



## *The 2016–2017 Essay Prize for Doctoral Students*

# Converted Citizens: From National Allegiance towards Heavenly Adherence

MICHAEL KNIPPA

The Christian church has long understood *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of prayer/worship is the law of belief). Our beliefs are inevitably shaped by the practices, the disciplines, the formations that we submit ourselves to and even undergo subconsciously. Thanks in part to the work of James K. A. Smith, Christians have increasingly become aware that such patterns of formation are actually all around us all the time—in the malls where we shop, the sports teams for which we cheer, the media we consume, and the nations in which we live and to which we pledge our allegiances.<sup>1</sup> The Christian church is increasingly struggling with the reality that these patterns of cultural, economic, and political formations are becoming (or have long been) more pervasive and persuasive than the formation of Christians as disciples of Jesus Christ by the church. In particular, many have begun to notice and question the formative power that politics seems to have upon Christians of all confessions. Craig Hovey voices this concern unequivocally, arguing that “the character formation wrought by the modern state is not merely an

<sup>1</sup>James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

*In a modern, post-Christendom world, to what do Christians owe their allegiance? The disparate parts of the world “form” our loyalty by the obedience that each one demands. Is there not a formal way that Christians ought to be asked for and reminded of their chief obedience to God?*

eneebled parody of Christian discipleship but positively competes with it.”<sup>2</sup> The prophetic words of Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon are in fact the case: in this age “Christians are intentionally made by an adventuresome Church.”<sup>3</sup>

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The Catholic Church was an early herald of this reality when it adopted the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in the 1970s.<sup>4</sup> This modern rite for adult converts was not created out of nothing but instead draws from the deep memory of the church’s liturgical life, specifically the liturgical patterns of fourth- and fifth-century Christians.<sup>5</sup> The RCIA understands conversion as a process of leaving the old and learning the new, of forgetting the formation of the world and being swept into the life of Christ experienced through his body, the church. One of the most prominent transitional rituals from ancient practice that has been revived and reshaped in the RCIA is the practice of scrutinies and exorcisms. While it would perhaps have been tempting for these parts of the ancient baptismal rituals to be passed over in the RCIA, Dominic Serra praises their inclusion. He declares, “This is a ‘traditional’ reform in the fullest sense because it is not the mere reinstatement of an ancient practice but a new formulation by which the ancient form is given new life and adapted to its new setting. . . . Concern for the liturgical tradition has more in common with horticulture than with taxidermy.”<sup>6</sup>

This article will explore how, in a similar spirit to that which Serra endorses, the growing insights and concerns of theological politics can be brought into conversation with liturgical theology—which is nothing less than the formative patterns of the church’s life together. Specifically, it will argue that the rite of adherence, a part of several ancient baptismal liturgies, ought to be reemployed within the Christian church to help form the ultimate allegiance of Christians towards Christ alone within an age that is marked by the scourge of nationalistic idolatry.

<sup>2</sup>Craig Hovey, “Neither Cyclops Nor Sophist: Christian Formation against the State,” *Political Theology* 12/1 (2011) 61.

<sup>3</sup>Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989) 19.

<sup>4</sup>For a brief history of the modern RCIA, see Peter McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013).

<sup>5</sup>See Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999) (hereafter *RCI*) and E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, revised and expanded by Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003) (hereafter *DBL*).

<sup>6</sup>Dominic E. Serra, “New Observations About the Scrutinies of the Elect in Early Roman Practice,” *Worship* 80/6 (2006) 511.

## THE PERILS OF MODERN NATIONALISM

William Cavanaugh is a Catholic theologian whose writings continuously urge Christians to become more discerning and critical of their interactions with modern nation-states. Cavanaugh's most basic concern is that over the past few centuries there has been a "migration of the holy," a movement of what people consider to be sacred from the church to the state.<sup>7</sup> This concerns Cavanaugh because it not only diminishes the truly catholic nature of Christ's body but also because the nation-state has come, in large part, to control the thinking and the ultimate loyalty of individual Christians. Cavanaugh contends that "the temporal has become not a time but a space, a realm or sphere, one which is usually located outside the spiritual realm occupied by the Church."<sup>8</sup> This change of imagination "helped to facilitate the shift to state dominance over the church by distinguishing inward religion from the bodily disciplines of the state."<sup>9</sup> According to Cavanaugh, first monarchs, and then the nation-states that followed after them, developed their own liturgies (patterns of formation) to promote unity among their diverse subjects. The motto "'one king, one faith, one law' was a transmutation of the biblical formula 'one God, one faith, one baptism.'"<sup>10</sup> In other words, slowly but surely "the kinds of public devotion formerly associated with Christianity in the West never did go away, but largely migrated to a new realm defined by the nation state."<sup>11</sup> This migration of the holy heralds the rise of an insidious, but often imperceptible, form of idolatry.

