

Nineteenth-Century Christian Higher Education: A Case Study of Cultivating Christian Citizenship

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In the wake of the passage of the First Amendment, nineteenth-century Protestants could not depend upon an established national church to play the same dominant role in establishing moral values in American public life. As the events in France after 1789 had so frighteningly demonstrated to many American Protestant intellectuals, the Enlightenment certainly had the potential to unleash forces that could threaten conventional Christian beliefs and practices. Consequently, the academic discipline of moral philosophy emerged in the early nineteenth century as an attempt to harness the Enlightenment for Protestant ends. Moral philosophy provided a rational and scientific—as opposed to a narrowly theological—justification for personal and public morality. In most colleges, the required course in moral philosophy served as the capstone of a collegiate education. These courses were intentionally designed to cultivate Christian citizens who would then go on to lead the key culture-shaping institutions of American society. Because moral philosophy was considered to be a scientific examination of morality, the academic discipline enjoyed intellectual credibility throughout much of the nineteenth century.

This paper examines former Yale college President Noah Porter’s teachings about Christian citizenship. Given Porter’s strategic location as the president of one of the nation’s most influential colleges, his nineteenth-century work on moral philosophy helped shape an entire generation of the nation’s college-educated Protestant leaders. His textbooks were used at many other colleges as well. Porter advocated a view of Christian citizenship that fostered a deep and abiding commitment to public service. This paper will argue that Porter’s conception of Christian citizenship entailed more than merely the exercise of rights and the state’s

responsibility to protect its constituents. Instead, Porter had a robust conception of Christian citizenship founded upon the importance of duty to the community.

In his moral philosophy textbook, *The Elements of Moral Science: Theoretical and Practical* (1887), Porter offers students an extensive discussion of the nature of civic duty and its practical consequences. According to the Yale President, Christian citizenship involves duties to the state that spring from “the obligation to promote the highest well-being of our fellow-men.” In particular, the duties of good citizenship covered two important categories: civil and political responsibilities. This once prominent moral philosopher’s notion of Christian citizenship arose from a classical republican organic view of a Christian society that contrasts sharply with both Jeffersonian and statist views. In short, Porter’s work provides a fascinating window into the understanding of Christian citizenship that once prevailed in a large portion of nineteenth-century America and can provide lessons for conservative Christians today.

Noah Porter’s Biography

Noah Porter (1811-1892) stood out as one of the “titans” of nineteenth-century moral philosophy. He was a Yale graduate who had served as a Congregationalist minister before returning to his alma mater in 1846. As Professor of Moral Philosophy and Metaphysics, Porter joined a group of faculty members recruited by President Theodore Dwight Woolsey, who helped transform the central aim of the college curriculum from mental discipline to self-development. The college’s goal was not merely to discipline students’ minds inside the classroom and regulate their behavior outside of it; instead, the curriculum sought to develop cultured men who were well rounded gentlemen with highly developed character and the ability to pursue truth-based scholarship. The academic institution believed that truth in all academic disciplines could be related to a nineteenth-century Protestant worldview. Like other academics

in mid-nineteenth-century America, Porter spent a year studying in Europe. For Porter, this meant studying philosophy at the University of Berlin under Adolph Trendelenburg. Even after he succeeded Woolsey as president of Yale in 1871, Porter continued to teach moral philosophy courses to undergraduates. Porter's works, *The Human Intellect* (1868) and *The Elements of Intellectual Science* (1871) became standard textbooks for a generation of college students. Likewise, his landmark study in moral philosophy, *The Elements of Moral Science*, enjoyed widespread popularity. In fact, Porter's textbook remained required reading for Yale undergraduates even after his retirement in 1886.¹

Porter's presidency of Yale is remembered best for two reasons. On the one hand, he helped transform the college into a genuine university. Porter led a group of Yale faculty that included such well-known scholars as the geologist James Dwight Dana, the church historian George Park Fisher, and the philologist William Dwight Whitney. Much of the faculty, like Porter, had completed advanced study in Germany and then returned to New Haven to help promote new scholarly methods. These new methods would prove to be essential to the development of the American university. While he was an advocate of scholarship based upon the German university model, Porter nevertheless remained a defender of traditional Christian collegiate education. Porter's conservatism was most evident in his 1879-1880 battle with William Graham Sumner over the use of secularist Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*.

