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## Political Theology Versus Public Theology: Reclaiming the Heart of Christian Mission

Martin R. Levesque, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: DR JOHN THORP, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Theology

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POLITICAL THEOLOGY VERSUS PUBLIC THEOLOGY:  
RECLAIMING THE HEART OF CHRISTIAN MISSION

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Rev. Martin R. Levesque

Graduate Program in Theology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

The University of Western Ontario

London, Ontario, Canada

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# Abstract

Christian theology has always viewed itself in relation to two communities: the church and the wider public. Political Theology attempts to expose incoherencies by highlighting theological themes in “secular” society. Public Theology, meanwhile, accepts that wider political communities have their own autonomy. The work of Public Theology is to bring together insights from the gospel with initiatives from wider political movements in Government, Economic Structures and Civil Society for the benefit of all citizens.

In this thesis, I explore the historical development of Political Theology with the aid of Kirwan and Phillips. I examine the evolution of Public Theology from Political Theology through Tracy and Smit. I then propose that Public Theology offers more public participation in secular society than Political Theology supported by Cavanaugh. Finally, I assert that Public Theology is made obligatory through the sacrament of baptism.

**Keywords:** Heavenly City, Earthly City, Political Theology, Public Theology, Baptism, Great Separation

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# Introduction

Religion and politics have never mixed as polite dinner conversation, let alone surrounding discussions on the role of the church in politics or within the wider public sphere. Ever since the Great Separation religion has been slowly pushed out of politics proper, marginalized in the public sphere, and to some extent, even civil society.

There are many good reasons that religion and politics do not mix. If a population is not homogeneous, then the privileging of one faith tradition over another will have the effect of ‘other-ing’ some citizens and it can deny them their democratic rights.<sup>1</sup> It creates a privileged caste and forces a particular worldview on citizens where they are not free to choose a relationship with God. In the pluralistic world that globalization has brought us, homogeneity is unrealistic. There is much to be said for a separation between religion and politics to be sure.

Yet one cannot escape the political implication of the Gospel message. Throughout his life and ministry, Jesus is quite clear that we are to get involved in the material conditions in which we find ourselves and especially the conditions of those we serve. Christians are to call governments to account for improper treatment of “widows and orphans”<sup>2</sup> and, as a whole, Christians are to help build the kingdom of God in the here and now. Jesus lived,

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1. I am assuming a certain level of religious freedom for citizens of nation states. This is not the case in some parts of the world but for the purpose of this paper and discussion, I will assume the kind of religious freedom and separation of church and state that occurs and is guaranteed in the Constitutions of Western democracies like the United States of America, Canada and South Africa. It is also worthy of note that the separation of church and state does not occur universally in all western democracies.

2. James 1:27 NRSV

worked, and breathed in the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament which is decidedly political. Culturally and historically there was no separation between religion and politics. In fact, religion and politics were deeply interwoven with each other during the life and times of the prophets and of Jesus of Nazareth. So how do we reconcile this obvious political nature of the work of Christians and of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the need that the Great Separation has presupposed and been enforced by society and culture today, namely that religion has no place in the political or the public sphere?

This thesis will undertake to answer that very profound question, the question of a private individual faith that calls Christians to political action and public citizenry. We are a people called to political action but barred from doing so in the political sphere. It is this tension, like so many others in Christianity, that we find ourselves struggling with.

As with all citizens who live into their responsibilities to help collectively build a better society for the benefit of all, Christians must enter into the public and political realm exactly as that, Christians informed from their beliefs and values as instilled from the scriptures and formed in a faith tradition. In the same manner that a liberal or a conservative enters into society with a set of values and ethics that presupposes and informs their actions, so too does the Christian.<sup>3</sup>

Underpinning any decision and action in the world by the Christian is the faith and lessons learned from Holy Scripture. While the utilitarian seeks to maximize happiness for the greatest number or the deontologist seeks to act only upon those maxims that she can will to be universal, the Christian enters the public sphere armed with a set of ethics

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3. Assuming the common partisan ideologies of Liberals (Democrats in the United States) and Conservatives (Republicans in the United States).

and values learned from the teachings of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> When casting a vote on election day, petitioning city council to maintain or expand a budget for affordable housing, or simply making a purchase at a store, the Christian acts publicly because of the theological first principles that support their ethical framework. It should be noted that not all Christians act in the same manner, just as not all Utilitarians agree on the measure of happiness or utility. Individual Christians enter into the public realm from a myriad of theological positions, whether Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Pentecostal, or any other Christian denomination. My assertion is that individual Christians will act in the public realm informed by their beliefs learned from a particular faith tradition and scripture. This will look different for each individual Christian as they enter into the public realm.

The Great Separation, meanwhile, is a human construction, championed in the Enlightenment, and is much similar to Mary Shelley's shambling monster in *Frankenstein*. The monopoly on violence and coercion is given over to the sovereign, to borrow a Hobbesian term. The State has become the saviour of the people that will keep us safe from the 'war

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4. For more on Utilitarianism see Henry R. West's chapter, "Mill and Utilitarianism in the Mid-Nineteenth Century"<sup>5</sup> and James E. Crimmins's chapter, "Bentham and Utilitarianism in the Early Nineteenth Century"<sup>6</sup> in *The Cambridge Companion to Utilitarianism*. Bentham first formulated that a moral agent's action can be discerned as either morally correct or morally wrong based upon the foundational axiom, "it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong"<sup>7</sup>. Mill expanded on this thinking to include act-utilitarianism: the foundational maxim is to be quantified by certain rules. For instance, the greatest happiness can be achieved by sacrificing one person to transplant their organs into 10 people needing transplants. But rule-utilitarianism postulates that certain rules are absolute and take precedence over the foundational axiom. Therefore, given the rule that life is sacred, no person can be sacrificed for others even if doing so would result in the most happiness.<sup>8</sup> For more on deontology, see "The Metaphysics of Morals" for more on Kant's categorical imperative, "act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."<sup>9</sup>

5. Henry R. West, "Mill and Utilitarianism in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in *The Cambridge Companion to Utilitarianism*, ed. J. Fagerberg, D.C. Mowery, and R.R. Nelson, Cambridge Companions to Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 61–80

6. James E. Crimmins, "Bentham and Utilitarianism in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *The Cambridge Companion to Utilitarianism*, ed. J. Fagerberg, D.C. Mowery, and R.R. Nelson, Cambridge Companions to Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 38–60

7. *Ibid.*, 39

8. West, "Mill and Utilitarianism in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 68

9. Immanuel Kant, *Kant: The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), vii



of all against all' and this saviour is a flawed human construction.

As Leviathan lurches through time it becomes subject to entropy and the many different forces in the world. Partisan politics, corporations and special interest groups all seek to impress an image of the world that is made in the interest of a few onto Leviathan rather than the interest of all those that have signed the supposed Social Contract. Politics has become increasingly corrupt and it is has become the place where the 'war of all against all' continues. Rather than the war being eliminated, it now plays out in the theatre of the political sphere.

Public Theology allows the Christian to re-imagine political associations and to help shift and influence political decisions and help mitigate the 'war of all against all'. Public Theology is not just as a means by which Christians may act politically, but it also becomes a means of rehabilitating civil society and politics as a whole. Through Public Theology community is formed, neighbourhoods are built, and mutually beneficial relationships among citizens are established, maintained, and expanded. It becomes the means by which we are joined to a larger collective, not by giving something up, but by taking something on.

This work is not meant to propose doing away with the Great Separation. In many ways, allowing religion back into politics is no better than banishing it. Rather I will take a decidedly Anglican approach, which is to propose the middle road and a blending of the divide. Much as Cavanaugh has done in his interpretations of the *City of God* in *From One City to Two*, I propose re-integrating people as whole citizens, which are public and private at the same moment.<sup>5</sup> By doing so I hope to open up the political realm again to Christians, both as individuals and as a church: a body politic.

The greatest public and political action that the church has at her disposal then is not the Eucharist as proposed by William Cavanaugh in *Torture and Eucharist*, but rather it is

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5. William T. Cavanaugh, "From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space," *Political Theology* 7, no. 3 (2006): 300–321.

the sacrament of baptism.<sup>6</sup> Baptism is the key sacrament that incorporates newcomers into the physical and historical community of the church, linked to Jesus Christ himself through the power of the Holy Spirit. The baptismal covenant makes us part of God's redemption of the world and firmly places us in the material conditions of the world in an effort to restore all, even creation itself, to right relationships with the divine. Therefore baptism is the key political and public action of the church. It adds newcomers and propels them forth from the font into the world, to help redeem corrupt social organizations, Governments and Economic Structures. The divide is large though, and the reformation of individuals from public/private dichotomy can only take place in concert with God, working through his people, joined together in baptism and participating together to recreate the world.

First, before plunging into Public Theology we will need to understand the history of Political Theology and how and why Public Theology has evolved out of Political Theology into a distinct conception. We will need to explore and expose the differences between two streams of thought often used interchangeably, that of Political Theology and Public Theology. Only when our historical survey is complete and the nuances of the Political and the Public have been analyzed can a case be made for political participation of the Christian in the public sphere. This public participation will be dependent on the individual Christian, rather than the work of institutions like the church. The true *Ekklesia*, the people, gathered together, knitted together through their common baptism is what will help shift society, at least until the time comes when the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, is realized.<sup>10</sup>

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6. William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ (Challenges in Contemporary Theology)* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 1998).

10. Revelation 21:2 NRSV

# Chapter 1

## The History of Political Theology

### 1.1 The Making of the Monster

The question of whether a Political Theology is still possible is a question that has long characterized western thought since the Enlightenment. The quest for the Great Separation of the religious and the political has long characterized political philosophy and its thinkers and has formed much of secular society and the public realm today. Many have advocated for a separation between church and state and have sought to eliminate theology and religion from politics, such as political philosopher Thomas Hobbes with his seminal work *Leviathan*. Others like Immanuel Kant have sought to blend enlightenment traditions of reason with theology, and in a sense offer a soft sell for the religious in the political sphere.

This separation of church and state is predicated on separating institutions, namely that no one church body politic could or should hold governmental power. To do so would promote one religion over another or, in the case of Christianity after the 15th century in Europe, one denomination over another: Catholic versus Protestant. This promotion or privileging of one religion or denomination over others would limit the freedom of citizens to exercise their individual will as moral agents. This separation, promoted by Hobbes, would become a hallmark of the Enlightenment, and of modernity and its thinkers, and it

continues to hold great influence in our society today.

The underlying purpose of the separation was to allow individual freedom for citizens to practice the religion of their choice. This was the thrust of the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights<sup>1</sup> in 1791 and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789.<sup>2</sup> The fall of theology in the political sphere has gradually occurred since the enlightenment, the publication of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, and these two constitutional documents. Through modernity, the Great Separation has expanded to include individuals speaking publicly to governments on behalf of religious institutions or from personal religious beliefs. As such, public policy must be formed through rational debate and scientific enquiry and religious arguments cannot be used.

Post-modernity, though, has allowed for the re-emergence of Public Theology as individual narratives and the contextuality of situations have allowed for the story of theology to once again be present in the political sphere over and against the universal declarations of modernity. The re-emergence of the individual narrative over the institutional narrative of particular churches has opened a new beginning for Political Theology or, more specifically, for Political Theology to evolve and birth a new true Public Theology.

Before proceeding, we must first define Political Theology and Public Theology. We must highlight the differences and trace the history of Political Theology through the ages to be able to examine how Public Theology came to exist and how it can offer a new and different way forward in the political sphere over and against Political Theology.

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1. *Constitution of the United States, First Amendment (1791)*, The First Amendment, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

2. *France: Declaration of the Right of Man and the Citizen*, Accessed: 2014-02-10, 1789, Section 10 "No one should be disturbed on account of his opinions, even religious, provided their manifestation does not upset the public order established by law." <http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/declaration.html>.

## 1.2 Defining the Difference

Throughout this thesis I use the terms Public Theology and Political Theology with different meanings. Political Theology is obviously a loaded term in that it implies theology and critique for the political realm, namely Government and Economic Structures. While I believe this to be true in a true sense of a *Polis*, it does leave the impression that Political Theology is about only politics and therefore about government, the economy, and how the church interacts with that portion of society. Public Theology, meanwhile, is about a public engagement from the private citizen's perspective. In short, the difference lies in the addition of a third public realm: that of Civil Society. Political Theology is about theological critiques of institutions; how a church body politic responds to Government and Economic Structures. Public Theology, as I will use the term, is about the theological engagement of individual citizens; it is predicated on the agency of the actor and permeates the three publics of Government, Economic Structures, and Civil Society.

This distinction will become increasingly clear in the next chapters but I will touch on it here briefly. As we shift in Post-modernity from universalism and institutions to the narratives and engagement of individuals we are shifting from the Great Separation of public versus private to the integration of individuals into the public realms as fully actualized citizens and peoples. This constitutes a re-imagining of Aristotle's proposals that the private lives of individuals must and do inform their public works.<sup>3</sup>

The individual and personal engagement of the Christian will also become central to my argument as I will differ from the likes of William Cavanaugh who centres his Political Theology in the Eucharist as the work of the church, the body of Christ. I will centre my Public Theology in baptism. Baptism marks the beginning of Christ's ministry which propelled him into the world to be active and effect change in the name of God as an individual, not as a church. It led to engagement with his surroundings and with the people

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3. For more on this from Aristotle see Aristotle's *Politics* and *The Nicomachean Ethics*.

he encountered. The Eucharist, meanwhile, marks the end of Christ's ministry on earth and points the way to the next world, life everlasting, and reunion and reconciliation with God.