Michael Budde sees the same problem confronting the church. He laments that "for the past five hundred years, political and economic leaders have worked to undermine Christian unity and fragment the church in the interests of nationalism, capitalism, and individualism."<sup>12</sup> The result of this is that "the bonds of baptism are spiritualized and sidelined in favor of the blood and iron ties of patriotism, and ethnonational solidarity."<sup>13</sup> As proof that this is in fact the case, Budde notes that in the lead-up to the second Iraq War most churches and church leaders opposed the war, but this did not stop Christian soldiers or many Christian citizens from supporting and engaging in that war.<sup>14</sup> His point is not the right or wrong of that particular war, or just war theory and pacifism within the Christian tradition, or the place of the church within the political order. Rather, he seeks to

<sup>7</sup>William T. Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011) 3.

<sup>8</sup>William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Christian Practices of Space and Time* (New York: T & T Clark, 2002) 91.

<sup>9</sup>William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence* (New York: Oxford University) 84.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 174.

<sup>11</sup>Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy*, 1.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Budde, *The Borders of Baptism: Identities, Allegiances, and the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011) 5.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 37.

draw attention to the fact that this incident directly shows that for many Christians today loyalty to the nation-state has become more formative than hearing the message and call of Christ's church.

It is not only Catholic theologians who have spotted the rise of nationalism as a rival claimant for a Christian's ultimate loyalty. The Lutheran theologian Gifford Grobien recently argued:

In spite of rhetoric that acknowledges freedom of worship, the American experience demonstrates "the taking over of the omnipotence and omniscience of God by the political authority." Rhetorically, the undefined god is whoever (or whatever) one wants it to be. Pragmatically, the undefined god is redefined as the state.... This god of the state comes complete with its own liturgy of allegiance, anthems, symbols, and prayers.<sup>15</sup>

It is important for Lutherans to remember that the doctrine of the "two realms" or "kingdoms" of God's rule over the world works as a check in two directions. First, it seeks to protect the church from the ever-alluring power of the sword and coercion, for the church's only sword is the Word and its only power the proclamation of God's grace for us in Jesus Christ. Yet, critically (and perhaps forgotten too often), the two realms doctrine also works in the other direction—it always denies the state the power to make a person righteous before God or to itself be a "god." Martin Luther also was aware of this second danger. In commenting upon Ps 101 he warned, "In the devil's name the secular leaders always want to be Christ's master."<sup>16</sup> The kingdoms of this world are ever and only servants to and tools of God's left-hand reign through law and the sword, curbing and restraining the evil of the world, as Paul makes clear in Rom 13. Whenever princes, rulers, or democracies seek to deify themselves, they transgress the limits of their God-given vocation. When this is the case, as Grobien rightly observes, "the call for the church... is not that she be subsumed into the idolatry of the state, but that she call it to account."<sup>17</sup>

The Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann draws out similar warnings. He states that "not only the 'world' but even Christians themselves often absolutize their earthly values—national, ethnic, political, cultural—making them the criterion of their Christian faith, rather than subordinating them" to Christ.<sup>18</sup> Finally, and perhaps more well-known, the Protestant theologian Stanley Hauerwas also shares these concerns and has drawn continual attention to the formative and corrosive power of American nationalism upon the church in the United States.<sup>19</sup> Regardless of one's views on any one political issue,

<sup>15</sup>Gifford A. Grobien, "The Christian Voice in the Civil Realm," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 78/3–4 (2014) 124.

<sup>16</sup>Martin Luther, *Psalm 101* (1534), in *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, 75 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia 1955–) 13:194. *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, 71 vols. to date (Weimar: H. Böhlau 1914) 51:239.

<sup>17</sup>Grobien, "The Christian Voice," 124.

<sup>18</sup>Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1974) 32.

<sup>19</sup>See, for but one example, Stanley Hauerwas, *War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011). See also note 3, above.