¹ Wilson Smith, *Professors and Public Ethics: Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers before the Civil War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), 201-202; Louise L. Stevenson, *Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends: The New Haven Scholars and the Transformation of Higher Learning in America, 1830-1890* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 16, 102-103; Brooks Mather Kelly, *Yale: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 293. On Porter, see Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America, 1720-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 58-74; Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 128-45; Kuklick, "Philosophy at Yale in the Century after Darwin," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 21 (2004): 313-17; George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 124; Stevenson, *Scholarly Means*, 38, 102-103; D. H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience: The Shaping of the American National Ethic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 3-6, 9-10, 16, 48, 36, 75-76, 125-26, 159.

Popularly known as the “White Czar of Agnosticism,” Spencer grouped Christianity with “the superstitions of the Mohammedans and the South Sea Islanders.” Spencer’s views outraged Porter who argued that “Christianity must control the college in order to exclude its antagonist.” The antagonist to the Christian college was a secular view of education. Sumner, an unbridled champion of laissez-faire economics, and according to some critics, a “social Darwinist,” scandalized Porter for actually using Spencer’s work in an undergraduate class at Yale. What troubled Porter even more was the fact that Sumner did not provide undergraduates at this flagship evangelical college a thoroughgoing Christian theological critique of Spencer’s atheistic materialism. Despite protests over the suppression of Sumner’s academic freedom, Porter successfully forced Sumner to stop using Spencer’s work. Historian Louise Stevenson notes that Porter was an evangelical Protestant who “wrote within a framework of evangelical hope and faith.”²

Nineteenth-Century Moral Philosophy

“It was virtually impossible for a person born in the first sixty years of the nineteenth century and educated in the American colleges,” the historian D.H. Meyer observes, “to escape the influence of the course in moral philosophy.” In fact, moral philosophy actually remained a staple of collegiate education well into the late nineteenth century. Like mandatory classes in Greek and Latin, required courses in moral philosophy played an essential role in collegiate education. What a course in Greek or Latin might entail is most likely self-evident. What

² Louise L. Stevenson, “Porter, Noah,” American National Biography Database, <http://www.anb.org/articles/09/09-00600.html> (accessed February 2000); On the Porter-Sumner controversy, see Burton J. Bledstein, “Noah Porter versus William Graham Sumner,” *Church History* 43 (1974): 340-49; Marsden, *Soul*, 23-24, 127; Kelly, *Yale*, 270-71; Gillis Harp, “Traditionalist Dissent: The Reorientation of American Conservatism, 1885-1900,” *Modern Intellectual History* 5 (2008): 487-518.

students actually studied in moral philosophy, in *belles-lettres* or natural philosophy, probably seems like some quaint relic of a bygone era.

Moral philosophy emerged as an attempt to harness the Enlightenment for Protestant ends by providing a rational and scientific—as opposed to narrowly sectarian—justification for personal and public morality. In this regard, moral philosophy was the successor to theology and the predecessor of the social sciences. Moral philosophers, as Meyer observes, “maintained that they were not engaged in mere speculation.” Rather the philosophers were “indeed approximating the rigor of the physical sciences in their study of ‘the motives and rules of human actions.’ To their minds, effective teaching and exhortation demanded that their moral theories have the appearance of certainty; and the criterion of certainty was that of science.”³ Because moral philosophy was considered to be a scientific examination of morality, it enjoyed immense intellectual credibility throughout much of the nineteenth century. In contemporary educational terms, the course encompassed not only philosophical subjects, like epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics but also psychology, sociology, economics, and politics. College graduates, according to the prevailing Whiggish view of higher education, served as American society’s leaders. Historian Daniel Walker Howe observes that the moral philosophy course, usually taught by the parson-president, enjoyed the same “integrative, synthesizing function that theology had performed at medieval universities.”⁴