While this distinction seems rather simplistic, it points to the tension in which Christians live, namely the realized-but-not-yet Kingdom of God. That Christ won the victory over sin and death for all on the cross, but the sinful world has yet to fall away and a new Jerusalem, a city on a hill, has yet to be realized. In the same manner, baptism joins us to Christ. For if we have died with him, we also will live with him.<sup>4</sup> So while the Eucharist is the work of the church, the work of an institution and a body politic, baptism propels the individual Christian forth from the font to a life of service and engagement as an individual in imitation of Christ walking in the shadow of the cross.

Centring on the individual rather than institutions also allows for the Christian to claim individual agency and act not just politically, but also publicly in the world according to their beliefs, denominations and faith traditions. Baptism allows for this centring on the individual's role to live a baptismal life rather than looking forward to the world that is to come and placing the entire onus on God for the redemption of the world. If we take the sacrament of baptism and being joined to Christ seriously, then we must also take into account that we become part of the *Missio Dei* and therefore, as individuals, have responsibilities to carry out that *Missio Dei*: the redemption of the world and reconciliation with our brothers and sisters. According to Moltmann, "It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church."<sup>5</sup>

Before continuing with imagining a Public Theology for the 21st Century it is necessary to first explore Political Theology and Public Theology in depth so that we may fully contrast the two approaches and demonstrate the evolution of Political Theology into Public

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4. 2 Timothy 2:11 NRSV

5. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1977), 64.

Theology.

### 1.3 Political Theology, Constructing Frankenstein

The distinction between Political Theology and Public Theology will become very important later in this work, but for now let us turn to defining Political Theology itself more in depth. William Cavanaugh and Peter Scott propose some definitions in the introduction to *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*: “theology is broadly understood as discourse about God, and human persons as they relate to God. The political is broadly understood as the use of structural power to organize a society or community of people.”<sup>6</sup> When these two definitions are combined, we have the result that Political Theology is “the analysis and criticism of political arrangements (including cultural-psychological, social and economic aspects) from the perspective of differing interpretations of God’s ways with the world.”<sup>7</sup> These arrangements can take many forms as outlined above. Political Theology, therefore, becomes the act of engaging in dialogue and criticizing the structures of society, whether cultural, economic or psychological and “what distinguishes all political theology from other types of theology or political discourse is the explicit attempt to relate discourse about God to the organization of bodies in space and time.”<sup>8</sup> Political Theology takes place in the *Sitz im Leben*, or situations in life, in which we find society and ourselves and how institutions interact with each other and with citizens, just as it did for the prophets of the Old Testament and Jesus Christ himself.

According to this definition put forward by Cavanaugh and Scott, politics is simply a given as humanity congregates together into societies and cultures. Politics is the means by which we organize our governments and economies. Theology, though, “is critical

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6. William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Scott, “Introduction,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 2.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, 3.

reflection on the political. Theology is related as superstructure to the materialist politico-economic base, and therefore reflects and reinforces just or unjust political arrangements.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the task of the political theologian is to call attention to the ways in which, for instance, gender, race, and class inequalities are generated and perpetuated, whether by society at large or even by the church itself. It offers a means by which decisions of the community can be questioned as to whether they reflect the ideally constructed community that enables the building up of the kingdom of God as expressed in scripture.

As such, “theology and politics are essentially similar activities: both are constituted in the production of metaphysical images around which communities are generated and organized.”<sup>10</sup> These images may be the ideal citizen or the ideal Christian, the ideal state or the ideal body of Christ: the church. In each case, the definition provided by Cavanaugh and Scott suggests that communities construct metaphysical images upon which they construct a shared narrative. Political theology is the means by which these metaphysical images are observed, analyzed, and critiqued. As such, “there is essentially no separation of material base and cultural superstructure. The task then might become one of exposing the false theologies underlying supposedly ‘secular’ politics and promoting the true politics implicit in true theology.”<sup>11</sup> The true theology and true politics bring God into our world where God becomes the one to whom we are joined in the effort to construct that New Jerusalem, that city on a hill.<sup>12</sup>

Another resource for defining Political Theology is Oliver O’Donovan’s *The Desire of the Nations*. In his work, he posits an analogy “between the political vocabulary of salvation which we find in the Bible, and secular use of these same political terms, between the acts of God and human acts, both of them taking place within the *one public history* (my

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9. Michael Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 5.

10. Ibid.

11. Cavanaugh and Scott, “Introduction,” 3.

12. Revelations 21:1-4 NRSV



emphasis) which is the theaters of God's saving purpose and mankind's social undertakings."<sup>13</sup> As with Cavanaugh and Scott, O'Donovan defines Political Theology as occurring in the world in which God and humanity are joined together to create and recreate political associations that best reflect the relationship between a loving creator and the created.

O'Donovan also marks out a 'High Tradition' which he dates roughly between 1100-1650 in which he takes the conflicts between the papacy and secular authorities and the reforms occasioned by Pope Gregory the VII at 1100 as the starting point, and the early Enlightenment and the development of moral political theory independent of theology with Thomas Hobbes at 1650 as the end point. This High Tradition will be extremely useful for sketching the history of Political Theology, the evolution of the third space, the public, to which we will return later in detail.

In essence, Political Theology as defined by Cavanaugh and Scott is nothing new. Elizabeth Phillips points out that the political "encompasses far more than the sort of items which fall under the heading of 'politics'" in the daily news. When Aristotle wrote *Politics*, it did not only cover questions like the best form of government or what rulers should and should not do, it was about what things make human beings flourish and how common life should be ordered in ways that promote that flourishing."<sup>14</sup> The private blends into the public and, as such, a Political Theology is used to criticize, examine, and analyze whether the political is providing the means by which all human beings may flourish and help to enact that city on a hill. Phillips rightly notes that the "Western idea of the *Polis* and the political originated in Athens and the philosophy of the Hellenistic city-state, where politics was seen as the science and art of seeking the common good."<sup>15</sup> While this much is true, the genesis of the political did originate in the Hellenistic city-states, politics in the

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13. Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2 My emphasis in the quote will also become clear later in this work.

14. Elizabeth Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark International, 2012), 2.

15. *Ibid.*, 4.

west developed and permeated only two spaces, Government and Economic Structures. The third space, Civil Society, does not fully form until the Enlightenment. We will come back to this third space later to help explain the evolution of Political Theology into a truly Public Theology and why it was necessary. But for now let us return to the definition of Political Theology.

Political Theology has been with us for centuries, if not exactly under that name. And with general agreement between Cavanaugh/Scott, O'Donovan and Phillips the definition of Political theology provided in the Blackwell Companion seems the most robust and encompassing, providing a roadmap forward to analyze the intersection and relationship between humanity and God, and humanity with each other in governmental and economic arrangements. It sketches for us the beginnings of a Public Theology in the political and how the individual moral agent may bring their private faith into the public realm as a fully realized, actualized and formed child of God, in relationship with God through Jesus Christ and participating in the *Missio Dei* by dint of the agency of their baptism. And while there is a hint of the genesis of Public Theology in this definition, it still revolves mostly, and critically, around institutions, namely Government and Economic Structures.

## 1.4 The History of Political Theology

Phillips points to three different ways to describe how and when Political Theology came into being. The first is that many theologians want to “point to the Jewish and Christian scriptures as the beginning of the project of political theology.”<sup>16</sup> Some notable theologians who subscribe to this view of Political Theology having its roots in the sacred scriptures of both Jews and Christians are John Howard Yoder and Oliver O'Donovan.

In his work *The Politics of Jesus*, Yoder “argued that the New Testament depicts Jesus as a political figure, killed for political reasons, and the church as a political body gathered

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16. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 11.

together as a political witness.”<sup>17</sup> Jesus identified himself and followed in a political tradition that had begun many years earlier in the “Davidic vision of a settled, landed kingdom under monarchy, and the prophetic/exilic vision of a sojourning, counter-witnessing people with no king but YHWH”,<sup>18</sup> where Jesus is in opposition to the Davidic vision and living into the prophetic/exilic vision.

This prophetic/exilic vision is carried forward through time in the church which has no king but Christ himself. The church is the public space in which humanity finds its meaning and where that meaning is enacted. However, “the sovereignty of Christ is not manifested exclusively in the church.”<sup>19</sup> The church is seen as the current embodiment and foretells the ultimate redemption and reconciliation promised by God in the scriptures and the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. The church serves as a buttress in the world, and even in the world’s rebellion against God, Christ still rules over the world. It should be noted that by ‘world’ Yoder meant “the realm of human existence in which Christ’s Lordship is not yet recognized, as distinguished from the realm where there is willing submission to Christ.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, according to Yoder, Christ’s rule is absolute over both church and secular realities.

The church’s role was to point to the teachings of Christ and God’s work of salvation on the cross. The church was to rule through servant-hood just as “Christ revealed his kingship to be a redefining of politics and power.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the politics of the church and political space that the church occupies is not separate from and does not transcend normal human politics. Yoder asserts, “Jesus made it clear that the nationalized hope of Israel had been misunderstood, and that God’s true purpose was the creation of a new society, unidentified

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17. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 13.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, 16.

20. *Ibid.*, 13.

21. *Ibid.*, 16.

with any of the local, national, or ethnic solidarities of any time.”<sup>22</sup> As such, the political theology that Yoder asserts is based on scripture, the prophetic/exilic biblical tradition and on a covenantal relationship between the people and their only king, God.

Likewise, O’Donovan sees the history of Political Theology as beginning with “Israel and the governing principle [as] the kingly rule of God, expressed in Israel’s corporate existence and brought to final effect in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.”<sup>23</sup> O’Donovan, though, differs from Yoder. Where Yoder believes in the singular rule of God through Christ, O’Donovan sees “the prophetic tradition [as] one of holding monarchs accountable to divine law; it does not call into question the divine given mandate of the monarchy.”<sup>24</sup> The most significant part of O’Donovan’s shift from Yoder is the shift away from the singular authority of God to the dual authority or “the doctrine of the two or two cities or two kingdoms”<sup>25</sup> which we will touch on later in much greater detail. Yet both Yoder and O’Donovan agree that Political Theology begins with Israel and scripture and that in scripture a distinctly Jewish political theology is “both embraced and redefined by Jesus and the Christ event, and that the church is a distinct political community and witness to the coming kingdom which he inaugurated but which is not yet fully realized.”<sup>26</sup>

Separate from the scriptures themselves, most scholars identify Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*, or *City of God*, as the pre-eminent founding text of Political Theology. The work began as an apologetic dissertation concerning the sacking of Rome in 410. In it, Augustine hoped to convince non-Christians that the fall of Rome and the eventual disintegration of the empire was not the fault of Christianity. Christians were facing the charge that “the ascendancy of the Christian religion had angered the gods, [and] secondly that Christian

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22. John Howard Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Kansas: Faith / Life Press, 1964), 10.

23. O’Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*, 27.

24. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 19.

25. *Ibid.*, 20.

26. *Ibid.*, 22.

other-worldliness left Christians indifferent to the fate of the empire in any case.”<sup>27</sup> According to Augustine, “human government is required to restrain sinfulness in the ordering of common life, but it cannot establish true peace or true justice.”<sup>28</sup> This fundamental distinction leads Augustine to the conclusion that there are two cities, the City of God and the earthly city.

Augustine traced these two cities through scripture. “We have Cain (earthly city) and Seth (heavenly), two lines which progress through biblical history.”<sup>29</sup> Augustine traces these two lines through Noah and the Flood to the Hebrews in Egypt to the history of Israel to Christ and to the church. Through this narrative, Augustine describes, “the city of God as created by the love of God, founded in peace and always ultimately orientated towards loving God. This city is populated by all those who worship God both in heaven and earth. This heavenly city — not to be confused with Heaven, or a future and other-worldly reality — is currently sojourning in this world, but will continue to exist when this world is no longer.”<sup>30</sup> In contrast to the City of God, the earthly city was, “created by self-love, founded in violence, is orientated towards and glories in itself.”<sup>31</sup> The earthly city is founded in love of this world and will cease to exist when this world ceases to exist, either at the end of time, the eschaton, or when the Lordship of Christ is fully realized and the New Jerusalem is inaugurated as in Revelation 21. As such, the earthly city is temporal where, “limited forms of peace and justice are pursued in this city, but its polity is also characterized by the dominion of the powerful who assert their own strength and subjugate all others.”<sup>32</sup> These two cities are interwoven, existing in the same space and time and make use of the same materials and resources simultaneously.

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27. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 59.

28. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 24.

29. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 59.

30. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 25.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*

Augustine's writings created the two cities model, or the Doctrine of Two that was alluded to earlier and that will become so fundamental to Political Theology.<sup>33</sup> This model continues through history and continues to be re-interpreted countless times. It forms the basis for political action in the church and the way in which the church interacts with the secular world. These two cities are interwoven and intermixed throughout human history. Key to this are the following two passages from *City of God*:

Two cities, then, have been created by two loves: that is the earthly by love of self extending even to contempt of God, and the heavenly by love of God extending to contempt of self. The one therefore glories in itself, the other in the Lord; the one seeks glory from men, the other finds its highest glory in God, the Witness of our conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, 'Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.' In the earthly city, princes are as much mastered by the lust for mastery as the nations which they subdue are by them; in the heavenly, all serve one another in charity, rulers by their counsel and subjects by their obedience. The one city loves its own strength as displayed in its mighty men; the other says to its God, 'I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength'.<sup>34</sup>

Both cities alike make use of the good things, or are afflicted with the evils, of this temporal state; but they do so with different faith, a different hope, a different love, until they are separated by the final judgment, and each receives its own end, to which there is no end.<sup>35</sup>

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33. I follow Kirwan in his presentation of the Doctrine of Two. According to Kirwan the Doctrine of Two was first formulated by Augustine, re-interpreted countless times in history, such as Luther's Two Kingdom model. This Two City Model, or Doctrine of Two will be discussed in greater detail throughout this work

34. R.W. Dyson, ed. and trans., *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Book XIV Chapter 28, 632.

35. *Ibid.*, Book XVIII Chapter 54, 907-908.