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### CHRIST AS "LORD"

The challenge of nationalism, while deeply concerning, is nothing new to the Christian church. Over the past half-century biblical scholars have exposed the fact that the era in which the New Testament was written was not immune from the division brought about by empire and political ambition. A field of study has emerged around the deification and worship of the Roman Caesars.<sup>20</sup> Such emperor worship was "the fastest growing religion in Paul's world, the eastern Mediterranean."<sup>21</sup> Paul's letter to the Philippians is helpful to consider on this point. Philippi was a famous city in the Roman Empire because of its founding by Caesar Augustus and its subsequent status as a Roman city even though it was located well outside of Italy. Many former Roman soldiers, who were Roman citizens, had settled there.<sup>22</sup> Paul did not leave the possible pride of the Philippians in their Roman citizenship unchallenged but instead wrote to them saying "But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:20). Paul's invocation of citizenship here is by no means accidental—it was a challenge to the growing cult of the Caesars who often declared themselves the world's true "lord" and "savior."<sup>23</sup> N. T. Wright argues that in this passage Paul is teaching the Christians of Philippi that they "must hear the call of God in Jesus to sit light to their civic status and be prepared to hail Jesus, not Caesar, as lord."<sup>24</sup>

The theme of heavenly citizenship and the ultimate allegiance to Christ that it entailed continued persistently in the early church. Tertullian noted in his treatise *On Idolatry* how easily it was for allegiance to a worldly kingdom to fall into idolatry that challenged the reign of Christ. He warned: "there is no agreement between the divine and the human sacrament, the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness. One soul cannot be due to

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, Richard A. Horsely ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (New York: T & T Clark, 1997).

<sup>21</sup>N. T. Wright, *Paul, In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) 64.

<sup>22</sup>See, for example, Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998) 2–6.

<sup>23</sup>See Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 97–98, 232–235.

<sup>24</sup>Wright, *Paul*, 72.

two *masters*—God and Caesar.”<sup>25</sup> The sacrament referred to here is likely a military oath of allegiance that was a requirement for soldiers in the Roman army to take—a pledge of loyalty to the “lord” Caesar. The urgency with which Tertullian wrote demonstrates the seriousness with which the early Christians viewed the pledging of ultimate allegiance to worldly powers. The martyrdom of Marcellus demonstrated that Christians were killed for their refusal to participate in “the oath of allegiance to the emperor.”<sup>26</sup> Finally, the early but anonymous Christian letter to Diognetus offers a clear-sighted view of heavenly citizenship. The letter explains:

As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven.<sup>27</sup>

It would seem, given the concerns that many theologians now have about the rising power of national allegiance over Christians, that our era is primed for the rediscovery, and inclusion in our liturgy, of the theme of heavenly citizenship and the allegiance to Christ as “Lord” that attends to it. Therefore, the rite of adherence should be adopted into Christian baptismal liturgies as a means of enacting, teaching, and celebrating the Christian’s heavenly citizenship.

### THE RITE OF ADHERENCE

The rite of adherence (*syntaxis*) is present in several ancient baptismal liturgies and often occurs immediately after the renunciation of Satan (*apotaxis*).<sup>28</sup> John Chrysostom recounted the rite in one of his catechetical sermons: “After the renunciation of the wicked one and of all thing which are important to him, the priest again has you say: ‘And I enter into thy service, O Christ.’”<sup>29</sup> This placement and pattern is echoed in *The Apostolic Constitutions*, wherein the candidates performed their adherence by saying “And I associate myself to Christ.”<sup>30</sup> *The Canons of Hippolytus* phrases the adherence in a trinitarian manner, with the catechumen stating, “I believe, and I submit myself to you and to all your service, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”<sup>31</sup> Within Cyril of Jerusalem’s catechetical lectures the rite of ad-

<sup>25</sup>Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 8 vols. (Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1885) 3:73 (hereafter ANF).

<sup>26</sup>J. Nelson Kraybill, “What Madness Possessed You? Catechesis for New Allegiance,” *Vision* 4/2 (2003) 5–6.

<sup>27</sup>ANF 1:26–27.

<sup>28</sup>RCI, 122.

<sup>29</sup>John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, trans. Paul W. Harkins (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1963) 51. Cf. *DBL*, 45.

<sup>30</sup>*DBL*, 39.

