

## **The Vision and Virtues of Wendell Berry's *Citizenship Papers***

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Citizenship is a burden to Wendell Berry. A burden because citizenship demands responsibility. Responsibility, first and foremost, for loving a place. This love, moreover, makes further demands of the citizen: fidelity—to stay put and invest one's time and energies within this place; education—to ask himself what do I need to learn to improve this place and what do I need to pass on to the next generation in order to preserve it; humility—to ask himself, how can I love better to better serve this place; sacrifice—an acknowledgement of limits, an understanding that this place, this focus of our affections and imaginations, might require of us our very lives. So far so good. The question, the rub, the crux, is identifying the place. If we all say, "America," we could call it a day and go home. But think about the home to which you would go. Berry does. Berry's first principle with regard to citizenship is that the "American Cause" of this year's Conference theme is not one and the same as one's home cause. This question of place becomes more tricky than it appears at first glance if one follows Berry's lead and attempts to place oneself as locally as possible. For the sake of argument remove from consideration America (an abstraction) and even your home state (a similar abstraction on a smaller scale) and think of these four places: one's native soil, one's home, the place where one lives and moves and has being, or where one wishes upon death to be laid to rest. Few of us, alas, (and that number is dwindling all the time) could answer the same to all four. That Wendell Berry can is the beginning of his wisdom.

Given our conference theme of "Citizenship and the American Cause," it is fortunate that Berry has shared his wisdom on the question of true citizenship in his 2003 collection of essays, *Citizenship Papers*. In honor of the ten year anniversary of its publication, I shall overview its

arguments and assess its continuing relevance to those who love this land, who are engaged in the public square, who are attempting to live out a Christian faith, or to those who, as Berry himself, are trying to do all three at once.

But first I feel the need to account for Berry's persistent relevance despite his career-long eschewal of big-time publishers, lack of any marketing or public relations, and steadfast refusal "to make something of himself" in the big city. I can explain his ongoing popularity in a single word, one that applies more to his readers than to him.

Deracination. It is a useful word if a bit pretentious. It means 'uprooted.' It refers to most of us upwardly mobile, technologically savvy types who cannot do or at least refuse to do our own home or car repairs. Demographically, we have a few more years of schooling than our parents, a few degrees more than our grandparents, and we tend to live near neither. Whether or not anyone actually told us, we heard it loud and clear, "a blue-collar job is not how you make something of yourself." We 'like' Starbucks, accessorize our technologies, and our greatest insult is to be "de-friended." We are what David Brooks famously dubbed "Bo-Bos," short for bohemian bourgeoisie. Financially, we are increasingly broke or at least in debt up to our ears. In this, it is worth noting, we as citizens haplessly mirror our federal government. Geographically, the suburbs were invented for us, then we fled to the exurbs, and now we're flocking into one megalopolis or another. We are deracinated. Rootless tumbleweeds. Nowhere or Anywhere men, er, persons. Wendell Berry is the opposite of deracinated: "Racinated" not being an actual word is deeply telling. The more deracinated one is, the more irresistible one finds the bracing tonic of Wendell Berry's essays: His is an unmistakably authentic voice.

In a writing career that has spanned now over fifty years, Berry has found his voice in three main genres: prose fiction (several novels and twice as many short stories), non-fiction essays, and lyric poetry. He acknowledges in one poem that each mode has its own muse:

“I would not have been a poet  
except that I have been in love  
alive in this mortal world,  
or an essayist except that I  
have been bewildered and afraid,  
or a storyteller had I not heard  
stories passing to me through the air  
or a writer at all except  
I have been wakeful at night  
and words have come to me  
out of their deep caves  
needing to be remembered.”<sup>1</sup> (“1993, VII,” lines 1-12)

So his poetry is inspired by affection while his prophetic essays are primarily inspired by bewilderment and fear (line 5). Specifically for the publication of *Citizenship Papers* the sources of bewilderment and fear are the twin horrors in Berry’s eyes of September 11 and the subsequent National Security Strategy that asserted the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive war.