³ Meyer, *Instructed Conscience*, vii. On moral philosophy, see also E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978), 127-54; Allen Guelzo, “‘The Science of Duty’: Moral Philosophy and the Epistemology of Science in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective*, eds. David N. Livingstone, D.G. Hart, and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 267-89.

⁴ Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861* (1970; reprint, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 3. On the Whiggish view of higher education, see Stevenson, *Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends*, 5-6, 27-28, 39, 114-15, 119, 125-26; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 9, 27-28, 30, 300-301; Smith, *Professors and Public Ethics*, 3-27; Kuklick, *History of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 59, 73; Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 145.

Noah Porter's *Elements of Moral Science*

Nineteenth-century moral philosophy textbooks, like Porter's work, typically had two parts: theoretical ethics and practical ethics. The former analyzed the nature of knowledge and the foundations moral obligations. The latter applied those tenets to daily situations. In *The Elements of Moral Science*, Porter offers students a detailed theory of duty as well as an all-encompassing analysis of practical duties that surveyed a person's obligation to self-discipline, self-development, and moral requirements of Christian citizenship. Porter builds his moral philosophy upon one foundational principle—duty. He defines duty as “an action, or collection of actions, which ought to be done: in the abstract, it is the quality or relation which is common to and distinguishes such actions.” Porter describes the subject of his textbook as “the science of duty.”⁵ In his study of nineteenth-century moral philosophers, the historian Wilson Smith observes that their textbooks were geometrical in argument: The definitions of duties serve as axioms, and their elaborations function as theorems.⁶ Porter's nearly six hundred page work actually reads like a moral geometry textbook.

Faculty Psychology

To appreciate Porter's discussion of a Christian citizen's duties, one needs to delve briefly into nineteenth-century faculty psychology. Porter shared the faculty psychology of Scottish Common Sense Realism that dominated early nineteenth-century American academic philosophy. In a way, Porter had married into the Scottish Common Sense Realist tradition. His father-in-law, Nathaniel William Taylor, the noted Yale New Divinity theologian, was one of Scottish Common Sense Realism's earliest proponents. In addition to a body and a soul, the

⁵ Porter, *Elements of Moral Science* (1887) 3, 1.