<sup>31</sup>*DBL*, 131. On the shift toward a Trinitarian confession within the rite of adherence, see Paul F. Bradshaw, *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2010) 71–75.

herence was symbolized by a physical turning of the catechumen from facing east to facing west along with a spoken confession that was also trinitarian.<sup>32</sup>

Alistair Stewart argues that the rite of adherence emerged early in the life of the church in response to Roman persecution: instead of swearing an oath to Caesar, Christians learned, and formalized, their pledge of allegiance to Christ alone.<sup>33</sup> While this is conjecture, it is clear that “the formula of adhesion is less evident in [ancient] western liturgies than in [ancient] liturgies of the East.”<sup>34</sup> This explains why the rite of adherence is not evident within the Western tradition but is present within the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Alexander Schmemmann recounts the practice of the rite of adherence as follows:

Then the priest says to the catechumen: Hast thou united thyself unto Christ?  
And he replies: I have.  
P: Dost thou believe in Him?  
C: I believe in him as King and God.<sup>35</sup>

According to Schmemmann, adherence to Christ “implies... a personal attachment to Christ, of an enrollment in the ranks of those who serve Christ, of an oath similar to the one taken by soldiers.”<sup>36</sup> It is important to note that within this confession the terms “King” and “God” are not synonymous terms. To confess Christ as king is a term of political import that demands “unconditional obedience.”<sup>37</sup> Schmemmann affirms that this act of adhering means that the Christian belongs to Christ’s kingdom “here and now, and we belong to it and serve it before all other ‘kingdoms.’ Our belonging, our loyalty to anything in ‘this world’—be it State, nation, family, culture, or any other ‘value’ is valid only inasmuch as it does not contradict or mutilate our primary loyalty and ‘syntaxis’ to the Kingdom of Christ.”<sup>38</sup>

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The Episcopal Church added the rite of adherence into their baptism service in the 1979 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*.<sup>39</sup> As with the ancient liturgies, the rite follows immediately after the renunciation of Satan. The *Book of Common*

<sup>32</sup>DBL, 31.

<sup>33</sup>Alistair Stewart, “The Christological Form of the Earliest *Syntaxis*: The Evidence of Pliny,” *Studia Liturgica* 41/1 (2011) 1–8.

<sup>34</sup>Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1994) 20 note 93.

<sup>35</sup>Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 31.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 31–32.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>39</sup>For a brief history of this, see *RCI*, 326–335.

*Prayer* structures the rite as a threefold pattern of question and response.<sup>40</sup> Intriguingly, the rite finds its center around the person of Christ rather than expressing a trinitarian confession as the threefold pattern might seem to have suggested. Besides this example, though, the rite of adherence remains little known and used in the West. Even the Catholic RCIA, which recovered so much from the ancient baptismal liturgies, excludes it.<sup>41</sup> Once again, Schmemmann is insightful as to why this might be:

It is when the world became “Christian” and identified itself with Christian faith and Christian cult that the meaning of this renunciation [and adherence] began to be progressively lost. . . . Christians became so accustomed to Christianity as an integral part of the world and to the Church as simply the religious expression of their worldly ‘values’ that the very idea of a tension or conflict between their Christian faith and the world faded from their life. And even today. . . . so many Christians are still convinced that there is nothing basically wrong with the world and that one can very happily accept its “way of life” all its values and “priorities,” while fulfilling at the same time one’s “religious duties.”<sup>42</sup>

Schmemmann was sounding an alarm decades ago. It is time for him to be heeded. In a world that is increasingly described as “non-Christian” or “post-Christian,” and that is increasingly partisan and polarized, the rite of adherence is primed to find a new and critical place in the life of the Christian church. Specifically, it should be (re)adopted within the various baptismal liturgies of the church with particular emphasis given to the reality that Christians owe their ultimate, and final, allegiance to Jesus Christ alone.

Incorporating this rite into the worship life of congregations grants a ritualized moment when, both as individuals and together as the people of God, Christians echo the words of the Apostle Thomas as they recall their unconditional loyalty to Christ, who is their “Lord” and “God” (John 20:28). The presence of the rite in the liturgy would provide an opportunity for ongoing catechesis by pastors and teachers against the encroachment of other rival claimants for Christians’ absolute dedication. It also provides church leaders a concrete point of reminder through which they can continually teach that what binds Christians together is not their particular political commitments but rather the unity won for them in Christ’s victory over “the rulers and authorities” of this age (Col 2:15). By adhering to Christ above all, the Christian learns that they are part of something far greater

<sup>40</sup>Question: Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior? Answer: I do. Question: Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love? Answer: I do. Question: Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord? Answer: I do.” *Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Seabury, 1979) 302–303.