Kirwan further expands upon this point of the two models existing in the same space and time while making use of the same resources. He states, “our temporal history is called the *saeculum*, in which the two cities are mixed into one another, until they shall be separated at the end of time. These two cities are eschatological realities, co-existing in the present *saeculum*. They do not differ externally, but only internally, in how they respond to the same experiences: both feel the same vicissitudes of fortune, good or bad: but they do so not with the same faith nor the same hope, nor the same love.”<sup>36</sup> Augustine’s two cities exist in one space and in one time.

The third strand that Phillips explores as the origin of Political Theology is scholarship in the mid-to-late twentieth century. She argues that while the genesis was always in the scriptural foundation of Israel, the Old Testament, the prophets, and the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, it was not until the middle of the last century that the discipline of Political Theology proper came into being and we have anachronistically read Political Theology back into the recesses of time.

It was in the late Twentieth Century that theologians and academics alike began to come to terms with the idea that the removal of Christianity as a central feature of Western politics, and Western society in general, was neither inevitable nor necessarily desirable. In actuality, the thesis of secularization had begun to collapse. The thesis was that “all modern, industrialized nations would become increasingly secularized: religious groups would continue to decrease in membership and the public workings of state and society would be increasingly free from religious influence.”<sup>37</sup> The separation of religion, theology, and the state’s infrastructure was seen as the “chief necessity and the crowning achievement of modernity, and secularization was sure to spread across the globe.”<sup>38</sup> Yet by the late-twentieth century academics, sociologists, political theorists, philosophers, and theologians

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36. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 60.

37. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 28.

38. *Ibid.*, 29.

began to dismantle this centrepiece of the secular narrative. The questions they began to ask include: was the Great Separation necessary or inevitable? Is secularization truly spreading across the globe with industrialization or is it simply a European strain of political organization? Has politics lost its mooring without the influence of theology?

At the same time that the secularization thesis had begun to be undermined, churches began to seriously analyze their relationship with the modern world and their place within it. There was the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), The World Council of Churches' Conference on Church and Society in Geneva (1966), and the World Council of Churches' Fourth Assembly in Uppsala (1968) where the place of theology in politics was front and centre. This occurred in conjunction with the work of theologians trying to come to grips with the Holocaust and the complicity of churches in those atrocities, along with Latin American churches, Bishops, and theologians, who insisted that the Gospel should be transforming the lives of the poor and marginalized in this world and not the next world. This work challenged societies that perpetuated the cycles of poverty and institutionalized injustices. Also, at this time, black and feminist theologians began to critically analyze the institutional racism, sexism, and privilege present in both churches and the society in which they lived and were unwittingly sustaining. Phillips points to this collection of voices rising as marking "the beginning of political theology as a distinct theological discipline."<sup>39</sup> It is to some of these trends we now turn in our historical survey.

Phillips splits the Twentieth century into two generations of Political Theology. The first generation comprises Political Theology, Liberation Theology and Public Theology. The second-generation comprises Post-liberalism, Radical Orthodoxy and Contextual Theologies. We will briefly look at each of these in turn and parse out each generation to add nuance to our historical sketch.

Political Theology 'proper', as Phillips describes it, is part of the first generation of academic work which emerged in Germany in the 1960's and centred around the work of

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39. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 30.



Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, and Dorothee Sölle. The main focus of these authors was to “call into question the privatization of bourgeois Christianity and re-empower the church to become the herald of an eschatological future that always calls into questions the status quo, destabilizing the present in the name of a peace, justice and freedom to come.”<sup>40</sup> In its time, this critique was desperately needed for many reasons.

First, there was the need to understand “how the Nazi regime had come to power, enacted fascist totalitarianism and perpetuated the Holocaust – all in a ‘Christian’ nation.”<sup>41</sup> Questions needed to be answered: where was the church in this crisis, and what had become of the church and its voice that it had so little to say and so little opposition in the face of such horrors?

Second, the inheritance of the previous generation needed to be addressed, particularly the “transcendentalism of Martin Heidegger, its outworking in the Catholic Theology of Karl Rahner and the Protestant Theology of Rudolf Bultmann.”<sup>42</sup> The new Political Theologies being expressed did not outright reject these approaches. They were, though, critiquing “the dangers of transcendental theology removing faith from its historical and social moorings and locating it instead in the private, existential realities of the individual.”<sup>43</sup> In essence, faith and religion may be perverted if removed from the foundation that gave it birth, as was seen in the Holocaust.

Finally, the rise of the Frankfurt School of thought, namely critical theory, deeply influenced this first generation of political theologians. Critical theory blends insights from various schools of thought into one theory. Traditionally associated with philosophy and sociology, critical theory was born in Germany in which “insights of Karl Marx are wed with other recent and contemporary thinkers, especially Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud is

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40. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 42.

41. *Ibid.*, 42-43.

42. *Ibid.*, 43.

43. *Ibid.*

psychology, Max Weber in sociology and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in philosophy.”<sup>44</sup> As such, critical theory provided new ways to investigate the “short-comings of contemporary theology through questions such as how a particular theology supports the status quo, whose interests are served by it, how it relates theory to practice and whether it promotes or hinders justice.”<sup>45</sup> Because of this liberating movement of the oppressed and marginalized, a natural relationship between Political Theology and the beginnings of Liberation Theology developed.

While Political Theology was a movement mostly confined to academia, Liberation Theology had its locus in three differing contexts: academic writings, the meetings and actions of the episcopacy, and grassroots communities. The foundation for Liberation Theology took the twin theses of “God’s universal and gratuitous love, and God’s preferential solidarity with the poor.”<sup>46</sup> The representation of this theological premise was to call into question the structures of society and how they would benefit the rich and powerful. It led to the production of academic writings in the 1960’s and 70’s. Priests and members of religious orders moved to poverty-stricken areas of Latin America to live in solidarity with the poorest and most marginalized. It also led to both “clergy and lay people . . . organizing opposition to their corrupt and oppressive governments.”<sup>47</sup> Perhaps the most famous of the Liberation Theology movements was in El Salvador and surrounded Archbishop Oscar Romero, whose opposition to the oppressive government and his championing of the poor led to his assassination in 1980 by government forces in an attempt to silence him and quell the movement.

Liberation Theology was not limited to Latin America. Expressions of Liberation Theology sprang up in North America during the civil rights movements of the 1960’s. These

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44. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 43.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., 46.

47. Ibid.

expressions took the form of Black Theology, especially centring on the civil rights movements, and Feminist Theology. In North America there was a need to critique structures of society that maintained systems of oppression, racism, and sexism in which blacks, women and other minorities were held back from being fully incorporated into society and the church as fully realized citizens and baptized individuals.

Public theology, as defined by Phillips, is another North American strand and part of the first generation of Political Theologies that Phillips describes.<sup>48</sup> Public Theology “sought to ‘find’ language and action through which to build societal consensus on moral issues.”<sup>49</sup> The thrust of this theological position was to inform and influence the private citizens’ moral lives and to work Christian principles “through the convictions of people and the policies of the multiple institutions of civil society where people live and work and play, that make up the public realm.”<sup>50</sup> In this sense, theology may still be public, but it is completely separated from the political. The difference between Political Theology and Public Theology rests on the creation of ‘space’ in the public realm for theology, namely a state/civil society distinction which maintains the Great Separation.<sup>51</sup> The idea of Public Theology will be examined much more extensively below.

The second-generation of political theologians, active at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, differs from the first generation on some key issues. While first generation political theologians “can be broadly considered critical friends of modernity, in the second generation we find many more outright critics of

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48. I will differ from Phillips later. My thesis is that Public Theology is an evolution of Political Theology and takes into account the third public space, namely Civil Society in addition to Government and Economic Structures. But for now it is helpful to present Phillips’ interpretation of the historical sketch as a way of laying the groundwork for further discussion later.

49. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 48.

50. *Ibid.*, 49.

51. My definition of Public Theology provided earlier differs slightly from the one presented by Phillips. I do not accept the separation of public space, a state/civil society distinction. Christians are Christians in all aspects of their lives, stemming from the font to their death. As such, the Gospel informs all their actions. As such, Christians are part of the whole world and act as Christian in all aspects of their lives. This includes interactions with Government, Economic Structures and Civil Society.

modernity.”<sup>52</sup> They were “grappling with European secularism as well as the collapse of the secularization thesis, the second generation has criticized the concept of the secular itself.”<sup>53</sup> Key to this is that the second generation begins the task of reintegrating the new discipline of Political Theology with the larger and broader project of theology itself. There are three streams to this second-generation that Phillips identifies: Post-liberalism, Radical Orthodoxy and Contextual Theologies. We now turn to these three streams and briefly sketch the background that is currently unfolding around us.

Post-liberal theology “has called into question the ways in which Public Theology sought to take Christianity ‘public’ instead of calling into question modernity’s public/private dualism.”<sup>54</sup> This stream is most often associated with Stanley Hauerwas and Oliver O’Donovan and is influenced by the political and theological writings of Augustine, Aquinas, and Karl Barth. In Post-liberal theology, the very separation and division of the individual that I have called into question, has found its voice. It is in this stream that theologians attempt to blend the public and private lives of citizens, recognizing that citizens are also Christians. Much like the two city model, both exist simultaneously and make use of the same resources and materials. William Cavanaugh is also in this camp and it is upon his works that I will lean on heavily to illustrate how the baptized, united with God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, work in the public sphere to help enable the kingdom of God in all three public spaces: Government, Economies and Civil Society.

Radical Orthodoxy is much like the previous generation of Political Theology in its “engagement with continental philosophy, but [it] renounces its embrace of the modern secular state and what is now interpreted as its alignment of the kingdom of God with progressive politics.”<sup>55</sup> To this end, Radical Orthodoxy has focused on the theological nature

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52. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 51.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., 52.

55. Ibid.

of the secular. Pre-eminent thinkers in this stream include John Millbank, Graham Ward and Catherine Pickstock.

Contextual Theologies, or second-generation contextual theologies closely follow the framework that was laid by Latin American Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology and Black Theology. As such, these theologies “are the ones which intentionally and explicitly speak from and to a specific context.”<sup>56</sup> This is a very wide umbrella comprising groups from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe after the fall of communism, and the Middle East. This catchall category includes Womanist Theology, theology for and by black women, and Queer Theology. Taking inspiration from Liberation Theology, these specific Contextual Theologies arose from specific situations in which specific communities found themselves. They are responses to the forces of oppression and call into question the structures of society and globalization that favour a privileged caste of society; they centre the theological endeavour on God’s preference for the poor and the oppressed.

These three strands of Political Theology — scripture, Augustine, and movements in twentieth century academia — are the three places where Phillips locates the possible genesis of Political Theology. Also within academia there is no single consensus on when and where Political Theology originated and, as we can see, much ink has been spilt in attempts to locate its origins. Phillips has been instrumental in painting the backdrop for the history of Political Theology but she has left the historical sketch somewhat incomplete. To add texture to our picture I now turn to Michael Kirwan.

## 1.5 Constructing Two Cities in One Space

Michael Kirwan’s historical sketch of the history of Political Theology is key to this survey. In it, Kirwan traces the history of the Doctrine of Two first formulated by Augustine but re-interpreted countless times. It will be this doctrine of the Two Cities that

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56. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 53.

Cavanaugh will interpret to allow for the evolution of Political Theology into a true Public Theology that encompasses all three publics: Government, Economies and Civil Society. Before examining the transformational change of Political Theology into Public Theology, it is helpful to review Kirwan's historical survey of the Doctrine of Two and its many manifestations.

According to the Doctrine of Two, the people of God aspire to live harmoniously with God and each other, yet there also exists a need for a restraining force to protect people from one another. These two competing notions become active in the political associations and theologies throughout history and in many ways form the basis for the Two Cities, the City of God and the earthly city, which lie at the foundation of Augustine's Political Theology. Augustine can be read to see that "the primary purpose of institutions in society is dealing with the conflict and disorganization resulting from the Fall... while they are feared, the wicked are held in check, and the good are enabled to live less disturbed among the wicked."<sup>57</sup> This conflict between these two competing notions returns time and again as Martin Luther "follows Augustine in understanding a conflict between the city of God and the earthly city; these are in tension until the end of time."<sup>58</sup> It is to the historicity of the Doctrine of Two, "which draws on the formulation of Pope Gelasius: 'two there are by which the world is governed'"<sup>59</sup> that we now turn and the many variations of this Doctrine of Two that have been proposed throughout history.

As discussed earlier, Augustine wrote the *City of God* in response to the sacking of Rome in 410. The text was meant to answer some fundamental questions about the rise of the Christian religion and the fact that Christians were not indifferent to the fate of the Empire as they looked to the next world and life with Christ at the right hand of God. In the earthly city, the restraining force of coercive government holds the monopoly on

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57. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 24.