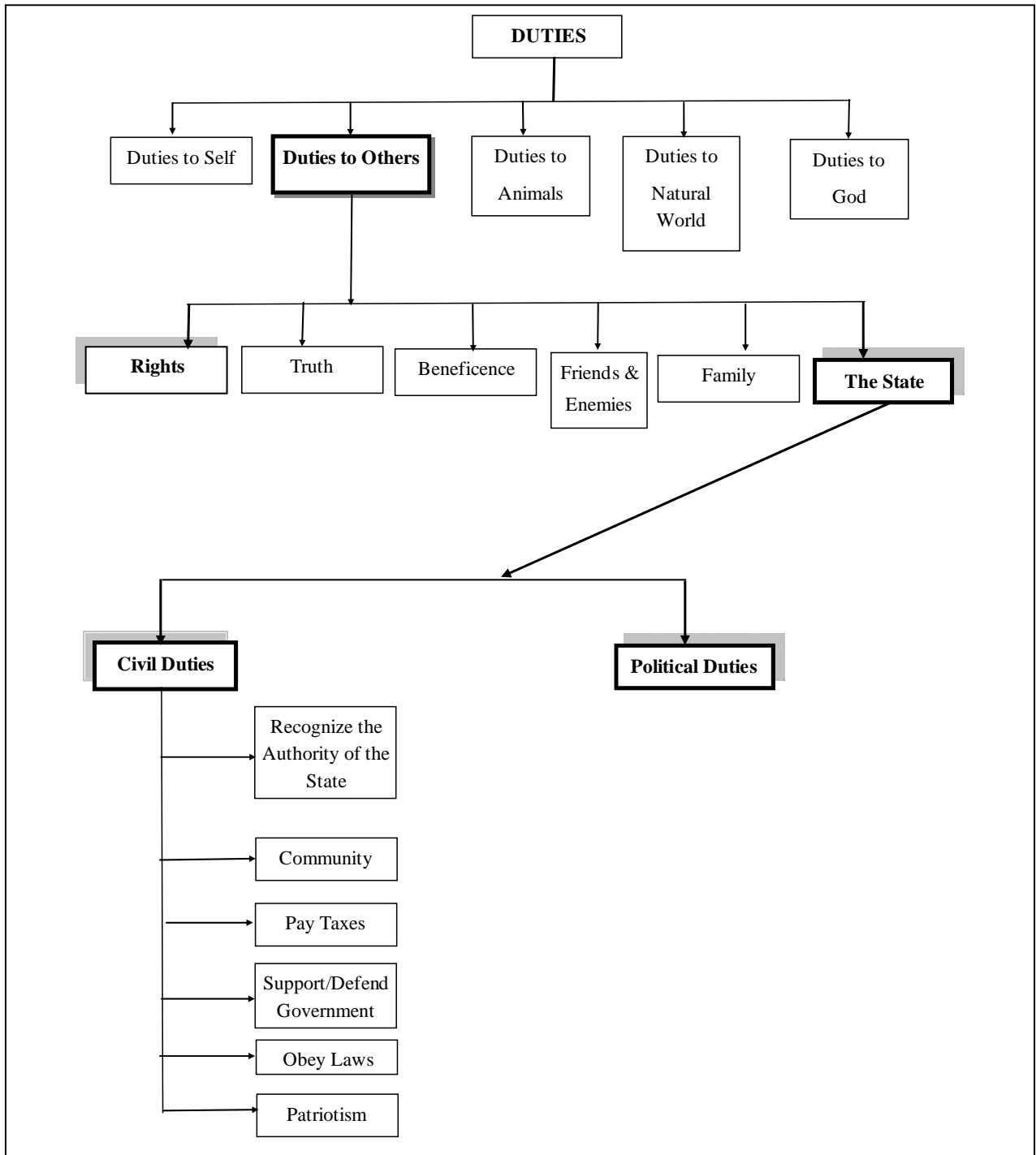
⁶ Noah Smith, *Professors and Ethics*, 35.

Scottish Common Sense Realist tradition advocated that every person has three rational faculties. Porter explains that “the consciousness of all men” attests to the fact that each person possesses “the powers of feeling, will, and intellect.” According to Porter, sensibilities, or “the capacity in man for feelings and desires,” have two critical parts or characteristics. Sensibilities are an “active power” because they “impel” people to engage in “activities of every kind.” At the same time, sensibilities can be passive in that “so long as the exciting object or condition is present and attended to, the appropriate feeling must necessarily be experienced.”

The second rational faculty, the will, is more than just “a power to execute or manifest the desires, or the so-called volitions, by words or bodily actions.” To Porter, “the act of choosing brings the man into, and leaves him in, a state of choice.” An object inspires a person’s will to action in order to meet the desire. A person’s will is shaped by the continuous fulfillment of a desire. Together, sensibilities and the will form a person’s character. Porter defines character as “the controlling or prominent peculiarity of a man, pre-eminently that by which a man’s individuality is distinguished, and usually involving more or less distinctly moral relationships.” A person’s character is eventually fixed as a consequence of the voluntary choices he or she makes. Moreover, an individual’s character is either “morally good or evil.” Because an individual will daily make good or evil decisions, the result of these choices inevitably shapes everything the individual thinks, feels, or does.