Against the Bush Doctrine Berry offers his opening salvo entitled “A Citizen’s Response.” This opening, original piece frames the rest of the collection most of which are revised from earlier essays and speeches to suit the theme of citizenship and to explore a wide range of ethical demands for the true citizen. Education, war, terrorism, national security vs.

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<sup>1</sup> Wendell Berry, *A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems 1979-1997* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1998), 182.

freedom, agriculture, forestry, science and technology, economics, patriotism, Christian pacifism are all broached in the name of genuine citizenship here in a single volume dedicated to the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Berry proves not to be one of those Americans that Russell Kirk feared “are badly prepared for their task of defending their own convictions and institutions” or “lack any clear understanding of their nation’s own first principles.” Indeed, in the decade of reactions since, the clarity of his convictions and his prose has proven to provide a mirror where readers tend to see themselves: Berry has been claimed as a true “conservative” by conservative readers for his distrust of big government and of any notion of “progress,” while simultaneously being championed as progressive and liberal for his pacifism and environmentalism. Complicating Berry’s positions in the political and economic spheres is his steadfast insistence on applying the ethical norms of the Gospels to public policy. The result of *Citizenship Papers*, now looking back after ten years since its publication, is a remarkable combination of insight and prescience along with a dash of misguided fear.

An astonishing feature of this volume of nineteen essays is how it begins its argument on the book’s cover: These essays are to be taken as Berry’s “application for” and his “proof of citizenship.” The subtitle, a dictionary definition of “citizenship papers,” declares this. Then there’s a paragraph presumably by the publishers that provides the necessary Constitutional context: “Let this book stand as Wendell Berry’s application, for he is one of those faithful, devoted critics envisioned by the Founding Fathers to be the life’s blood and very future of the nation they imagined. Adams, Jefferson, and Madison would have found great clarity in his prose and great hope in his vision.” Now, conservative readers are ready to read on and cheer. But we are still on the cover. At the bottom is Berry’s provocative thesis regarding September 11: “The time will soon come when we will not be able to remember the horrors of September 11

without remembering also the unquestioning technological and economic optimism that ended on that day.”<sup>2</sup> If both conservatives and Progressives, whose optimism in technology and the economy has hardly waned since September 11, are not scratching their heads, they can finally open the book to see it dedicated by name and unironically to the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

The essay collection as a whole follows this same rhythm: Just as Berry’s deep distrust of big government resonates on the Right, his strong critique of war in every case leans to the Left; and if both sound appealing to the libertarian, Berry insists that both the environment and education reform require some kind of genuine government leadership. And all this in the name of true patriotism. I must reassure you, however, Berry’s program is not merely an effort to toggle back and forth between Tea Party rhetoric on the one hand and Occupy Wall Street polemics on the other. For one thing he is consistent in applying Christ’s principle “love your enemies” in all cases, so that his commitment to non-violence makes him as anti-abortion as anti-war. But what really provides cohesion to Berry’s philosophy is his commitment to the land—“let the land be the judge” is the lodestar for Berry’s ethical compass.

The land, however, is not the national abstraction found in our patriotic songs that spans from sea to shining sea; it is the very ground he stands upon. Berry does not consider the citizen’s primary or even ultimate responsibility to be national. “When I try to identify myself to myself I am less than an American, less than a Kentuckian, less even than a Henry Countian, but am a man most involved with and concerned about my family, my neighbors, and the land that is daily under my feet. It is this involvement that defines my citizenship in the larger entities.”<sup>3</sup> And so he wants all citizens to consider their own backyard first. At times in his populist tone and

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<sup>2</sup> Wendell Berry, *Citizenship Papers* (Washington, DC: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2003), cover.

<sup>3</sup> Berry, “In Distrust of Movements,” in Berry, *Citizenship*, 43.

more libertarian moments, Berry seems to imply that these “larger entities”—be they political or economic or constabulary—need not exist at all or at least that their effect on local communities is irredeemably negative. Berry’s critique of 20<sup>th</sup>-century militarism and of war in general illustrates what amounts to, in Berry’s reckoning, an unbalanced reciprocity between local communities and national security.