58. *Ibid.*, 25.

59. *Ibid.*, 55.

violence and enforces restraining laws in hopes of keeping the ‘war of all against all’ in check. Meanwhile, in the Heavenly City, citizens freely chose to turn to God and to enter into a relationship with Him, His creation, and each other for mutual benefit, felicity, and love of all. It is this story and trajectory that we now pick up: the Doctrine of Two and its historical background.

In the generation after Augustine, Pope Gelasius I “reworks the formula of the ‘Two Cities’ in a way that is significant, namely as a more general and ambiguous formula about government.”<sup>60</sup> The church became equated with the Heavenly City and the earthly city became equated with secular government. This shift will have dramatic repercussions as a search for “the correct balance between two legitimate jurisdictions: the consecrated authority of priest and royal power” will ensue.<sup>61</sup> The sense that there is a qualitative difference between the two cities was lost very quickly after Augustine. Cavanaugh describes this flattening out in this way: “two spheres now struggle with each other for ascendancy over the one city which is to be ruled, namely Christendom.”<sup>62</sup> In this re-working of the Two Cities, both cities vie for control of empire, namely Government and Economy.

This shift continued with Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) as did the tension that existed between the Two Cities. The realized-but-not-yet kingdom of God had now been completely spiritualized. The earthly powers “have been absorbed into the spiritual community, and all authority is conceived in religious terms, so that the term ‘rector’ could refer to ‘ruler’ in the general sense and to the presider (bishop) over the Christian community.”<sup>63</sup> The Heavenly City had been absorbed completely into the earthly city, as eschatological anticipation and covenantal relationships were replaced by political structures that restrained individuals, both politically and now also spiritually.

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60. Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100-1625* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 179.

61. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 62.

62. Cavanaugh, “From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space,” 309.

63. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 62.

For several centuries the push and pull would continue between church and empire as to who would rule the one city of Christendom, namely who would form government to administer coercive force and laws: would it be church or state? This would come to a head with Pope Gregory VII and his “assertion of spiritual authority as supreme over the secular powers.”<sup>64</sup> which occurred in the context of the Investiture Controversy as Pope Gregory VII and the German Emperor Henry IV fought over “the existence of mutual privilege of appointment and legitimation.”<sup>65</sup> The attempt to rescind secular involvement in ecclesiastic appointments led to the mutual ‘dethroning’ of pope and emperor in 1075/6. At the forefront of the Gregorian reforms was a new assertion of the priority of the spiritual, or the City of Heaven, as the church had become known, regarding interpretations of Augustine that were popular at the time, namely those that had begun with Pope Gelasius I.

At this time, it was held that God and God alone had founded the church. Therefore the “papacy was the sole universal power, entrusted with the task of embracing all humanity in a single society, with divine will the only law.”<sup>66</sup> Effectively, this proclaimed a theocracy over Christendom and placed the papacy as the ruling power in the world where it would act as the restraint in the political realm and manage the economic structures. The Heavenly City was subverted completely as the institution of the church took to the throne to rule over the earthy city and over secular society.

O’Donovan, as discussed earlier, calls this the beginning of a high tradition that would last until 1650 when the Great Separation of the religious and the secular would once again enter the political landscape. Yet during this period, both church and state would use scripture as the means to justify who should rule the one city. For the church, Matthew 16:19, Christ’s commissioning of Peter, is key along with Augustinian tradition which had come to see the political community as secondary. From the other side, the emperors and kings saw

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64. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 63.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.



secular autonomy as deriving from Romans 13 and Luke 20:25 (give unto Caesar). This period of history also saw the Conciliarist crisis where the Council of Constance (1414-1417) decree *Sacrosancta*, “asserted its superiority to the pope.”<sup>67</sup> In many ways, the *Sacrosancta* is seen to be the religious equivalent of the *Magna Carta*, “a classic defense of the rights of the privileged many against the claims of the one.”<sup>68</sup> This would cut both ways, “if a council had the power to depose a pope for the sake of the well-being of the larger community, then the same arguments applied to the removal of political tyrants.”<sup>69</sup> This set the stage for years of fighting back and forth, removal and appointment of kings and popes, all concerned with who would rule the one city.

Into this world came the reformers, Luther and Calvin, and the attacks that they would level against the magisterium in hopes of bringing the church back to a vision in line with Augustine’s original proposal in his Two Cities formulation. The reformers accepted the necessity of civil powers, “though they were not of one mind as to how the civil and spiritual powers should collaborate.”<sup>70</sup> From this, two distinct Political Theologies opened up in the “mainstream Protestant Reformation: the Two Kingdoms doctrine of Luther and the Reformed (Calvinist) doctrine of the Lordship of Christ.”<sup>71</sup> We will first examine the Two Kingdoms proposition of Luther before turning to Calvin.

Luther took the position that the individual’s relationship to God is unmediated and therefore challenged the “church’s claim to be the mediator of salvation.”<sup>72</sup> Luther becomes a proponent of the Doctrine of Two — two there are, by which this world is ruled — and he grounds his political theology in the priesthood of all believers. Luther radicalizes the

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67. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 63.

68. Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (London: Yale University Press, 1980), 157.

69. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 66.

70. *Ibid.*, 73.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*

notion of separate realms, the spiritual and the secular, and centres rather on the individual, leaning “in the direction of modern ideas of individualism and modern democracy.”<sup>73</sup> This is a groundbreaking moment in Political Theology, again separating the two cities, which had been fused into one, although it does come with some of its own distinct problems.

Luther’s Two Kingdoms position is as follows:

For God has established two kinds of government among men. The one is spiritual; it has no sword, but it has the word, by means of which men are to become good and righteous, so that with this righteousness they may attain eternal life. He administers this righteousness through the word, which he has committed to the preachers. The other kind is worldly government, which works through the sword so that those who do not want to be good and righteous in the eyes of the world. He administers this righteousness through the sword.<sup>74</sup>

Kirwan points to Moltmann’s critique of Luther’s Two Kingdom proposition and the problems it created. According to Kirwan, “an inversion of this doctrine becomes an affirmation of the Protestant world, with an understanding of Church and State as distinct and separate dimensions of the world, as well as a separation of private and public, or inner and outer.”<sup>75</sup> And “with that, faith was made world-less and the world was made faith-less. God became unreal and reality God-less. The world was left to unfaith and faith retired into the shell of the introspection of the pious soul.”<sup>76</sup> As such, Luther’s proposal does not allow any room for the Christian critique of unjust structures of society and specifically any kind of effective resistance “to tyranny or unjust governance.”<sup>77</sup> The outcome of the Two

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73. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 73.

74. Martin Luther, *Luther: Selected Political Writings*, ed. J.M. Porter (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 105.

75. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 75.

76. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Politics of Discipleship and Discipleship in Politics: Jurgen Moltmann Lectures in Dialogue with Mennonite Scholars*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2006), 16.

77. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 75.

Kingdom principle of Luther was unfortunately clearly seen and felt in the Holocaust. The church was effectively neutered and could not respond for it had no voice in the earthly city. It also firmly anticipated the separation of the public/private divide that Hobbes would champion and that would become a hallmark of modernity.

The Reformed Church, meanwhile, developed in the same period in the city-states of Zurich and Geneva. There the developments differed from Luther's perspective of the principalities of the ruling class for they already had forms of democratic citizenship. The accent was placed on the Lordship of Jesus Christ and therefore the Christian did not live in two separate worlds but in "one encompassing lordship of Christ in the various relationships of this world."<sup>78</sup> While Luther expounded the priesthood of all believers in opposition to Rome and clerical tyranny, Calvin used the language of covenant and expounded the "general kingship of all believers"<sup>79</sup> in the face of political tyrants, as well as ecclesiastical ones.

A third response in the early sixteenth century came from Thomas Müntzer, who was a proponent of a radical apocalyptic political organization. His expectation was for civil authorities "to assist positively in the process of transformation, and not merely provide the peaceful conditions for it by protecting the godly from wrongdoers."<sup>80</sup> While, on the surface, this sounds like a desire to return to a theocracy, Müntzer believed that all things should be held in common and each was to receive according to his or her needs. Müntzer sought a utopian ideal, the creation of the Heavenly City on earth and one in which the earthly city helped to create and transform citizens into Christians. Each person would be included in this city, but not by coercive force, but by being joined to the community,

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78. Jürgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics*, trans. Douglas M. Meeks (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 81.

79. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 77.

80. *Ibid.*, 79.

though adult baptism only, in a covenantal relationship.<sup>81</sup> While there is a more radical note in Müntzer, he does lean toward a two city model in which the Christian acts to help enact the kingdom of God in the here-and-now as well as at the end of time. In many ways, Müntzer was prophetic and it is a strain that Cavanaugh will pick up in his paper *From One City to Two, Christian Reimagining of Political Space* and a strain I will also explore later.<sup>82</sup>

The end of this high tradition period described by O'Donovan comes with what has become known as the key markers in the collapse of Christendom, such as “the end of the Thirty Years War (specifically the Treaty of Westphalia 1648) and the publication of Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651).”<sup>83</sup> According to the Treaty of Westphalia, the Pope no longer controls religion solely and all are free to practice religion according to the ruler of the territory, whether Protestant or Catholic. Each of the responses, by Luther, Calvin, and Müntzer are three “distinctive responses to the convulsions that accompanied the death throes of Christendom in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.”<sup>84</sup> This early enlightenment period marks the beginning of the Great Separation and the rise of the earthly city as saviour. Eschatological hope is now placed in nation states and in the political realm of government and economy and “religion is made private and politics is made public.”<sup>85</sup> God, religion, and the agency of Christian actors has been removed from politics and while Luther, Calvin, and Müntzer were proponents of the two city model, they helped create the public/private divide which pushed religion out of politics and sequestered religion to the private lives of citizens. Religion has been banished from Government and structures of society, such as economies.

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81. Müntzer’s tone resembles Rousseau and his view of the role of the state, which is to force one to be free, or, in Müntzer’s case, force one into Covenant.

82. Cavanaugh, “From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space.”

83. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 72.

84. *Ibid.*, 82.

85. *Ibid.*, 89.

Before continuing with the final leg of the historical survey and bringing us to the twentieth century which Phillips has already clearly articulated, it would be best to look quickly at William Cavanaugh's thesis, the myth of the state as saviour, before continuing. This tangent is necessary because as just mentioned, religion and the agency of actors grounded in a faith tradition have been removed from the public realm and thereby God has been entirely removed from the earthly city. This tangent should help greatly to recapture the two city model for a postmodern world and re-introduce theology into the public sphere and demonstrate the evolution of Political Theology into a new conception, Public Theology.

## 1.6 The Rise of the Earthly City

The peace that came as a result of the Treaty of Westphalia is often pointed to as proof of the need to rein in the religious and to keep the religious out of the public sphere and politics. Many have pointed to the so-called Wars of Religion as showing the need to rein in religious fervour. Liberalism's own official history "originated in the need to overcome the religious enmity of the early modern period."<sup>86</sup> The destruction caused by religion and the fight for control of the two cities, or Two Kingdoms, and who would rule Christendom, church or state, was destroying Europe. The modern secular state arose out of a need for a peacekeeper, a saviour.

This narrative has commonly been accepted as the reason why religion and politics no longer mix. The very peace and stability of our society rests on maintaining the Great Separation between Church and State, otherwise religious fervour would plunge us back into violence. Religion, therefore, was cast out to the private sphere and "assumed to the private sphere of values," where the individual believers are welcome to believe and practice religion however they like, yet the individual's "public and lethal loyalty belongs to

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86. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 84.

the State” and not to the Lordship of Christ.<sup>87</sup> This shift of loyalty to the state first is the premise on which Cavanaugh rests his argument, namely that “the Wars of Religion were not the events which necessitated the birth of the modern State; they were in fact themselves the birth pangs of the State.”<sup>88</sup> As Kirwan explains, “at the heart of these conflicts was not a denominational struggle between ‘Catholics’ and ‘Protestants’, but differences around the rise of the emerging State as a replacement of the declining medieval ecclesial order.”<sup>89</sup> The war cited as the most bloody and violent, the Thirty Years War (1616-48), was fought not over religion, but over whether king or pope would rule. The historical record shows that Protestants and Catholics fought on both sides and the last most violent phase, “was essentially a conflict between two rival Catholic dynasties, the Bourbons and the Hapsburgs.”<sup>90</sup>

This shift to centralize all coercive force in secular authority is central to Luther’s proposal for the Two Kingdoms. Every Christian is subject to Two Kingdoms: the spiritual and the temporal. As such, coercive force is ordained by God but is given over to the “secular powers in order that civil peace be maintained among sinners.”<sup>91</sup> The ramifications of this proposal played out in the so-called Wars of Religion, in that “what is left to the Church is increasingly the purely interior government of the souls of its members; their bodies are handed over to secular authorities.”<sup>92</sup> This is clearly demonstrated in the laws imposed upon citizens that refuse to fight and kill on behalf of the State if they are found guilty of desertion and treason against the State. The consequences are clear for theology and the church: questioning the State comes with dramatic consequences. The peace that

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87. William T. Cavanaugh, “A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State,” *Modern Theology* 11 (1995): 397.

88. *Ibid.*, 398.

89. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 84.

90. *Ibid.*

91. Cavanaugh, “A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State,” 399.

92. *Ibid.*

is promised comes in the form of violence, wholly monopolized by the State.