The final dimension of faculty psychology, the intellect, is involved in every rational choice a person makes. An individual has an intuitive moral sense about the rightness or wrongness of an action. This intuition is the fruit of “the reflective intellect, and the voluntary impulses or affections” working together. The fact that the mind makes moral distinctions or judgments is “universally recognized,” Porter contends. People know from their own experience

that they make moral evaluations about their actions and feelings. “No man was ever known to exist . . . who did not recognize certain ethical distinctions as real, and esteem them as of supreme importance.” According to Porter, the morality of an act or feeling, its rightness or wrongness, is as “immutable” as the laws of mathematics. In other words, each person has a



moral sense about his or her duty. “Man can sooner part with his shadow when he stands in the open sunlight, than he can shake off or lose sight of that ideal of duty which he finds in his own capacities of good when viewed in the light of his reflective judgment.”⁷

Five Sets of Moral Obligations

In light of these fundamental principles regarding the working of a person’s mind and the shaping of his or her character, Porter outlines humanity’s moral responsibilities. He identifies five general categories of moral obligations: duties to ourselves; to our fellow-men; to animals; to the physical world; and to God. In typical Scottish Common Sense Realist fashion, Porter contends that a person knows that he or she has these moral obligations through inductive reasoning based upon both objective and subjective facts. The objective facts, according to Porter, concern the higher ends for which human nature and a person’s social relationships are designed. The subjective facts are “the strong impulses or feelings which impel” a person to fulfill “these ends.” Porter advocates a teleological system of ethics because he contends that a particular action is morally right when it promotes an end that is inherently good. Within each of these categories of moral obligation—duties to ourselves, others, animals, the natural world, and God—Porter discerns a matrix of sub-categories.

For example, one’s duty to one’s self covers two specific types of duties: duties to develop good character and duties to cultivate good conditions. The general or fundamental principle underlying one’s duty to self is that “man is morally bound to choose, to feel, and to act, in such a way as to effect and attain the highest good possible for himself.” Within the sub-category of duties to develop good character, Porter includes duties related to one’s appetites and bodily life, duties to one’s intellect, duties to develop proper feelings and habits, and duties

⁷ Porter, *Moral Science*, 332, 22, 49, 77, 93, 96, 101, 147, 113, 128-29, 146.

related to one's wants, rights, and moral claims. Porter's analysis goes on to describe in painstaking detail even more specific duties in reference to each of these dimensions of one's duty toward one's self.⁸

Duties to Others

Porter describes the obligations of Christian citizenship under the general category of duties to others. The key principle informing a person's duties to others parallels that which informs one's duty to one's self. A person "is morally bound to feel and act for the highest well-being of his fellow-men."⁹ Within the general category of duties to others, Porter identifies six sub-categories: duties toward rights; truth; general beneficence; friends and enemies; family; and the state. Porter explains his understanding of the nature and purpose of Christian citizenship in reference to the rights and duties to the state.

Rights

According to Porter, "man is born in society," and therefore, a man "is a 'political animal,' existing in a social organism." Contrary to John Locke, Porter contends that the individual is not the fundamental building block of society. Porter reasons that if "*unus homo nullus homo* [a man alone is not truly a man], it cannot be denied that a man separated from his kind is inconceivable in conception and impossible in fact." So as "soon as man awakes to self-consciousness, he awakes to the fact that he is a member of a community of his fellows, and that society expresses and enforces its claims to some response of duty."¹⁰

Porter defines a "right" as a moral claim. In fact, he uses the two terms interchangeably. Individuals living in community, which is the foundation of civil society, therefore, have rights

⁸ Porter, *Moral Science*, 309, 307, 312, 375.

⁹ Porter, *Moral Science*, 309, 307, 312, 375.