On the one hand, Berry admits in “The Failure of War,” that his own small corner of Kentucky owes a debt to gratitude to federal power over the years. He mentions the emancipation of slaves and the preservation of the Union specifically. “I am,” he says, “one of many who have benefited from painful sacrifices made by other people, and I would not like to be ungrateful.”<sup>4</sup> But Berry elsewhere points out that it is America’s rural places whose sacrifice is disproportionate: The very locales who have the fewest good men nonetheless are asked in times of sacrifice to give up those good men and more often than not lose them forever to either death or diaspora. Berry is thinking anecdotally of his native Kentucky after both world wars; post-WWII demographics certainly bears this out. Thus, while a sort of give-and-take obtains between interests of a Kentucky village and Washington, D.C., the brunt of civic sacrifice is always borne more heavily on Main Street than on Pennsylvania Avenue.

The true patriot’s first responsibility, therefore, is to properly count the cost of the sacrifice. Too often it is merely assumed that “the acceptable price is whatever is paid.” In the case of Bush’s National Security Strategy, for instance, it is assumed “if that price includes the diminishment of privacy and the increase of government secrecy, so be it.”<sup>5</sup> But Berry has little use for such accounting. Citing Burke, Berry sees the Bush Doctrine as a breach of public faith between government and the governed in asserting that “we will not hesitate to act alone, if

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<sup>4</sup> Wendell Berry, “The Failure of War,” in Berry, *Citizenship*, 26.

<sup>5</sup> Berry, “Failure,” *Citizenship*, 27.

necessary, . . . preemptively against such terrorists.” Berry asks fairly enough, “Who is this ‘we’?” And explains that it cannot be the ‘We’ of the Constitution nor of the Declaration of Independence, but only the royal ‘we’ of the executive branch. Berry sees this as nothing less than a threat to democracy as we have known it: “Would-be participating citizens of a democratic nation, unwilling to have their consent coerced or taken for granted, therefore have no choice but to remove themselves from the illegitimate constraints of this ‘we’ in as immediate and public a way as possible.”<sup>6</sup> Berry’s analysis has two main problems: 1) a potential misunderstanding of the Bush doctrine’s use of ‘we,’ and 2) the true citizen’s vague call to action here.

Berry is surely correct to assume that the use of preemptive force which the Bush doctrine is justifying will primarily be decided within the executive branch and that this National Security Strategy is confirming the existence and expansion of covert military options on “enemies” that will be determined by the commander-in-chief’s own prerogative. But Berry only imagines either an executive, royal we, or the “We the people” that is the demos or the electorate at large of “participating citizens.” This is a false either/or dichotomy. The National Security Strategy is a policy statement written by the executive branch for Congress, so it is the office of one elected official reporting to a body of other elected officials. The “we” refers to duly elected representatives of a republic that are performing the tasks the electorate expects of them. Nevertheless Berry is giving voice to a legitimate critique which many traditional conservatives of various stripes share: the dubious constitutional grounds for such expanding executive authority.

Berry also never gets around to explaining just what careful citizens are supposed to do to “remove themselves from the constraints of this ‘we.’” Nor does he actually explain what the

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<sup>6</sup> Wendell Berry, “A Citizen’s Response,” in Berry, *Citizenship*, 2.

constraints on a citizen the executive branch is imposing. Perhaps public protest is what Berry has in mind. Certainly Berry is not suggesting for the better citizen to forsake his land. Later on in this essay Berry is much clearer: A nation's "citizens must love their land with a knowing, intelligent, sustaining, and protective love. They must not, for any price, destroy its beauty, its health, or its productivity. And they must not allow their patriotism to be degraded to a mere loyalty to symbols or any present set of officials."<sup>7</sup> In three sentences Berry sums up nicely what he calls elsewhere the "agrarian argument."