This does not mean that religion and theology have nothing left to add. And there are some who see politics and government and the separation of public/private for the nasty and brutish perpetuator of violence that it is. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and G.F.W. Hegel are each, in their own way, “unsympathetic to the Enlightenment’s disparagement of religion and offer an account of religion as an expansive response towards the universe, and towards morality and freedom.”<sup>93</sup> Buried in each of their responses is an attempt to rehabilitate religion and theology as necessary parts of political organization.

Rousseau is best known for his formulation of the Social Contract and, as such, is often linked with Thomas Hobbes. Where Rousseau differs from Hobbes is that he stresses the validity of religion, or more specifically “religious experience and emotion.”<sup>94</sup> Rousseau championed “the individual conscience, what he called the ‘inner light’ in each human being.”<sup>95</sup> There are spiritual advantages to religion that Rousseau attempts to resuscitate for political life. The type of covenantal relationship in signing the social contract and placing government over us is simply not enough to breed the kind of connectedness that transcends our individuality and fosters love, charity, and felicity among citizens. Relationships of mutual benefit simply are not possible when religion has been eliminated. For this reason, Rousseau opens up room for religion to flourish in the individual and to form and mold persons into better citizens. Yet this religion must remain private. Rousseau has begun the project of recapturing religion into Political Theology and within the earthly city, although the personalized version leads to a private bourgeois Christianity of the individual with little to no real political force behind it. This is the type of private faith that stands silent as government enacts the Holocaust.

Just as Rousseau stressed that morality cannot stand without religious underpinnings,

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93. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 93.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

Immanuel Kant did so as well. Kant does concede, in Kirwan's words, that "pure reason cannot help us to God: it is only under the heading of practical reason that indications of God's existence can be found."<sup>96</sup> The moral underpinnings of society, therefore, must be guided to some degree if the ethical basis of society is to move beyond personal property, coercive laws, and threats of violence towards citizenship. To maintain a basis for ethical behaviour of individual citizens without the use of coercive force there are three factors that Kant proposes, "that we are free, that God exists, that there is an afterlife."<sup>97</sup> This is fundamental to our moral convictions because good behaviour should be rewarded and bad behaviour punished. Therefore, for ethics "to operate at all we need to imagine some way in which the balance is redressed. That can only mean a just God, who gives people what they deserve in the afterlife."<sup>98</sup> While this opens the door for religion and theology in the private realm of citizens' lives it does fall short of providing a foundation to foster religion in public life or for the private citizen to act publicly from a faith perspective. Pure reason still necessitates that public policy is decided rationally and free from religiously influenced perspectives. The morals and values learned in a faith tradition are still relegated to the private realm of citizens' lives.

Hegel suffers from a different problem as he seeks to unhinge Christianity from its historical moorings and cast the Heavenly City in the earthly entirely. For Hegel, "humanity itself is seen to be the manifestation of what was once called God."<sup>99</sup> The eschatological framework of checks and balances of Christianity is completely unhinged with no consequences to immoral actions. If there is no Heavenly City, there are no consequences to sinful acts. There is only the here and now and no consequences when one does not act morally or for the benefit of all.

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96. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 96.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid., 99.



The Enlightenment offered hope that theology could be re-introduced into the political. Yet the “plan to build a tower to the heavens is normally a symbol of human arrogance in the face of God, therefore stands nicely as a parable of the Enlightenment’s attempt to do without God, or to take the place of God.”<sup>100</sup> As humanity constructed its own saviour in the form of the state and saw within itself the manifestation of God, it moved away from mutually beneficial relationships and continued toward a coercive means to enforce the will of a few over the many.

The ability of Christians to stand in opposition to unjust structures of society or unjust governments had unwittingly been unhinged during this process. We have seen the ramifications of this in the Holocaust where a Christian nation saw no reason to question its government, and its institutional churches lacked the ability to do so. The churches had been neutered and the ability to speak on behalf of the other, the widow and the orphan,<sup>101</sup> was eliminated as not only our bodies, but also our souls had been given over to the State. The grotesque saviour had supplanted the mutual benefit of all of God’s creatures and the covenant that binds us into one body in baptism, and instead centred that mutual benefit loosely on citizens only of a particular nation state. No longer were we anchored in Christ, but in an entirely human construction, which humanity created for itself.

We have come so far from Augustine’s original vision it is difficult to imagine being able to recapture such a robust Political Theology for our nation states, governmental institutions, and citizens. With the developments since the Enlightenment it would be very difficult to recapture the two cities model that Augustine had proposed in his original Political Theology. It may be that Political Theology is not capable of being resuscitated at all. But all hope is not lost. With the demise of the secular thesis and the universalism of modernity, Post-modernity and Post-liberalism have opened a new path to take us back into our history. The narrative of the individual and the contextual nature of post-modernism

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100. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction*, 103-104.

101. James 1:27 NRSV

has opened a way forward to reclaim that which has been lost deep in the recesses of time. The way forward will and must leave behind the limited notions of politics solely comprising government and social structures like the economy. The public realm has evolved and so too must Political Theology.

From here, we will turn to David Tracy to outline exactly what constitutes a public and with the help of Dirkie Smit we will outline the development of a third public space, namely that of Civil Society. In addition to speaking to Government and Economic structures, it is into this third space that religion, the church, and individual Christians, by dint of their baptism, will plunge in an effort “to help transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.”<sup>102</sup>

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102. The Anglican Communion, *Five Marks of Mission*, Accessed: 2014-06-25, [http : / / www . anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm).

## Chapter 2

# The Evolution of Public Theology: A New Breed

### 2.1 The Evolution of Public Theology

Phillips provided the genesis of Public Theology in her work and in many ways Public Theology has been practiced by a vanguard of individuals calling for a re-imagining of how Christian citizens engage with the world around them. Phillips claims that public theologians in the 1960's "sought to find 'public language' and action through which to build societal consensus on moral issues."<sup>1</sup> This created a distinction between state and Civil Society where Public Theology understood that "political parties, regimes and policies come and go; they are always necessary, but they are also the by-product of those religious, cultural, familial, economic and social traditions that are prior to government, and every government is, sooner or later, accountable to them."<sup>2</sup> The Christian's role is to help reinvigorate the institutions of society by influencing them through Civil Society and their individual actions, according to Phillips.

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1. Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 48.

2. *Ibid.*, 49.

As touched on previously, this maintains a separation of theology from the political sphere and keeps religion in the private lives of citizens rather than outwardly using theology to help shape public policy and participate in the enacting of the kingdom of God. Phillips is correct to point out this genesis of Public Theology in one sense, yet Public Theology has moved well beyond this definition and limited role. Public Theology has opened new doors and new means for the religious and for theology to once again become part of the public and not just the private lives of individual actors seeking to influence institutions through Civil Society. Public Theology, through its evolution from Political Theology, will speak to all Three Publics: that of Government, Economic Structures, and Civil Society.

David Tracy in *The Analogical Imagination* helps us understand and trace these three publics, which are helpful to examine as we parse exactly what ‘public’ is and what role Public Theology has in the public realm as well as the limited political. While we have already defined what constitutes Political Theology and Public Theology to a lesser degree, Tracy begins by defining what is a ‘Public’ as a launching point. By doing so, Tracy opens the door for theology to once again take its chair at the table of policy formation for society and for the common good of all. Understanding the publics will help us to reposition Public Theology to have a larger and greater role in society. In other words, unlike previous iterations of Public Theology as defined by Phillips, Public Theology would then not be limited to Civil Society and individuals, but could act and interact directly with institutions and governments on all levels as well as Civil Society.

According to Tracy there are three publics in which the theologian, or I would say the Christian, acts: wider society, the academy and the church itself.<sup>3</sup> Each of these publics is distinct and a Christian may wish to speak to only one, but as Tracy points out, each theologian, or Christian, who seeks a “genuine publicness. . . thereby implicitly addresses

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3. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (Crossroads Publishing Co., 1981), 5.

all three publics.”<sup>4</sup> To refuse to admit that Christians face the complexities of social reality “will prove as damaging as an earlier theological generation’s refusal to face historical consciousness.”<sup>5</sup> The results of refusing to see the social complexities have already been seen in the historical ramifications of Luther’s Two Kingdom model, the abrogating of the Christian and church’s responsibility to be the voice to the face of power for the oppressed and marginalized and how that was played out in Germany during World War II, namely in the Holocaust.

Each of these publics is comprehensive and intricate. Tracy parses out the three different publics that the Christian addresses in their life and work as follows: the Public of Society, for example, consists of three distinct realms and the three publics I alluded to prior, that of Government, Economic Structures, and Civil Society. Tracy describes these three realms as the realm of the technoeconomic, the realm of the polity, and the realm of culture.<sup>6</sup> It is to these three distinct realms of the Public of Society we now turn before exploring the additional realms of the public of the academy and the public of the church.

The realm of the technoeconomic is concerned with “the organization and allocation of goods and services. This realm forms the occupation and stratification systems of the society and uses modern technology for instrumental ends.”<sup>7</sup> Since the value of the technology is based upon instrumental rationality, “a use of reason to determine rational means for a determined end”, it runs into the problem of its inability to define those ends for society in general on anything other than instrumental value.<sup>8</sup> Tracy points out that if instrumental reason was the sole means by which the good of all society is measured then we would “not be dealing [with a] technological society but with an emerging technocracy, where

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4. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 5-6.

5. *Ibid.*, 6.

6. *Ibid.*, 7.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, 8.

the eclipse of practical reason for political decision and action is assured.”<sup>9</sup> If instrumental reasoning is used for public policy, then society would give all power and authority over to government which would make the most efficient and beneficial policy decisions. However, these decisions would not reflect a mutual benefit for all citizens but would favour the emerging technocracy.

Furthermore, this allows for the technoeconomy to be influenced by a few who benefit at the cost of the majority, as seems to be the case with the growing gap between rich and poor in North America. If the Christian acts within the technoeconomy, then he or she can help shape and determine policy decisions based on other influencing factors, namely the teachings of Jesus Christ. Policy decisions, therefore, can be determined not by instrumental reason or the instrumental value citizens may play in the technoeconomy but rather by all citizens, indeed all peoples, as having intrinsic value as created beings in the image and likeness of God. Granted this is only one aspect of the Public of Society that Tracy describes but we can already see the need for Public Theology to offset instrumental ethics.

The second aspect of the Public of Society that Tracy proposes is the realm of the polity. This realm is also governed by practical reason and it is the place in which all citizens meet, civic discourse and a genuinely public philosophy are discussed, and the good of all citizens is sought. Public policy is discussed in a myriad of ways, whether based upon “teleological, deontological, axiological or responsibility models for ethical reasoning, or upon some mixed theory.”<sup>10</sup> The purpose of this realm is concerned primarily with the legitimate meanings of social justice and the use of power by government. In other words, the realm of the polity is the basic political civic discourse where all citizens are welcome to come and interact based upon rational discussion. Where the utilitarian or deontologist would approach civic discourse from an individual’s rational perspective, the Christian enters into public debate surrounding issues of the well-being of all citizens from

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9. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 8.

10. *Ibid.*, 9.

a set of values and ethics based in scripture and faith. It is in this realm where the role of Public Theology is most obvious.

The third and final realm in the Public of Society is the realm of culture. The realm of culture is chiefly, but not solely, “art and religion and reflection upon its various forms of cultural criticism, philosophy and [where] theology is concerned with symbolic expression.”<sup>11</sup> It is here that an “intuitive and developed sense of values may be found in the classical symbolic expressions of the major traditions informing the culture.”<sup>12</sup> The basis of these traditions and values are often found in religion. The way in which religion influences the realm of culture is through what Tracy defines as a ‘classic’: a piece of literature or art that is embodied in a culture. Examples of a classic would be a work of Shakespeare or, in the Christian’s case, the Bible or, more specifically, the event of Jesus Christ.

Tracy proposes that “classics” are revelatory, in the sense that they have a normative quality to disclose a cultural experience, which is experienced as realized truth.<sup>13</sup> In a very real sense the presence of classics helps us interpret the world and helps us to make epistemological claims, or, at the very least, culturally valid truth claims. Tracy never denies that the claims to truth that an interpreter makes through a classic are entirely dependent on the pre-understanding that he or she brings to the text or the classic. Tracy does not attempt to put forward a set of a-priori transcendental claims, but instead attempts to ground our understanding of the world and culture through the lens of the classic which imparts some measure of truth to the interpreter through the process of experiencing the classic and engaging in dialectical hermeneutic.

Tracy asserts that only through experience and dialogue can evidence be brought forward to make claims on the character of the truth that is experienced in the classic.<sup>14</sup> Yet

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11. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 7.

12. *Ibid.*, 11.

13. *Ibid.*, 108.

14. *Ibid.*, 113.

because the event of reading the classic is entirely subjective, the truth of the event must be brought forward into a conversation, both with the text that is being interpreted but also with other interpreters, past, present, and future. This is highly important. The particular focus of the “question and the particular history of one’s own most familiar or intense response. . . will lead each individual theologian [Christian] to her or his own response to that event.”<sup>15</sup> The truth of the event is therefore first experienced between the interpreter and the classic.