¹⁰ Porter, *Moral Science*, 397, 396.

or moral claims upon each other. Porter labels these rights as universal or common moral claims, which are natural, universal, and inalienable. He calls them natural because the “nature from which they spring, and on which they are founded, is human nature.” Since they derive from the nature of man, “they extend as widely as universal manhood.” Finally, these rights are “incapable of being rightfully parted with by their possessor,” except for a crime by due process of the law or for a limited period necessitated by the government. An example of governmental influence would be compulsory military service. Christian citizens living in a civil society, therefore, have a duty to respect others’ rights to life, property, and personal liberty.¹¹

The Nature of the State and Duties to the State

Porter’s understanding of the nature of the state is pivotal to his vision of Christian citizenship. He has an organic or communal understanding of the state. According to Porter, “the state is one of the natural and normal conditions of human existence, and that, so soon as man recognizes his relations to his fellow-men, he finds himself in a community.” Consequently, he uses the term “state” to signify more than just the institutions of government or even the civic order. The state represents something larger. Porter argues that once man recognizes that he is a political animal, “he assents to the truth as axiomatic that this community of man should be organized.” And if “he finds that it is organized already, he accepts its institutions and its officials . . . as invested with authority over him.” Porter reiterates the basic democratic principle that “every government derives its authority from the consent, and is exercised for the welfare, of the governed.”¹²

Porter categorically rejects both individualistic or Jeffersonian and statist views of the state. Jeffersonianism, Porter reasons, limits the function of the state to solely and exclusively

¹¹ Porter, *Moral Science*, 401, 402, 400. Porter elaborates upon the nature of these natural rights in 406-15.

¹² Porter, *Moral Science*, 488-89.

defending the three inalienable natural rights of life, liberty, and property. According to this radically individualistic view of society, if the state does anything else, “it undertakes functions which it can neither legitimately propose, nor successfully perform.” Porter contends this theory “is demonstrated to be false by proving itself to be impracticable.” He insists that such a theory “has never been put in practice, and is not likely to be.” He continues, the state has “other interests besides the three great rights of man” that it is “compelled to recognize.” In typical New England Whig fashion, these interests include public decency, public health, marriage and family, pauperism, along with commerce and communication. Porter finds the solely “negative function” of the civil government espoused by Jeffersonianism as “narrow and untenable.”¹³

Porter also rejects statist views of the state that begin “with an abstract theory of the natural supremacy of the state [which] regards the individual citizen as existing exclusively or supremely for [his or her] well-being and glory.” Such a paternalistic view of the state, which Porter may have encountered during his year of study in Germany, presupposes that the state “can take care of its citizens in most particulars better than they can care for themselves” and consequently “assumes to direct many of the details of their family and social life, their dress and diet and health” as well as education, morality, and religion with “careful and minute supervision.” While Porter cites extreme despotism and unrestrained monarchs, as example Louis XIV, his criticism could also easily apply to a Marxist view of the state.¹⁴

Between the Jeffersonian and statist theories of civil society, Porter advocates the strain of the Whig-Republican tradition that stressed the organic or communal nature of society. Unlike the Jeffersonian tradition’s stress on the individual, the Whig-Republican tradition stresses self-discipline, rational order, and social responsibility. Porter defines the state as “a community of

¹³ Porter, *Moral Science*, 491, 404-405.

¹⁴ Porter, *Moral Science*, 492.

living beings, with varying characteristics, which is organized for more or fewer great public interests—more or fewer according to the culture and habits of the people.” He goes on to argue that the state is “a society constituted for and maintained by certain functions, which it can only perform through certain” governmental agencies. For this reason, the state has a limited but very positive role in cultivating a moral society. Porter, therefore, contends the state has a moral obligation to promote public education and to curb vice, such as the sale of obscene literature.¹⁵

Duties to the State

As members of civil society, Porter asserts individuals have duties to the state. “All our duties as citizens of the state spring from and are included in the general obligation to promote the highest well being of our fellow-men,” Porter insists. He discerns two classes of duties of Christian citizens: civil and political. Civic duties focus on the “citizen of the commonwealth” and political duties relate to the citizen “as a member of its polity, or its governing class.”¹⁶