It is a deeply conservative and conservationist argument which Berry is keen to point was not invented by him. Indeed, as a man in the public square, a man of letters, perhaps the agrarian argument has invented him. He has chosen his words carefully here and individually they refer to aspects of his thinking that in some cases he has devoted whole books to in other places.

"Knowing" and "intelligent" refer to a whole way of knowing, an agrarian epistemology which quite opposes the current, modern superstitions about science, technology, and Progress that remain regnant in our culture, our colleges, and our agricultural policies. "Sustaining" refers to sustainable farming practices which entail a radical reformulation of American farming that seeks to break the monopolies of corporate agribusiness, to stop and prevent soil erosion and toxicity, to restore the possibility of family farms; in short, to keep faith with the land.

Sustainable farming practices is the arena which provides Berry with the most hope and illustrates the best example within Berry's worldview where his fans from both the Left and the Right literally and figuratively find common ground. Perhaps this is merely because Berry speaks in this vein with the clearest common sense. It is not that Berry ever advocates that everyone should start farming; his pragmatic charge is the more reasonable, "Know where your food comes from." How one acts upon that knowledge is highly variable: Some buy organic as

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<sup>7</sup> Berry, *Citizenship*, 10.

much as possible, or buy local, start or join food cooperatives with local farmers, avoid all processed foods, plant a vegetable patch or fruit trees, learn to can their own food, keep and raise their own livestock, a few might even move to the country. This aspect of Berry's philosophy is accessible to all because it taps into universal virtues no one can argue against: the "virtues of stewardship, thrift, self-sufficiency, and neighborliness."<sup>8</sup>

Berry also acknowledges that the federal government is necessary for making treaties; our ongoing problem is that ours is a "diplomacy of war" that "cling[s] to the hopeless paradox of making peace by making war."<sup>9</sup> Berry complains that this "brutal hypocrisy" and the deliberate reluctance in foreign policy to engage the means of non-violence reveal that it is as if Gandhi and Martin Luther King never existed at all. For Berry the command of Christ to "love your enemies" is genuinely normative for public, foreign policy. Since every major religion preaches forgiveness and a basic right of beings to live, Berry argues for a more comprehensive attempt to make and keep peace through non-violent means. And it is hard on these points, and the similar appeal that we need to understand more about our enemies, to contest Berry.

Certainly, a broader policy to promote peace by peaceable means and a stricter, higher threshold for any threat of violence would make for saner foreign policy than that imagined by either neoconservatives or the current Obama administration's half-hearted attempts to revise the neoconservative agenda.

But since Berry considers war as a total failure, implying that there may be no such thing as a just war, ever, the scale of his pacifism in light of the war on terrorism needs to be measured. To frame Berry's attitude toward American bellicosity in terms of citizenship, Berry does not see America's role as "arsenal of democracy" or as the world's "defender of freedom"

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<sup>8</sup> Berry, *Citizenship*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Berry, *Citizenship*, 24.

as legitimate. In fact, though he expresses a genuine gratitude toward being an American, he does not see American interests as superior to those of any other nation. Certainly nothing worth fighting for. An earlier collection of essays, *The Long-Legged House* provides some helpful background to his essay “The Failure of War.”

Berry protested the war in Vietnam and shares his reasoning which he neither changes or qualifies after September 11. As Bill Kauffman, in his definitive essay on Berry’s pacifism points out: “Berry’s preponderant reason for opposing war—any war, not just Vietnam—is located in the innermost of those concentric rings of citizenship: his family.”<sup>10</sup> Kauffman draws this conclusion from Berry’s protest against Vietnam:

‘As a father, I must look at my son, and I must ask if there is anything I possess—any right, any piece of property, any comfort, any joy—that I would ask *him* to die to permit *me* to keep. I must ask if I believe that it would be meaningful—after his mother and I have loved each other and begotten him and loved him—for him to die in a lump with a number hanging around his neck. I must ask if his life would have come to meaning or nobility or any usefulness if he should sit—with his human hands and head and eyes—in the cockpit of a bomber, dealing out pain and grief and death to people unknown to him. And my answer to all these questions is one that I must attempt to live by: *No.*’<sup>11</sup>