It is a consequence of the forgoing that all interpretation of classics must be accorded a public status in the wider culture so that a multiplicity of interpretations may take place and, through a dialectical conversation, arrive at the “truth” of the classic. That is, at least, the truth within the historicity of that particular culture and set of interpreters, for each set of interpreters comes to the text with a pre-understanding of his or her culture in time and space.<sup>16</sup>

Tracy loosely defines the classics as works of art, whether that is literature or visual art, that imparts truth about the human condition. They tell a story of an event that becomes open to interpretation. For the Christian, the classic begins with the event and person of Jesus Christ. This event is kept alive within the “classic texts, events, symbols, images, events and persons in [the] tradition.”<sup>17</sup> It is the event of “God’s self-manifestation in the person of Jesus Christ: an event that happened, happens and will happen”<sup>18</sup> to which the Christians scriptures testify as original witness. For Tracy, the Christian classic is not a piece of art or text, but the actual event of the manifestation of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament is not a text in the classical sense of which Tracy speaks. Those

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15. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 315.

16. *Ibid.*, 233.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, 249.



texts speak truth about the human condition, but even the collection of texts within the New Testament are themselves only testimony to the event that is the true classic: the event of Jesus Christ. In other words, the scriptures attempt to interpret the Christ event itself and the modern interpreter must ask himself or herself,

Where shall we go for some exclusive view of the classic events, texts, persons, the dominant images and thought about Jesus Christ, to be sure, but by what route? Through what other classic New Testament persons: The expectancy of the Baptist? The heroic stature of Luke's Paul? The extraordinariness of the ordinary disclosed in the non-heroic bridge-builder Peter? The rigour of James? The courage of Luke's Mary? Through what image? Resurrection alone, cross alone, incarnation alone? Through which founding events? The classic events of ministry of Jesus narrated in the synoptic, the epoch-making event for the early Jewish Christian communities of the desecration of the temple of Jerusalem; the expectancy of that event which did not come, the parousia; or other epoch-making events of the New Testament, the persecutions, the Gentile mission, or, as seems right and unifying, the events of the passion and resurrection as confessed in again diverse ways throughout the New Testament and confessed anew in distinct and sometimes conflicting narratives in the gospels.<sup>19</sup>

In this sense, the New Testament becomes part of the dialectical public conversation into which Tracy indicates that all interpreters, Christians and others, enter. The gospels themselves share "the prejudice for narrative as a key to lived experience."<sup>20</sup> Each gospel presents the truth of the Christ event from the perspective of the gospel writer. Mark develops a narrative "which is like an apocalyptic drama where this Jesus is the apocalyptic Son

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19. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 251-252.

20. *Ibid.*, 276.

of Man whose Messianic secret discloses the necessity for a suffering Messiah.”<sup>21</sup> Here, the author’s pre-understanding of his cultural environment influences the interpretation of the Christ event. The gospel of Mark, written prior to the destruction of the temple in 68-70 CE, reflects the secrecy under which Jewish Christians lived, and the suffering they endured when they confessed Christ. Paul himself notes that he was a zealous persecutor as a Pharisee, indicating the pre-understanding of the Markean community and how they interpreted the Christ event.

Similarly, Matthew and Luke developed foundational narratives for later communities in the form of an incarnational God that chooses to manifest itself in the form of Jesus Christ. This addressed a need to understand and experience the event inside a narrative that accounts for all human experiences from birth, through life, and eventually to death.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, in Paul and John, the theological treatment of the event imparts the truth of the event as lived and experienced by the epistle writers.

Paul engaged in a dialectic, “which hurls the reader about and destroys any escape from facing contradiction, and at the same time the giftedness, of the shattering reality of the cross of Jesus Christ.”<sup>23</sup> Paul forces the reader to face the scandal and the folly of the cross, “an event where all our lies, fears, anxieties, compulsions, illusions and distortions, our thousand strategies to justify ourselves are decentered and defamiliarized as they are brought to recognize the power of God on the cross as seeming weakness, suffering, and forgiveness.”<sup>24</sup> These are the same contradictions and scandal with which Paul himself lived and which he brought as his pre-understanding to the Christ event, the classic, and which he used to interpret the event to disclose the truth of the event.

Meanwhile, John’s “dominant manifestation orientation empowering his high Christol-

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21. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 277.

22. Only Matthew and Luke have developed infancy narratives where the whole human experience must be explored for future communities, or at least according to Tracy

23. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 283.

24. *Ibid.*, 284.

ogy leads him to re-express the narrative of Jesus' ministry into series of signs of his glory in a life of humiliation-exaltation of the Logos who is Jesus Christ."<sup>25</sup> John interprets the event of Jesus Christ from his cultural perspective in an attempt to disclose the truth of the event as seen in the book of signs (chapters 1-12) and the book of glory (chapters 13-20).<sup>26</sup> In the same manner that Paul disclosed the truth of the event, that all is grace, Tracy claims that John interprets the classic in empiricist terms that he can understand.

This dialectical conversation with the text, with the event itself, and the interpreters has not ceased with the New Testament, but has continued in the tradition leading to declarations at both Nicaea and Chalcedon about the nature of the event itself and what truth was disclosed by God and what truth can be learned. These statements act very much in the same manner as the theological work of both Paul and John in interpreting the Christ event. The dialectical conversation continues to allow for more truth to be gleaned from the one specific and historical event that was Jesus Christ. It is in this same manner that myriads of commentators, theologians, and Christians continue to engage with the classic, according to Tracy. By experiencing the event of Jesus Christ through the text, traditions, and symbols of Christianity, the Christian is able to engage in a public revealing or a pluralistic treatment of the event. Truth is gleaned and revealed with each passing generation that engages in a dialectic hermeneutic that continues to reveal the truth of the event as experienced.

Tracy grounds the truth that is revealed in the classic in such experience. Our pre-understanding influences our readings as much as the text itself influences our readings of the event. It is for this reason that new truths can be gleaned through a pluralistic hermeneutic practice. Interpreters must continue to bring forward their respective interpretations of the Christ event as a corrective means of arriving at the core truth of the event, if that is even possible. Fundamentally, each question and answer about the event discloses partial truth

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25. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 286.

26. For more on the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory please see Raymond E. Brown and the Anchor Bible Series

that is revealed in a lived experience, whether that lived experience is early Palestinian, Judaic, Hellenistic, Gentile, Markean, Lukean, Matthean, Pauline, Johannine, apocalyptic, early catholic, inner city American or post-modern.<sup>27</sup>

The classic, therefore, must be interpreted in all three publics if it is to have any validity. The truths gleaned from the event and from the text are brought into the public sphere as a means of not only gleaning truth about the event itself, but to hold society in-check as a social and political corrective force.

The definition of a classic has helped us illuminate the Public of Society and how and why the Christian must engage publicly with the classic and with the rest of society. While Tracy's Public of Society contains my three publics for Public Theology, Tracy describes two other publics, that of academia and the church. It may be helpful to hear what Tracy has to say on these additional publics. The first public of Tracy's three publics had three subsets to it, the other two do not. Tracy, as I have already noted, is attempting to isolate the three publics that theologians address in their work and life as they engage with the classic, the New Testament writers and the event that is Jesus Christ. Yet at the core of Christian discipleship is the need and responsibility to read and study the scriptures, to worship, give alms, and to fast and pray for all Christians and not just the theologian. In a very real sense, the study of God and theology is the responsibility of all the baptized and not limited to the theologian as Tracy asserts. As such, the next public, the public of the academy, is to be addressed not just by theologians proper, but also by all Christians.

The academy cannot be separated from the rest of the world through the creation of an ivory tower where hermeneutic practices take place. The public nature of theology as a discipline was best seen and demonstrated in the Liberation Theology movement in Latin American and also in South Africa during the apartheid years, both examples of Public Theology in practice. Movements within theology itself happen outside the "social locus

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27. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 305.

where the scholarly study of theology most often occurs.”<sup>28</sup> Tracy centres the publicness of theology in the academy around traditional acceptable academic standards that exist today in western universities. He states that, “theologians do recognize their responsibility to produce theological discourse which meets the highest standards of the contemporary academy.”<sup>29</sup> While I agree with Tracy in a general sense, I would like to expand his definition of the academy and add some nuance to it so as to incorporate theological movements that are lived experiences of the classic event of Jesus Christ, as with Liberation Theology, and also broaden the scope of the academy itself.

What rests at the core of the academy is peer review and dialogue between theologians. This was generally accepted when Tracy wrote *The Analogical Imagination* and it still is today, to some degree. I would propose, though, that the academic world is being flattened-out from its ivory tower history with new forms of academic expression such as pop-academic works and the blogosphere. Through blogs, vanity publications, and social media, Christians are now able to engage in public peer-review, that is the questioning and study of scripture and engagement through the created world, in a new, broader academy. No longer is the academy reserved for the few, but the democratization of knowledge and public dialogue has become more pervasive thanks in a large part to the Internet. So while Tracy’s view of the academy is somewhat antiquated, the public that he described is even more important and prevalent today and his points surrounding the publicness of the study of God in theology is something that any Christian can and ought to undertake rather than a few select theologians living in ivory towers.

The final public of Tracy’s three publics is the church to which the Christian speaks. While the Christian must strive for publicness in both society and the academy, the same openness must occur in the institution of the church itself. While other intellectuals and citizens need only to speak to the first two publics, the Christian, unlike other intellectuals,

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28. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 14.

29. *Ibid.*, 21.

“must also speak explicitly to a third public, the church.”<sup>30</sup> Why is the church considered a third public unlike other social institutions or service clubs? Tracy asserts that the “church as a public may be considered a community of moral and religious discourse.”<sup>31</sup> And as a community of believers, “the ethos and worldview of the churches affect the larger society usually indirectly. Through their individual members and more rarely through their institutional weight, churches may directly affect the policies of the society as a whole.”<sup>32</sup> While this was the case for many years, in the 21st century this is much more unlikely as the Great Separation has pushed the church, the institution and the baptized, out of the public spaces and sequestered the church in its own public where more often than not it speaks solely to itself. It has become incumbent, therefore, on the Christian to speak publicly on all issues in society, including the church, acknowledging the church’s own history and abuses, to help further the church’s own transformation.

Tracy is right to point out though that every Christian “must face squarely the claims to meaning and truth of all three publics: the paradigms for truth in the church tradition, the paradigms for rational enterprises in the academy, the models for rationality in the three overlapping realms of contemporary society.”<sup>33</sup> As both citizens of the state and baptized members of the Body of Christ, the Christian affects all three of Tracy’s publics and therefore must engage all three publics genuinely and openly.

Tracy outlines his three different publics with which the Christian engages, but he doesn’t outline precisely what ‘public’ itself means, where it originated, or how it differs from the political realm. To help unpack that meaning a little further and investigate the origin of the term ‘public’, we now turn to Dirkie Smit and his presentation of Jürgen Habermas and the structural transformation of the public sphere. This will help illuminate

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30. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, 21.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, 29.

the differences between Public Theology and Political Theology more clearly.

## 2.2 The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere

While politics and the political sphere have been with us since long before the emergence of Christianity, as seen with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Plato's *Republic*, the same cannot be said for this concept of the public sphere, or the "public". The history of the public sphere begins in the 13th century with an early form of capitalism and the gradual undermining of existing power relations. Smit notes that at this time, "[powerful] people and institutions — especially political, but also religious — determined the contours and practices of life."<sup>34</sup> Over time, the flow of commerce and communication will alter the political formation of societies and shift the balance of power.

During the 16th century, "commercial companies were formed that required political support to protect and support their business ventures."<sup>35</sup> For this protection of their business ventures, commercial interest paid taxes to the government or crown, slowly giving birth to the nation state, as we know it today. As both political and economic realities began to change dramatically, "so did the lives of people living together."<sup>36</sup> Gradually, the emergence of what we call Civil Society today began to take form. Smit explains, "the new form of state and economy needed a different kind of citizen."<sup>37</sup> With the advent of the printing press and the need for an informed citizenry, newspapers began to circulate and the public space, Civil Society, emerged. The original "public" targeted is not what we today would call the "public" though. Instead, the newspaper targeted the bourgeois class to "relate commercial news to merchants and potential buyers (thus serving economic powers) and,

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34. Dirkie Smit, "What does Public Mean? Question with a View to Public Theology," in *Christian in Public: Aims, Methodologies and Issues in Public Theology*, ed. Len Hansen (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2007), 13.

35. *Ibid.*, 14.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

on the other hand, to make the will of the political powers widely known (thus serving political power).”<sup>38</sup> As such, the first citizens engaged in this early form of the public sphere were mainly the bourgeois class of capitalist and government functionaries. The general population would be added, but much later.

Yet even at this point, the term ‘public’ or ‘public sphere’ had yet to emerge. In the late 17th century this began to change with groups of citizens who held their own opinions separate from the economic or political powers of the day. The role of the press also began to change with this shifting landscape “towards a more pedagogical or educational” role.<sup>39</sup> By supplying information, the press took on the role of helping to “shape critical opinion, carrying reviews, in short, by critically challenging the legitimacy of political and economic powers.”<sup>40</sup> It is at this point that terms such as ‘public’, ‘publicity’ and ‘public opinion’ emerge. Smit sums up this emergence as follows: “From now on one could speak of a true interplay of *three* [my emphasis] instead of merely two forces: the state (regardless of the way it was organized), the economy (regardless of the form it took) and a critical public opinion (regardless of the fact that it was still in its infancy, regardless of its unrepresentative nature, and regardless of the fact that it could be described as both the public or the private sphere).”<sup>41</sup>

Over the next two centuries this continued to evolve. As the right to vote was gradually extended to other groups – non-landowners, women, and ethnic minorities – participation in public life, discussions surrounding political leadership and economic development increased within these groups. Publicity and public opinion “developed as a counterforce against secrecy of state and politics.”<sup>42</sup> The emerging middle class was “purposefully informed in order to assist public opinion in questioning and criticizing public actions. What

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38. Smit, “What does Public Mean? Question with a View to Public Theology,” 14.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., 15.