According to Porter, the Christian citizen’s first duty is “to recognize the authority of the government which prevails in the country in which he finds himself.” In his explanation of the importance of the government, Porter takes another swipe at the individualistic view of the state. “Those idealists who have dreamed of founding a pure society, in which government and authority should be resolved into the consenting consciences of its members, and would thus fulfill their dainty and impracticable ideals, have never succeeded in dispensing altogether with authority for the restraint of the conscience from acts which otherwise would not have been prevented, nor with physical force for the repression of those brutal impulses which now and

¹⁵ Porter, *Moral Science*, 493, 523, 493-96.

¹⁶ Porter, *Moral Science*, 512.

then are certain to assert themselves.”¹⁷ Porter would likely have little time for today’s libertarians.

Porter delineates that the second duty of Christian citizenship concerns the responsibility “to possess and cherish those feelings of special interest in his own country which are the natural and necessary consequences of moral love to his kind.” According to Porter, this duty makes the Christian citizen “the lover of his fellow-men.” He calls the fulfillment of this duty “the natural expression and rational consequence of a benevolent will.” This duty cultivates feelings of gratitude, sympathy, and pity for one’s neighbor along with a shared labor and sacrifice for the community’s common good.¹⁸

The third obligation of Christian citizenship, Porter reasons, is the duty “to contribute to the support of the government to the extent and in the measure which the law requires.” He contends that no government could exist without taxing its citizens. Consequently, governments “must prescribe the amount which is required, and compel the payment of it.” Christian citizens have a moral duty to pay taxes even if they are “unreasonable and disproportionate, and ruinous to both government and citizen,” claims Porter. Citizens, to be sure, have a right to protest high taxes and to seek changes “by all lawful means.” But “after the decision is made, it is equally his duty to obey, whether the tax be equitable or oppressive.”¹⁹

The fourth Christian duty involves the commitment “to support and defend his government, and at times even at risk and sacrifice of his life.” While not every citizen is obligated to defend the nation during times of war, it is the duty of some to make the sacrifice. Like the duty to pay one’s taxes, the government has the responsibility to determine to whom

¹⁷ Porter, *Moral Science*, 512, 513.

¹⁸ Porter, *Moral Science*, 513-14.

¹⁹ Porter, *Moral Science*, 514.

and how individuals should discharge their responsibilities in times of national peril.²⁰ Porter goes so far as to label conscription fine during national crises.

The fifth obligation of Christian citizenship is one's duty to obey the law. Porter devotes more attention to this duty than to any other. This "comprehensive principle," however, is not without qualification. In fact, Porter identifies five potential exceptions to the duty to obey the law. He acknowledges the government sometimes enacts laws that "may be clearly unwise and even mischievous." Even in a democracy where citizens elect their lawmakers, legislators occasionally devise "unwise" laws. Although the "evil consequences" of such laws "may be obvious to all competent observers" and "bring speedy disaster and dishonor to the country," the laws "must rule the conscience, and demand obedience" of Christian citizens. The second possible objection Christian citizens might raise to following the law would be obeying laws that are "demoralizing" and offend the conscience. Porter cites laws that "tempt men to dishonesty or crime by unwise and excessive taxation" or that stimulate "the vicious or sensual appetites." One example here might be laws that ease the legal restrictions on divorce or laws that permit the sale of alcohol on Sundays. Citizens may attempt to expose the laws' demoralizing tendencies and seek to redress them. So long as the laws persist, however, the Christian must respect them even if they find it troubling. The third possible exception Porter identifies concerns laws that require blatantly immoral acts that violate the plain commands of conscience. He writes, "When such a law usurps the place of the moral on which it stands, it has no authority to which it can appeal." Such laws, Porter speculates "are not likely often to occur." But when they do, he counsels, it is "obvious that such laws should be disobeyed." Porter reaches the same conclusion concerning laws that "require or forbid actions which are forbidden or required by God." While Christians sometimes misinterpret God's commands, thereby leading to fanaticism and civil disorder, the