Kauffman goes on to point out from the same speech how Berry explains these concentric rings of citizenship in terms of a scale of affection:

“My devotion thins as it widens...I care more for my household than for the town of Port Royal, more for the town of Port Royal than for the County of Henry, more for the County of Henry than for the state of Kentucky, more for the State of

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<sup>10</sup> Bill Kauffman, “Wendell Berry on War and Peace,” in *Wendell Berry: Life and Works*,” ed. Jason Peters, 25 (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Kauffman, “Berry,” 25.

Kentucky than for the United States of America. But I *do not* care more for the United States of America than for the world.”<sup>12</sup>

This may sound astonishing unpatriotic. And yes, Berry is insisting that America has no inherent rights over any other nation. He is no nationalist. Berry’s disregard of American interests at the expense of any other nation’s, moreover, is at once deeply conservative, republican, and Christian. It is conservative in that Berry would have a republic, if we can keep it (to borrow Franklin’s famous phrase), rather than an empire. It is republican in its desire to resist “foreign entanglements” and to maintain economic autonomy, self-reliance, and freedom. In both its conservatism and republicanism Berry’s reticence about American international hegemony draws more directly from Burke and Jefferson than any neoconservative foreign policy. It is Christian in its conception of *charitas*: If one is to love one’s neighbor as oneself, then how can the true Christian citizen’s love of his own country hold sway over his foreign neighbor’s love of his own? It cannot hold sway, according to Berry. More pointedly he is adamant that if we as Christians are to love the world as God loves the world; then that must include all nations and even our enemies.

This holds true, according to Berry, even in the cases of World War Two and the War on Terror. Berry is adamant that peace cannot be made by war. That may be true enough. But he fails to acknowledge the murky gray between his black and white extremes; as when a certain amount of violence and destruction prevents even greater bloodshed, genocide, and devastation. Berry carefully avoids the question, “Wasn’t the world better off without Hitler?” because the answer is rigged. For Berry it is more fruitful to account for the domestic costs for even a more noble war as WWII. He thus catalogs the diaspora of the greatest generation, the evacuated small towns, the wholesale destruction of farmlands for the interstate highway system, and the

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<sup>12</sup> Kauffman, “Berry,” 77.

economy of war that persists even in peace—all of which is usually labeled as “Progress.” Berry is right on to correct the arithmetic of Progressivism with regard to the homefront. But the question of just war remains.

Berry does admit the unique nature of the foe in the war on Terror: “the madness of terrorists who kill themselves in order to kill others.”<sup>13</sup> But how this dangerous worldview might affect the ability to effect peace through peaceable, non-violent means he does not explore. His blind side is that of hardline pacifism everywhere—it assumes everyone at the negotiating table shares a common, rational and traditional reluctance to die or to neglect the interests of their children. Furthermore, the nature of the enemy in the case of such terrorists is not primarily geopolitical, that is, the fight is not over borders or scarcity of resources, but it is primarily ideological and religious. So Berry’s assertions for peacemaking do not adequately address the same particulars about the “enemy” as the National Security Strategy of 2002. In so far as that NSS does mention oil, weapons of mass destruction, technological progress, and America’s place in a globalized economy, however, Berry’s criticism is relevant and trenchant.

Which brings us to a fundamental dilemma in Berry’s thinking: the moral force of government. On the one hand, we have an “absurd” status quo of insane policy across a broad spectrum in Berry’s reckoning that reflects greed, selfishness, and lust for power which collectively accomplishes the twin “rape of man and nature.”<sup>14</sup> Berry calls this elsewhere “an agenda of domestic evils,” and goes so far to say in response to “evil” terrorists that “the proposition that anything so multiple and large as a nation can be good is an insult to common sense.”<sup>15</sup> So, a nation cannot be “good.” This echoes George Washington’s quip, “Government is force” and Jefferson’s insistence that government be carefully monitored by its citizen’s “vigilant

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<sup>13</sup> Berry, “Response,” 4.