<sup>41</sup>See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, National Conference of Catholic Bishops (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1988). Bradshaw argues that the threefold, interrogative pattern of the Western rite’s confession of faith (i.e., “Do you believe. . . .” “I do”) served a similar function to the East’s outright statement of adherence. See Paul F. Bradshaw, “The Profession of Faith in Early Christian Baptism,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 78/2 (2006) 101–115. Even if this was the case, it appears that this part of the Western tradition has long ago lost its binding power upon the individual and so the use of the rite of adherence could serve to reinvigorate the Western rite.

<sup>42</sup>Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 28–29.



and grander than just their own particular nation of origin or political ideology, for they are citizens of heaven. For them “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female” (Gal 3:28). As the Christian’s loyalty to Christ is tried, tested, and tempted by calls to raise nation or partisan politics above Christ, the rite of adherence can be a constant call towards the Christian’s “only absolute oath: the one they took on the day of their Baptism, of their ‘enrollment’ in the ranks of those for whom Christ is the only King and Lord.”<sup>43</sup> Certainly this rite is no cure-all, but it is a start; the rite of adherence is a powerful act filled with many possibilities for extolling and encouraging faithful allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### TOWARDS HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

The aim of this article has not been to delineate the proper relationship between church and state or to consider the perennial question that is “Christ and culture.” Rather, the central question that is being raised by theologians from various backgrounds is more fundamental: Where ought the ultimate allegiance of Christians to rest? Even if the concerns of the political theologians raised above about the growing dangers of nationalistic idolatry are only halfway correct, they should still merit the full attention and response of the Christian church, in her teaching, preaching, and liturgy. Fortunately, the church has long remembered and confronted the challenge of political idolatry. Within our own context, the ancient Christian rite of adherence stands ready for wider adoption and use in the life of the Church, for through it Christians can learn and remember that they are ultimately a people who “must obey God rather than any human authority” (Acts 5:29). ⊕



*MICHAEL KNIPPA is a PhD candidate in systematic theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He received a BA degree in psychology from Concordia University in Irvine, California (2006), and an MDiv degree from Concordia Seminary (2012). He is a part-time teacher at Lutheran High School South in Affton, Missouri, and a guest instructor at Concordia Seminary.*

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 32.

The nation-states that emerged before the massive influx of migrants. This is why attempts to plant public rhetoric and political practice, peculiar to immigration countries, in European soil are bound to seem awkward. The issue is multiculturalism. To ensure any study of multiculturalism is meaningful, it is necessary to agree on what the terms used actually mean, which is not easy since the term multiculturalism itself has no broadly accepted definition. In everyday life multiculturalism is identified with ethnic, linguistic, religious and life-style diversity in society. If earlier this stemmed primarily from the historical heterogeneity of the population in most modern states, in the post-war decades it was mostly brought about by immigration. Citizenship, relationship between an individual and a state to which the individual owes allegiance and in turn is entitled to its protection. Citizens have certain rights, duties, and responsibilities that are denied or only partially extended to noncitizens in the country. Learn more about citizenship. Encyclopaedia Britannica's editors oversee subject areas in which they have extensive knowledge, whether from years of experience gained by working on that content or via study for an advanced degree. See Article History. Citizenship, relationship between an individual and a state to which the individual owes allegiance and in turn is entitled to its protection. Citizenship implies the status of freedom with accompanying responsibilities. The Pledge of Allegiance was written in August 1892 by the socialist minister Francis Bellamy (1855-1931). It was originally published in The Youth's Companion on September 8, 1892. Bellamy had hoped that the pledge would be used by citizens in any country. In its original form it read: "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." In 1923, the words, "the Flag of the United States of America" were added. At this time it read: "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God." Note: In certain circumstances there can be a modification or waiver of the Oath of Allegiance. See the USCIS Policy Manual. The principles embodied in the Oath From Allegiant to Assertive Citizens. This book reevaluates Almond, Verba, and Pye's original ideas about the shape of a civic culture that supports democracy. Marshaling a massive amount of cross-national, longitudinal public opinion data from the World Values Survey, the authors demonstrate multiple manifestations of a deep shift in the mass attitudes and behaviors that undergird democracy. The chapters in this book show that in dozens of countries around the world, citizens have turned away from allegiance toward a decidedly "assertive" posture to politics: they have become more