²⁰ Porter, *Moral Science*, 515.

general principle nevertheless “remains true.” The final exception concerns laws that “may be unconstitutional and tyrannical.” Such laws, Porter argues, “may be disobeyed or resisted for the purpose of testing their legality at the proper tribunals.” Dissenters, therefore, must be prepared to suffer consequences for their violations of immoral laws even if they consider them unjust. Only in the most egregious cases in which when the Constitution “is frequently and persistently violated, or the administration of the government becomes intolerable, or so fraught with abuses,” may “resistance to the authority of the state” be justified.²¹

The final duty of Christian citizenship is patriotism. “The impulse to love our country is natural and strong,” surmises Porter. The duty of patriotism “connects us with the past by all that is romantic in the heroic age of our sturdy ancestors.” Patriotism links citizens with the nation’s founders, along with “their struggles with nature and with hostile powers,” their aspirations for civic liberty, and the foundations of national prosperity. This prosperity includes “our capacity for moral and intellectual achievements” at home and abroad. Yet Porter was not a mindless jingoistic patriot. “True patriotism is sensitive to national defects, and zealous for the moral welfare, the intellectual culture, the aesthetic grace, and the religious faith of one’s fellow-citizens.”²²

In addition to civic duties, Christian citizens also have political duties. Compared to his analysis of civic duties, Porter devotes little attention to the political dimension of Christian citizenship. Porter defined this second class of responsibilities as duties of “an administrator of the state.” In other words, Christians have a responsibility to participate in the political process by voting and sometimes serving as officers of the state.²³

²¹ Porter, *Moral Science*, 515-16, 517, 520.

²² Porter, *Moral Science*, 522.

²³ Porter, *Moral Science*, 522-23.

Porter summarizes his examination of Christian citizenship by reiterating his conviction that “the state is a social organism which is natural and necessary to man.” Consequently, he concludes that the state is “always a sacred institution.” He also repeats his rejection of the radical form of Jeffersonianism by calling it an “offensive exaggeration” and “a caricature” of the “truth.” Since the state is a community, its well-being depends in part upon its citizens not only exercising their rights but also fulfilling their duties. “Such fidelity and exactness are required by civil statute, and are enforced by moral law.” The Yale moral philosopher adds, it “is essential to the well-being of the state” that these duties “should be performed with intelligence, with gravity, with exactness, with zeal, with energy, and at times with enthusiasm.”²⁴

Conclusion

Porter’s vision of Christian citizenship helped influence an entire generation of college graduates. According to Porter, citizens not only had rights to be defended but also responsibilities toward the community to be exercised. His organic view of the nature of society represents a Christian alternative to the rabid individualism of the growing libertarian strain within the Jeffersonian tradition. His beliefs are also a substitute for the paternalistic state. While Porter certainly criticized the government and its potential to overreach its sphere of responsibility, he expressed no bitter disdain for the institutions of government. In fact, Porter was downright optimistic about citizens and the government working together for the common good. The Yale moral philosopher did not consider paying taxes a form of theft. To be sure, tax codes have changed dramatically since Porter’s lifetime and have warranted the use of lawful means to redress perceived injustices. Porter, however, maintains it is a Christian’s basic duty to pay taxes even when one felt such taxes were egregious. His call for Christian patriotism, albeit

²⁴ Porter, *Moral Science*, 528, 323-24.

seasoned by a thoughtful recognition that the nation's ideals are not always fully realized, should give cynics in both political parties reason to reconsider their criticisms of the nation's past, values, and future. Finally, the tone of Porter's analysis lacks the histrionics. While not uncritical of alternative views of the state, he avoided using sarcasm and ridicule to caricature those views. Porter does not attempt to mobilize political action through the cultivation of *ressentiment* but through a commitment to the common good.