<sup>14</sup> This phrase is not Berry’s but his friend Phillip Sherrard’s to which Berry sadly but heartily ‘Amen’s.’

<sup>15</sup> Berry, “Response,” 4.

and distrustful superintendence.” So, one could say, that Berry’s diffidence in the federal government as an agent of morality accords with the view of the Founding Fathers.

On the other hand, there is a tradition of Christian charity that enjoins us to love thy neighbor and love thy enemies. Which shall we follow? How shall we then live? “We must face this daunting question,” says Berry, “not as a nation or a group, but as individual persons—as ourselves.”<sup>16</sup> Our right to “live, be free, and be at peace,” Berry goes on, is only possible “by our willingness to use or give our own lives.”<sup>17</sup> Berry apologizes that his answer only leads to further questions; he acknowledges the crux—how to hold our government to the same standards we hold ourselves—and the difficulty, perhaps impossibility, in doing so. While collectively a nation can only amount to a mixture of good and imperfect people, its policies can be changed to approximate the better angels of its constituency. This love-your-enemies ethos, if we as individuals could live it out and if we could realize it more among our communities, represents “the most comprehensive vision of human progress.”<sup>18</sup>

I fear that I am making Berry sound like the liberal optimist who believes in the perfectibility of man and the efficacy of big government. Nothing could be further from the truth in Berry’s case. “Progress” is generally a byword to Berry, which he dismisses as a pernicious myth, an insidious superstition about “The Economy” or technology or our denuded culture, that refuses to account for its true ecological, cultural, existential, and material costs. The true progress that may be accomplished by these true citizens he is imagining would be by definition local in extant and parochial in influence. Berry’s fifty years of mounting the agrarian argument publically in various genres of writing and speaking as well as living it out privately amounts to an appeal for some cooperation with, some recognition of the pockets of, isolated change that is

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<sup>16</sup> Berry, “Failure,” 29.

<sup>17</sup> Berry, *Citizenship*, 29.

<sup>18</sup> Berry, *Citizenship*, 30.

already occurring. For this persistent remnant of a small, alternative tradition within the dominant American experience, that elsewhere he contrasts as “Stickers” versus “Boomers,” Berry is grateful. To the extent of his role in motivating, inspiring, and empowering this remnant to persist, he is genuinely bashful.

To round out this tribute, the ten year anniversary of Berry’s *Citizenship Papers* allows me to comment on two other essays—“Thoughts in the Presence of Fear” and “In Distrust of Movements.” The former are his thoughts, a sequence of paragraphs really, in the wake of September 11, while the latter is a witty and masterful assessment of agrarianism as a movement.

The semiotics of September 11 was one thing that puzzled Americans at the time. The Pentagon made sense, so did the White House or the Capitol or wherever the one that crashed in Pennsylvania was supposed to hit, and not simply because of obvious strategic importance but because they signified American prestige and power. But the World Trade Center? Other than ugly office space and really tall office space, it meant little and signified less. The 1993 attempted bombing of it was certainly news but only because of the potential human loss. The notion of wiping the Twin Towers from the Manhattan skyline did not register as a significant loss. Indeed, the two giant rectangles never enjoyed domestically the iconic status of the Empire State Building or the Chrysler Building in terms of Manhattan architecture. That the World Trade Center had such iconic status to the terrorists was news to most Americans. In a fascinating twist, only in their absence from the New York City skyline do we read them as symbols of American pride. It was their destruction that finally gave them iconic status for Americans too. What was generally perceived as ugly on September 10 became a national symbol of beauty by September 12. Like the poet Wallace Stevens said, “Death is the mother of beauty.”