42. Ibid.



we know as democracy in fact underwent a structural transformation during that period.”<sup>43</sup> In many ways this would be the height of the public sphere and an informed, rational, and educated citizenry. The fall of the public sphere to a semblance of what it once was would occur partially because of the enfranchisement of such a large portion of the population, until the entire population, male and female, land owner or not, Gentile or Jew, would be given the right to vote and participate in public life, namely the questioning of the economic and political powers.

Public opinion lost much of its rational and critical force through the democratization of the public sphere. As a consequence to the rise of late capitalism and in reaction to the Great Depression, “public opinion and personal liberties were sacrificed for the sake of greater protectionism by politics, by increased concentration on the immutable laws and demands of the economy, and state intervention in the interest of the economy.”<sup>44</sup>

Smit’s presentation is extremely helpful in defining the difference between public and political. Public concerns “a specific type of social space and accompanying institutions and practices that have developed in democratic societies since the onset of modernity.”<sup>45</sup> This space is different than the so called “private sphere, the sphere of the state, the economy or the various activities and organisations of civil society.”<sup>46</sup> These various spheres have different levels of engagement and often call for secrecy, as with the state, and therefore are not, in part, open to the public sphere. Smit, though, concludes that public, or public space, is connected with “the general welfare, with the general will and the general consensus on values and interest in society.”<sup>47</sup> It is into this space of the public good, public will, and public values, that the Christian steps, and in which he or she and acts in conjunction with God.

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43. Smit, “What does Public Mean? Question with a View to Public Theology,” 15.

44. *Ibid.*, 16.

45. *Ibid.*, 31.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

This space includes the political sphere, but has notable expansions. The political sphere surrounds the organization of the state and how government interacts with citizens specifically, what Tracy called the technoeconomy. The political is much more limited in many senses than the “public”. The societal values of the public will inform the choices governments make and how they influence the economy. In other words public opinion, public desire, and the public will inform political choice; the political ought to be subservient to the public. This makes the public space, the public sphere, the area where the Christian can have the most influence upon policy and direction that governments choose. It is the area and space where Christians can act to address the needs of neighbour and it is where humanity acts in concert with God to help enact the kingdom of God and participate in the *Missio Dei*, the mission of God.

Politics, therefore, is about institutions, systems, and structures of the government and the economy. Public, meanwhile, is about participation in politics, but it is not limited to participation in politics alone. It includes much more. Public consists of the general will, general welfare, and general consensus of the citizens of a nation state. It goes well beyond the political to encapsulate all aspects of daily life.

The differences between Political Theology and Public Theology should be clear now as we look at the origin of Political Theology, limited in many ways to just the political, government, and how we organize large collections of citizens and the economy. Meanwhile Public Theology, evolved from Political Theology, is meant to encapsulate all of the Christian’s life, their interactions with the political, yes, but also with other institutions and with other citizens in all aspects of society. Because this centring is on the individual actions of each Christian in the public and how they seek to reveal the truth in the classic that is the event of Jesus Christ, this engagement to influence the direction of public values and ethics, the general well-being of society, re-introduces theology into our political associations and economic organizations and signals the main difference between Public Theology and Political Theology.

The centring on the individual actor is the hallmark of Public Theology. Meanwhile, the centring on the institution of the church and how it interacts with government or economy is the hallmark of Political Theology. Public Theology therefore takes into account the three aspects of society mentioned by Smit: Government, Economy and Civil Society. Political Theology is centred merely on Government and Economy. Incorporation of this third public space, that of Civil Society, illustrates clearly how Public Theology has evolved from its origins in Political Theology. It should also indicate that Public Theology, therefore, has much different and broader applications for the church and for individual Christians.

Political Theology's weakness is that it speaks to only two aspects of society: Government and Economic Structures. The strength of Public Theology is that it speaks to Government and Economic Structures, but it also speaks to Civil Society. This allows the Christian to interact with the three public spaces. It is for this reason that Public Theology evolved from its earlier incarnation in Political Theology and becomes the means by which Christians, joined to God in baptism, become co-creators of the Heavenly City.

## Chapter 3

# United in Baptism

### 3.1 A Tale of Two Cities

As I have already suggested, baptism is the means by which believers are joined to the historical body of Christ. Baptism, therefore, becomes the central public act of the church. It both adds new Christians and sends them forward into the world where they participate through the union with God in the redemption of world, the building of the kingdom of God, and the establishing of the Heavenly City in both the here-and-now and at the end of time. To fully understand the depths of baptism and the ways in which the Heavenly City is being enacted through the work of the baptized, it is necessary to look back to Augustine for inspiration. I will follow William Cavanaugh to illustrate that the two cities, the Heavenly City and the earthly city, co-exist in the same time and space. Through baptism, Christians become citizens of the Heavenly City. And, through the sacrament of Baptism, Christians are sent forth to use the same resources of the earthly city but for purposes of the Heavenly City. Without this grounding in baptism, citizenship in the Heavenly City, Christians would be unable to participate in the redemption of the world and would be cast adrift in time until the eschaton when the earthly city passes away and the Heavenly City comes to be.

Even though he never intended to set out a full and robust political theology as we

understand political theologies today, Augustine's political writings have often been cited to support the idea that God sanctions the state and good citizens. Augustine's theology is much more akin to the definition of Public Theology that I have put forward, rather than Political Theology, and really should be treated as Public Theology and not Political Theology. In his political writings, Augustine addresses not just Government and Economy, but also Civil Society. Augustine's sanction of state and citizens is limited, as states and good citizens are limited in means of achieving a truly just moral end, whether in public or private life; namely in achieving true justice and peace.<sup>1</sup> It is for this reason that the State may, and does, make use of coercive force in an effort to maintain what Augustine calls the peace of Babylon- peace in the earthly city and amongst its citizens.

This has often caused a distinction or separation between the Heavenly City and the earthly city, which are sometimes interpreted as occurring in two separate and distinct spaces and times. The earthly city is now and in the world in which we live, and the Heavenly City can only be attained after this life when devout Christians pass from life through death's door to a new existence through the grace and mercy of God by the one true and perfect sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. Other interpreters have concluded that the earthly city is on a trajectory towards the Heavenly City which exists at the end of time. The earthly city, therefore, is not eternal and our journey in it is temporary as we are moving towards the eternal Heavenly City at the end of time itself. Others have concluded that the Heavenly City is represented here on earth in the church as a body politic and governments that use coercive force to maintain law and order and the peace of Babylon represent the earthly city.

It is not my intention to engage with any of these perspectives but to propose a different interpretation of Augustine and how his Public Theology provides the means by which Christians may re-engage with society, seek the general welfare of all, help to inform the

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1. As noted above, the notion of a public and private divide is a notion of modernity and not implicit in Augustine writings. In many ways reading this separation in Augustine is reading back into history modern ideas that simply would never have occurred to the ancient writer.

general will, values, and ethics of society, and help to influence the general consensus on how we ought to organize ourselves in the 21st century. In dialogue primarily with William Cavanaugh, but supported by Herbert A. Deanne, I will argue that the City of God co-exists with the earthly city in time and space: that in the one perfect sacrifice of Christ upon the cross the City of God was brought again to the earthly city. As such, the earthly city is in process of a continual transformation into the Heavenly City. In effect, then, there are two cities, “present in this world mixed together and in a certain sense, entangled with one another.”<sup>2</sup> The two cities exist simultaneously in time and space, making use of all the same resources, humanity, and all of creation, and the two cities are in the process of being reconciled with God in eternity.

My constructive proposal will begin by tracing Augustine’s own thoughts in *City of God* on what exactly he defined as the City of God, or the Heavenly City. While he finds it difficult to define a city that none other than the first man, Adam, and the second man, Jesus Christ, have ever seen, Augustine does offer some description of what he believes is core to the City of God. Augustine accomplishes this through gleanings in scripture. After the City of God has been defined, I will explore the City of Pagans, or the earthly city, and its origins in space and time. Once these two cities have been clearly articulated, I will demonstrate that they exist simultaneously and that the earthly city and its citizens are in a process of transformation into the City of God, inaugurated on the cross by the sacrifice of Christ, which does not just exist at the end of time itself, at the Eschaton. By demonstrating that these two cities exist together, I will demonstrate that individual Christians, joined to God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit in baptism, join with God in the bringing about of the Heavenly City as its citizens. Because the two cities exist together, the Christian is compelled to act publicly in the three public spaces of Government, Economic Structures, and Civil Society as already outlined for the purpose of building up of the kingdom of God. And finally, I will argue that these public actions

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2. Dyson, *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans*, 450.

toward Government, Economies, and Civil Society can only happen because God acted first in the sacrament of baptism, but through baptism we are compelled to become actors in the comedy of redemption.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.2 The City of God

In Book XI of the *City of God*, Augustine asserts that God is eternal, immutable and unchanging, “for his thought does not change as it passes from one thing to another, but beholds all things with absolute immutability.”<sup>4</sup> The eternal nature of God means that He existed before the world was created, and therefore also before time itself was created and that “God is incorporeal and the Creator of all natures that are not Himself.”<sup>5</sup> Augustine is asserting that God could not have been created in any sense, but that God existed before creation, before there was light and darkness, day and night, before there was sky, water and dry land, before vegetation had grown, or the moon and sun were placed in the sky to mark the days, before living creatures on land, in the air and in the water populated the earth and before humanity was made in the image of God.<sup>6</sup>

Augustine also argues that God did not change His mind or decide to create something new. In effect, the idea to create the world was always in the mind, or being, of God. Here, Augustine puts forward a view of God where God is eternal, existing before time and space, but also where God exists simultaneously in all of time and space: “Neither does He pass from thought to thought in what He contemplates; for in His incorporeal vision all things which He knows are simultaneously present.”<sup>7</sup> This view necessitates that the

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3. The ‘comedy of redemption’ is a term I borrow from William Cavanaugh and one I will return to later.

4. Dyson, *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans*, 475.

5. *Ibid.*, 455.

6. Augustine relies heavily upon Genesis 1:1-2:4a when postulating the existence of God before the world was created in Book XI. In it, he proposes that when God created the heavens and the earth, there existed nothing before hand, not even time itself.

7. Dyson, *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans*, 475.

eternal nature of God allows Him to be omniscient, to know all that will happen because He is, in effect, experiencing all of time and history simultaneously in one moment, in totality. In this manner it is not possible for God to be limited in knowledge in any sense. This also allows Augustine to maintain that God is immutable and unchanging, since no new thought would ever occur to God, but God would have all thought and all knowledge simultaneously in all of time and space and even before there existed time and space. The totality of all His thought would occur in one and the same moment.

The difference between eternity and time is very important for Augustine: “for if eternity and time are rightly distinguished by the fact that time does not exist without some movement and change, whereas in eternity there is no change.”<sup>8</sup> This distinction allows Augustine to maintain his claim that God is eternal, immutable and unchanging, while his creation, even time itself, is mutable. Therefore Augustine postulates, “The world was made not in time, but simultaneously with time. For that which is made in time is made both after and before some time: after that which is past, and before that which is to come.”<sup>9</sup> This assertion allows Augustine to claim that God existed before the world, before time and that His nature is indeed eternal, immutable and unchanging.

The eternal nature of God is extremely important to Augustine. Time allows for change, evolution or degradation. In either case what is will be altered and achieve a new state of being, whether better or worse. Augustine feels it necessary to answer the effects of time in the world and in his culture. As the Roman Empire slowly converts to Christianity, it would be easy for critics to claim that the City of God has already been achieved in Christendom. It is noted by Deanne that Augustine is, “speaking of his own period, when the empire is ‘Christian’, and not the pagan past or of the period of persecution of the Church by the State.”<sup>10</sup> What Augustine hopes to stress is that the City of God is eternal, unchanging and

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8. Dyson, *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans*, 456.

9. Ibid.

10. Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 124.



perfected. He is suggesting, therefore, that the City of God can only have its form in the very being of God, and since only God is eternal and unchanging, existing outside of time and space, the city of God cannot exist in the form of the Roman Empire or any other earthly city throughout time.

The City of God, it would therefore seem, is not a temporal place or even a New Jerusalem descending from the clouds as a bride adorned for husband Israel.<sup>11</sup> The City of God has its being, its so-called place, in the presence and being of the eternal God himself. This indicates, then, that the City of God exists outside of time and space, perhaps at the eschaton. Yet this also means that the City of God, having its being and existence in God, exists also in all of time and space. Therefore the City of God is now, but not yet, realized, but yet to come.

This understanding of the City of God is extremely important in understanding Augustine's political thought and his Public Theology. It allows for the completion and redemption of God's creation on the cross, in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Yet it also allows for the fact that the world did not come to an apocalyptic end but continues onward, on its trajectory. Augustine's thought process rests heavily in the same anticipatory nature of the season of Advent in the church, as we wait for the realization of the Kingdom of God in the birth of the Messiah, yet knowing that after the birth the earthly city will not be immediately transformed and we continue in history towards the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross and the discovery of the empty tomb.

The City of God, so construed, allows for the realization of the Kingdom of God in the here-and-now, realized, but still yet to come. It also allows for the baptized to be citizens of both cities and to work in conjunction publicly with God and the event of Jesus Christ to help transform the earthly city into the Heavenly City. But before further exploring how the City of God is realized in the here-and-now we must first turn to the City of Babylon, or the earthly city, and define the parameters that Augustine envisioned for the City of the

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11. Revelation 21:2 NRSV

Pagans.

