Obama, "Call to Renewal Keynote Address."

7. This story is told fully in two volumes of his autobiography, Hans Küng, *My Struggle for Freedom: Memoirs*, trans. John Bowden (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003); Hans Küng, *Disputed Truth: Memoirs II*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Continuum, 2008).

8. Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (New York: Crossroads, 1991), vii-xi, xv.

9. Küng himself prepared this draft. See Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), 108-9.

10. Küng, *Global Ethic* 223-28.

11. Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1994).

12. Walzer, *Thick and Thin* 83.

13. Küng, *Global Ethic* 96.

14. Walzer, *Thick and Thin* xi.

15. "Tammy Kitzmiller, et al. v. Dover Area School District, et al," trans. 4:04-cv-02688-JEJ (U.S. District Court for the middle district of Pennsylvania, 20 December, 2005), 87-88.

16. Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), viii.

17. Harris: 2004: 18.

18. Sam Harris, *The End of Faith; Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 23; Harris, *Letter*, 107. Rawls is seen as similarly limiting religious discourse by limiting public discourse to reasons in principle agreed upon by all, thus de facto non-religious discourse. Rawls actually does not see himself as discriminating. For careful discussion of how Rawls continues to limit religious language from a non-religious theorist, see Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, New Forum Books (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2004), 65-77. Stout also describes how what he calls the new traditionalists, such as Hauerwas, Alasdair MacIntyre, John Richard Neuhaus, and John Milbank are very dissatisfied with Rawls. He opines, "We are about to reap the social consequences of a traditionalist backlash against contractarian liberalism. The more thoroughly Rawlsian our law school and ethics centers become, the more radically Hauerwasian the theological schools become." 75.

19. Mohler, "Secularism with a Smile."

20. Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* 93-100. Stout says in speaking of the seventeenth century breakdown of the Bible as a public authority, "Readings supposedly grounded in the plain sense of Scripture had multiplied so rapidly that the plain sense could no longer function as publicly effective constraint on interpretation. And once this had happened, the Bible's public role as arbiter was gone." 97. Note that this had occurred at a time when most people presumably still accepted biblical authority for their own beliefs.

21. For example, *Time* magazine named Hauerwas "America's best theologian" in 2001. "'Time' Magazine Names Hauerwas 'American's Best Theologian,'". *Worldwide Faith News* 12/09 2001, 09/01/2009 <http://www.wfn.org/2001/09/msg00077.html>. Similarly, Stout offhandedly comments that Hauerwas "now has an audience larger than that of any other theological ethicist in the English-speaking world," an observation with which I agree. Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* 157.

22. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon P, 1989).

23. The title of chapter 6 of Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave If Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas* (Nashville: Abingdon P, 1991).

24. Hauerwas, *After Christendom* 71.

25. See Stanley Hauerwas, "A Christian Critique of Christian America," *Christian Existence Today* (Durham: Labyrinth, 1988).

26. In fact, he thinks this cozy, accommodationist strategy is actually a Constantinian one, going back to the fourth century when Christianity became acceptable to the Roman Empire.

27. See especially Stanley Hauerwas, *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos P, 2000), ch. 1, "On Being a Christian and an American."

28. Küng, *Global Ethic* 142.

29. Hauerwas, *Better Hope* 23-24.

30. Hauerwas, *Better Hope* 26. The approach given here is likely reminiscent in many ways to Rawls' notion of "overlapping consensus" between comprehensive or metaphysical doctrines and political doctrines that are more procedural and relate to public reason. Theologians like Hauerwas are critical of Rawls' idea because it seems to privilege public reason and make it the arbiter of comprehensive doctrines. It also tends to limit public debate to public reason and not allow for the wider debate that comes from discussion involving comprehensive doctrines. Nevertheless, given these demurrals, there is broad affinity between the necessity for a liberal society to seek an overlapping consensus and to distinguish between comprehensive doctrines and political doctrines. The direction of Obama and Küng's approaches would be, however, not to preclude discussion of the comprehensive doctrines. See for Rawls' discussion of overlapping consensus, John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, The John Dewey Essays in Philosophy, vol. No. 4 (New York: Columbia UP 1993), Lecture IV. On this subject, I benefited from discussion with my colleague, Rod Taylor, and his dissertation on Stanley Hauerwas, Rodney Stephen Taylor, "Between Church and World: The Christian Political Actor and a Theology of Vocation" (Ph. D. diss., King's College London, 2005).

31. Hauerwas, *Better Hope* 25f.

32. Hauerwas, *Better Hope* 27.

33. Jeffrey Stout makes a similar point, "I have suggested that democracy would profit if more citizens engaged in the 'lengthy, even leisurely unfolding' of their commitments. Our ethical discourse has become rather thinned out." Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* 113. His reference to "thinned out" refers to the danger of

a Rawlsian approach where only the thin language is allowed in public discourse, a point that Obama and Küng specifically reject.

34. Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* 77, 88.

35. Hauerwas, *Better Hope* 28.

36. Hauerwas, *Better Hope* 27.

37. Dan Morain and Jessica Garrison, "Focused beyond Marriage," *The Los Angeles Times.* 11 June 2008, 08/01/2009 <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-gaymarriage6-2008nov06,0,2331815.story>.