**Armour of God**

**Discussion Summary, Notes and Presentation**

**For January 30, 2019**

**“Can Catholic Values and Canadian Politics Mix?”**

**By Garnett Genuis, Member of Parliament**

**Notes from one attendee:**

Mr. Genuis pointed to three religious figures who represented three perspectives in their political circumstances:

1. Clemens August Graf von Galen (d. March 1946) was a German [count](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Count), [Bishop of Münster](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Diocese_of_M%C3%BCnster), and [cardinal](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardinal_(Catholicism)) of the [Roman Catholic Church](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church). During [World War II](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II), Galen led [Catholic protest against Nazi euthanasia](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_euthanasia_and_the_Catholic_Church) and denounced [Gestapo](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestapo) lawlessness and the [persecution of the church](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_persecution_of_the_Catholic_Church_in_Germany). He was appointed a Cardinal by [Pope Pius XII](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_XII) in 1946. He was beatified by [Pope Benedict XVI](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Benedict_XVI) in 2005. He remained a patriotic German.
2. Daniel was a political survivor. He used reason and was uncompromising. His courage before apparently impossible odds lead to a long reign as King.
3. Pontius Pilate was an example of an amoral political figure. Perhaps he represents the sometimes terrible consequences of refusing to take a values based position.

Legislation which requires a values framework or guidance (Catholic?) touch on:

* Freedom of conscience
* Religious liberty
* Fight for life
* Voice for the voiceless

The political process involves framing the issue, defining the challenges to values and uncovering opportunities for progress.

Be strategic: sometimes it is better to push lesser current issues, as they might lead to bigger, longer term goals.

Mr. Genuis believes he can remain a faithful Catholic while an MP.

Canadian democracy works. Have faith in it. Participate.

# GENUIS: Faith, politics, and competing worldviews.

 by [**Garnett Genuis**](https://www.thepostmillennial.com/author/garnett-genuis/), MP, Alberta

[February 3, 2019](https://www.thepostmillennial.com/genuis-faith-politics-and-competing-worldviews/) in [**Culture**](https://www.thepostmillennial.com/category/culture/), [**Discussion**](https://www.thepostmillennial.com/category/discussion/), [**Opinion**](https://www.thepostmillennial.com/category/opinion/), [**Politics**](https://www.thepostmillennial.com/category/politics/) **The Post Millennial Newsletter**

As an out-of-the-closet religious person in public life, ‎people sometimes ask me how my religion affects my politics. People who share my religious views sometimes have a hard time understanding how a person of faith can exist in an environment perceived to be hostile to faith.

People who disagree with me about particular issues sometimes try using my religious beliefs to discredit me, rather than respond to the substance of my arguments. Other people question if a religious person can uphold the principles of constitutional documents or the wishes of their constituents while also adhering to the doctrines of their religion.

For me, the relationship between my faith and my politics is guided by two key ideas: a belief in the harmony of faith and reason, along with a commitment to Christian humanism.

The harmony of faith and reason

Because I believe that God created the world, I believe that the teachings of faith ought and can be expected to align with our experiences and observations of the natural world. Truth in one domain does not contradict truth in another. The natural testifies to the supernatural and vice versa.

This means that a direct appeal to religious doctrine or text is unnecessary for justifying the political positions I take. Natural reason provides all of the tools necessary for advancing and explaining my perspectives on policy questions. After making a very “secular” argument recently on an issue, I was asked on Twitter if my religion influences my views on that topic. The simple answer is that I could get to the same conclusion through either a religious or a non-religious route.

Some politicians speak of “putting their religion aside” when making policy decisions or deciding how to vote. This might make sense for those who do not believe in the harmony of faith and reason. But if you believe that your faith does accord with reason, then why would you ever have to put it aside? And if your faith does not accord with reason, then ‎why maintain it?

This isn’t to say that we can all know in every case how faith accords with reason. Believing in the ultimate reconciliation of faith and reason doesn’t require knowing every detail, any more than believing in science requires me to understand the detailed mechanics of every machine that I use. I believe that my smartphone works based on science, even though I have no idea how.

What‎ if there is a conflict between my own faith and the apparent will of my constituents or the prevailing interpretation of a constitutional document or the policies of my party? When I think about this sort of question, I can just as well switch out the phrase “my own faith” with “reason”. A conflict of this nature (between, say, my party and the dictates of reason) is no less difficult, but it is not a conflict particular to people of faith.

All politicians are likely to be confronted by cases in which their good sense or conscience conflict with other interests or pressures. If particular politicians were never to experience such conflicts, it may be that they are not heeding their conscience or rational judgment with sufficient rigour.

Everybody has a worldview

Religious faith does make a difference in my life, but not in the way that some people might suppose. My faith points me towards what I see being the dictates of natural reason, not away from them.

On the other hand, the process of reasoning does require certain foundational assumptions. ‎You and I might both believe in reason, but we might get to different conclusions if we have different starting points. And this can have political implications.

If you believe, for example, that all culturally-informed moral standpoints are equally valid, then you might oppose strong action by Canada to advance human rights around the world in ways that appear to conflict with local custom.

If, however, you believe that human rights must be protected even when at odds with local custom, then you might support a stronger role for Canada to advance human rights. In this case a disagreement on moral assumptions has practical implications for the kinds of policies that legislators will support.

Christian humanism

My foundational ‎assumptions about right and wrong are shaped by what might be called “Christian humanism”. This is the belief that all human beings have immutable value because of their created nature as beings made in the image of their creator. Humanism in general in western societies has its roots in the Christian tradition.

The propositions which define Christian humanism (or any other humanism for that matter) are neither scientific nor unscientific. Rather, they exist outside of the scientific standard of provability. Systems of value are not things for which scientific proofs can be furnished.

My humanism deeply influences the decisions I make ‎every day as a politician – my advocacy for persecuted minorities (such as the Rohingya), my votes in the House of Commons on a wide variety of other issues, and the way I try to relate to constituents facing challenges are all influenced by my humanism which has its roots in my faith.

Many self-identifying secularists are happy to celebrate Christian humanists when they agree with them. I haven’t heard anyone say recently that William Wilberforce, Abraham Lincoln, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, or Tommy Douglas should have kept their faith-informed political views to themselves. But even if Christian humanists are regarded positively by history, they are not always appreciated by their contemporaries.

Even those who are annoyed by the faith-informed interventions of Christian humanists in policy debates should acknowledge that everyone has a worldview.

A moral ‎relativist also has a worldview and makes moral assumptions, even if they are not linked to particular ritual practices. In that sense every politician is religious – it’s simply a question of which god they serve.Top of Form

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