What September 11 signifies for Wendell Berry is similarly counterintuitive, and I am not certain that his interpretation of it, as a call to a certain kind of citizenship, completely compels the unsympathetic reader. “Thoughts in the Presence of Fear” is a list of twenty-seven numbered paragraphs, sometimes single sentences, that layout his rationale for his provocative thesis. The first paragraph spells out his reading: “The time will soon come when we will not be able to remember the horrors of September 11 without remembering also the unquestioning technological and economic optimism that ended on that day.”<sup>19</sup> To Berry this act of terrorism was an unambiguous calling: “We citizens of the industrial countries must continue the labor of self-criticism and self-correction. We must recognize our mistakes.”<sup>20</sup>

The vagueness and, to some, bizarreness of such a claim sounds like Berry is implying a soft, Leftist response—that America had this coming or somehow deserved it, or, worse, that somehow the terrorists were the scourge of God punishing us for our sins. I would hope that at this point in the essay Berry’s thinking has been expounded enough to at least suspect that he is implying no such thing. Berry is seizing on the moment to ponder true repentance: that the nation and the powers-that-be now have an occasion to re-think the status quo, especially in terms of economic, military and diplomatic policy. In certain paragraphs he can sound as far Right as anyone: “Far too many public voices have presumed to ‘speak for us’ in saying that Americans will gladly accept a reduction of freedom in exchange for greater ‘security.’ Some would, maybe. But some others would accept a reduction in security (and in global trade) far more willingly than they would accept any abridgement of our constitutional rights.”<sup>21</sup>

Berry’s biggest concern, unsurprisingly in the immediate aftermath of September 11, is a swift, unthinking violent response. He dismisses any comparison to Pearl Harbor, especially, and

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<sup>19</sup> Berry, “Thoughts in the Presence of Fear,” in Berry, *Citizenship*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Berry, *Citizenship*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Berry, *Citizenship*, 20.

the jingoistic kind of shallow patriotism that looks for any excuse to crank up the war machine. In terms of the militarism that that day bred, Berry, of course, has proved to be prescient. But his primary claim that “no one” will remember that day without recalling the end of technological and economic optimism still goes unproven. What for him is axiomatic, for many remains disconnected, especially in light of American optimism regarding our resilience and ingenuity which has gone remarkably unscathed in the public consciousness.

Berry’s strongest essay in this collection is “In Distrust of Movements” which in the main was composed before September 11 and only scantily revised in light of this collection theme of citizenship. Here we see Berry’s mature, fully-developed prose style that elegantly ties thought to thought and elides from paragraph to paragraph to mount and sustain a coherent vision of the agrarian argument. Unlike the sterner or more fearful essays here, Berry’s native, winsome spirit draws us into a more fully realized human and humane depiction of a holistic life of affection in community.

The agrarian worldview has in mind economic and educational reform that enjoins the true citizen to a robust public and private life that starts with recognizing rightly our current ills, none of which can be simply redressed by one technological advancement or another. This is misplaced faith. The public side of this responsibility of citizens of genuine community boils down to “the public life of complainers, petitioners, protesters, advocates and supporters of stricter regulations and saner policies.”<sup>22</sup>

The really hard part but the one that “will enrich our lives and make us glad” is the private side whose components can be broken down as:

- 1) “in every way we can make good economic sense in our own lives, in our households, and in our communities”;

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<sup>22</sup> Berry, “Distrust,” in Berry, *Citizenship Papers*, 50.

- 2) “do more for ourselves and our neighbors”;
- 3) “spend our money with our friends and not with our enemies”;
- 4) “grow good wheat and make good bread” by remembering “that we do not live by bread alone.”

In this way, Berry insists will we have what we want: “a movement that is a movement because it is advanced by all its members in their daily lives.”<sup>23</sup> And the final turn of phrase about bread is particularly apt. The agrarian movement is about growing and making good things; it calls us to picture the good life. It imagines greener pastures. And that good life is a life that can only thrive within the limits of a created order. All we like sheep may have gone astray. But we have such a shepherd that prepares a table for us.

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<sup>23</sup> Berry, *Citizenship*, 50-51.