### 3.3 City of Pagans

The City of Pagans, commonly referred to by Augustine as the earthly city, is the fallen world in which we live. It is transitory in nature, mutable and changing. It is a place where compromises are necessary and justice is not perfect, as seen by the many discourses Augustine enters into in his letters collected in the *Political Writings*. The justice of the earthly city is what Augustine refers to as the peace of Babylon, where “a household of men who do not live by faith strive to find an earthly peace in the goods and advantages which belong to this temporal life.”<sup>12</sup> This does not mean that God’s good creation was imperfect, for “the first human beings in Paradise were blessed before they sinned, even though they were uncertain as to how long their blessedness would last and whether it would be eternal (although it would have been eternal had they not sinned).”<sup>13</sup> What is apparent is that the earthly city came into being as a result of the fall and not because of some defect in God’s creation. Also that the fall occurred in time and not in eternity as previously defined. The earthly city, therefore, needs to use coercive force to maintain the peace of Babylon.

Augustine stresses that the fall did not occur because of evil, “for there is nothing at all which is evil by nature, and ‘evil’ is a name for nothing other than the absence of good.”<sup>14</sup> It was therefore not a naturally occurring event but a result of the will of humanity, and of the angels who turned against God, going contrary to the will of God; the fall occurred because of sin. Augustine defines sin as an opposition to the will and authority of God, “for its cause is not efficient, but deficient, because the evil will [sin] itself is not an effect of

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12. Dyson, *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans*, 945.

13. *Ibid.*, 465.

14. *Ibid.*, 477.

something, but a defect.”<sup>15</sup> This evil will is made such “by nothing else than the defection by which God is forsaken.”<sup>16</sup>

Augustine stresses the autonomy of humanity’s will and that sin and the fall are contrary to the natural order. As Deanne notes, “man has been given the gift of free will, which no earthly creature possesses; he can, if he wishes to do so, act in a manner contrary to God’s command. He can choose to obey or disobey.”<sup>17</sup> As Augustine relies heavily upon the creation story, he must reconcile the two ideas that God made humanity in His own image and that humanity is no longer immortal.<sup>18</sup> He achieves this reconciliation through the autonomous choice of humanity to turn away from God as disobedience when the first man went contrary to the will of God with the first woman and ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.<sup>19</sup> Sin and the fall, therefore, rests on the pride of humanity and its “presumptuous desire, to which the devil adroitly appealed, to ‘be like God’. By craving to be more, man became less; and by aspiring to be self-sufficing, he fell away from Him who truly suffices him.”<sup>20</sup> The fall, therefore, is based in humanity’s free will, and caused the earthly city to come into being in time as humanity chose to turn away from God.

For Augustine, God created the world and everything in it. He writes that the world “is not eternal; it had a beginning, and the beginning of the world was also the beginning of time. The world will have an end, the last Judgment, when heaven and earth shall pass away, and a new heaven shall appear, in which the saints will enjoy eternal peace and happiness with God and his angels. Between these two points, the creation of the world and its eventual destruction is played out in the great drama of man’s career on earth. The climax of the drama, the moment for which all that went before was simply an

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15. Dyson, *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans*, 507.

16. *Ibid.*, 509.

17. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*, 15.

18. Gen 1:26 NRSV

19. Gen 3:1-6

20. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*, 16.

anxious prelude, is the Incarnation, the appearance on earth of God in human form with the birth of Jesus Christ.”<sup>21</sup> Understanding the fall and its occurrence in time and space allows us to understand the significance of the Christ event, the classic according to Tracy, and how what was fallen was restored upon the cross and in the empty tomb. While Deane mistakenly sees the Heavenly City only occurring at the end of time, he is right to point to the significance of the Incarnation, of the Christ event. For it is in the Incarnation that the eternal came to the temporal. It is in the Incarnation, the Kingdom of God, the Heavenly City, was inaugurated in time, and it is through the Incarnation that we are joined through the waters of baptism to the eternal and become actors in the comedy of redemption.

### 3.4 Two Cities, One Place

Cavanaugh poses the simple question, “What would it mean to construe the Church as a public space in its own right?”<sup>22</sup> Can the Church itself be a public space or a *polis*? And if so, how can the Church occupy the same space that is normally reserved for secular society? Should the Church separate itself and act separately from society? And if it does, is this just another recreation of the public/private dichotomy that has caused the split between beings as either citizens and Christians? It would be a mistake “simply to accept the dichotomy of public and private as it is currently construed.”<sup>23</sup> Society is always in flux and no one pure iteration of society and social organization exists. In essence, we are always acting both publicly and privately. Religion and the public are all part of the one and same *polis*, Government, Economy and Civil Society as one.

If we accept the public/private dichotomy, the Church becomes relegated to the fringes of society, into the private realm, at least in the current secular iteration of societal organization. This dichotomy is predicated on there being a limited amount of resources for the

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21. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*, 14-15.

22. William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination* (New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 85.

23. *Ibid.*

*polis* or city to occupy and share. This concept of spatiality and the very description of public space is limited and quantifiable, it has boundaries and reaches. It can be measured and defined and, as such, it is assumed that there is a limited amount of space that exists, which the Church must share with the rest of Civil Society, Government and Economic Powers. In this sense, the Church's place and the Christian's role in the world has slowly been eroded and been marginalized as secular society has slowly taken root over the last few hundred years and begun to occupy more space and even dominate the spaces of Government and Economics. The space that the Church occupies, as a result, has continually contracted and become more limited and marginalized. The church and Christians have been slowly relegated to just Tracy's Public of the Church and an increasingly smaller portion of Civil Society. It has long abandoned Tracy's other two publics: the Public of Society and, to a lesser degree, the Public of the Academy.

Consequently, the nation state becomes the one *polis* to which all people in a pluralistic society are subject above all other private religious affiliations. It represents itself as the one true public. Pluralism and the public/private divide require a "tempering of an individual citizen's particular religious commitment to his/her commitment to the nation state."<sup>24</sup> To keep peace among a large population with a variety of religious views, the nation state is therefore held up to be the means by which the common good is reached. Religious convictions must either conform to the ideals of the Nation State, Government and Economic Powers or become antithetical to the social contract and marginalized, even within Civil Society.

The basic assumption, therefore, is that the nation state is one *polis*, or one city within which there is a division of goods and labour which follows certain binaries or dichotomies: civil society and the state, sacred and secular, eternal and temporal, religion and politics, church and state. This enlightenment and modernist thinking has, for too long, occupied our thinking and conceptualization about the Church's place and the Christian's role in

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24. Cavanaugh, "From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space," 302.

society and where the Church's space and the voice of the Christian is in civil discourse, governmental matters and economic issues.

Instead of seeing society made up of finite goods and labours, tightly defined in the temporal and quantifiable measurements, Cavanaugh has reached back to the writings of Augustine on how to re-imagine modern societal construction and how Christians 'ought' to act within a given *polis*, or public as Tracy and Smit imagine them. Augustine speaks of not one city, but two. And in the two cities, "there is no division of goods. Both cities use the same finite goods, but use them for different ends."<sup>25</sup> In this sense, property is used not just within a nation state as something that is owned and therefore protected, but is also used by the Church and by Christians to create spaces "in which alternative stories about material goods are told, and alternative forms of economics are made possible."<sup>26</sup>

For Augustine, there is not one city, but two cities that use the same amount of finite goods and labour but for different purposes. This is not to say there is a competition between competing ideologies or *poleis* for goods, but simply that the two cities exist simultaneously and use the same goods but for different *telê*. The nation state uses these goods and labours of the citizens, it is assumed, for the common good or general will of the sovereign or population. The Church uses these very same goods and labours to help transform the earthly city, or the nation state, into the Heavenly City. Cavanaugh asserts that, "The city of God has to do with ordering matters that are considered public because the city of God makes use of the same temporal goods as the earthly city, but in different ways and for different ends."<sup>27</sup>

Underlying Augustine's proposition of the two cities is that while they use the same goods and labours and occupy the same space, they co-exist temporally, that is through time. The earthly city is on a trajectory towards the Heavenly City and the role of the

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25. Cavanaugh, "From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space," 302.

26. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 94.

27. Cavanaugh, "From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space," 310.

Church and of Christians is to help guide that transformation through a process of reconciliation, of being restored back into a right relationship with God. Augustine based his thought upon the realized kingdom of God that was inaugurated through the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross and the not yet that is the fallen and broken world in which we still live as we await the return of Christ. “The two cities are the already and the not yet of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>28</sup> It is for this reason that Christians live in the world, but are not of the world. They participate temporally, but only in so far as they seek to bring about the Kingdom of God through acting together as the one body of Christ, the baptized, and participating in the *Missio Dei* through the covenant enacted in their very same baptism.

For Augustine, the “already is not some principle or transcendental reality, but is a reality to which the Church bears witness in history.”<sup>29</sup> Christ has been triumphant and the powers and principalities of the world are slowly passing away. The kingdom of God has been realized. But it is also not yet, not because God is holding back from fully enacting the kingdom and bringing about the city of God, but because humans are holding back, trapped in sin due to the fall. As such, coercive government, of the kind that enacts a Hobbesian social contract, where the threat of violence against individuals is held by the state, “is not natural but a result of the fall.”<sup>30</sup> Augustine sees the earthly city or nation state that uses the threat of violence and has dominion over and against other rational human beings as necessary for the common good, welfare, and health of citizens, but in the end it is antithetical to scripture and the will of God.

The role of the Church and of Christians, therefore, becomes one that bears witness to the heavenly kingdom, or the City of God. It does so, as Cavanaugh illustrates, because “neither city is a space with clearly defined boundaries, but both are sets of practices or

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28. Cavanaugh, “From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space,” 312.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

dramatic performances, one tragic, the other comic, broadly speaking.”<sup>31</sup> The Church plays a role of transforming one city into a likeness of the other. Christians participate in the redemption of the world through participation in the *Missio Dei* by dint of their baptism and in their participation they help transform one city into the other.

As an illustration, Cavanaugh compares Augustine’s two-city model to Richard Strauss’ opera *Ariadne auf Naxos*. In the opera the host of the evening has two performances that have been prepared for his guest, one a tragedy and the other a comedy. The composer, though, not wanting his masterpiece of the tragedy to be followed by the frivolous offering of the comedy, is outraged. The situation becomes worsened when the announcement comes that they must leave sufficient time for a fireworks display at the end of the evening. As such, both offerings, the tragedy and the comedy, must occur simultaneously and on the same stage.

The composer objects to the other “actors” infiltrating his tragedy, as the tragedy “is the symbol of Mankind in Solitude.”<sup>32</sup> The lord of the house though, having seen the tragedy wants to enliven it with characters from the comedy.

So as the curtain rises on the second act of Strauss’ opera, Ariadne is at the grotto grieving her abandonment by her lover Theseus. Ariadne resolves to await Hermes, the messenger of death, to take her away to the underworld, the realm of death, for in death is peace and the cessation of suffering and corruption. However, Zerbinetta and her troupe of comedians interrupt Ariadne’s tragedy and alter the direction of the entire opera. Zerbinetta tries to convince Ariadne that she wants not death, but a new lover.

Onto the scene comes the rakish young god Bacchus, whom Ariadne at first mistakes for the messenger of death. Eventually, however, she is won by his wooing, and she embraces life instead of death, and as he carries her off to the heavens, Bacchus has the last word proclaiming, “By thy great sorrow rich am I made. . . And sooner shall perish the stars in

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31. Cavanaugh, “From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space,” 315.

32. *Ibid.*, 316.



their places, than Death shall tear thee from my arms.”<sup>33</sup>

It is the tragedy of the earthly city, the world around us, that Christians, united with God through baptism, perform their comedy of redemption. The church, the community of Christ joined to Him in baptism, are in effect Zerbinatta and her troupe of comic actors. Christians are the fools that interrupt the tragedy of the world, the hurt, the pain, the suffering and death with the message of hope, salvation and eternal life. Christians are the fools that break down barriers of hate, violence and death with the promise of eternal life and love for all people, regardless of race, sex, class or orientation. Through baptism, God brings together His troop of actors, Christians, to enact this comedy of redemption.

In Augustinian terms the tragedy, the earthly city, and the comedy, the Heavenly City, therefore occur at the same time and in the same place and make use of the same resources; the stage, the audience, space and time. In Christian theo-political imagination, then, the comedy is meant to save us from the tragedy of violence that we impose on ourselves through the nation state and the social contract, the latent war of all against all. The Church and individual Christians interrupt the tragedy of the earthly city by enacting the comedy of the redemption of the world through the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. “The Church is not a separate enclave, but — as in the Ariadne auf Naxos metaphor — it joins with others to perform the city of God.”<sup>34</sup> The Church does not allow the earthly city to define one public space, but constantly redefines what is truly public and what is truly universal.

The Church and individual Christians, therefore, are not part of a separate institution relegated to the private sphere of citizens’ lives. They are also not enacting a wholly separate drama from society or the public sphere. The Church and Christians seek to work with other actors and players in an attempt to try and divert the tragedy of the earthly city into the comedy of redemption. As such, when we envision public space we must always remain aware that the Church is not separate or competing for a limited amount of space, but

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33. Cavanaugh, “From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space,” 316.

34. *Ibid.*, 318.

is in fact part of the tragedy told and the comedy meant to transform, heal, and reconcile.

In an Augustinian sense there are two cities that exist simultaneously and that public space is not limited. Public space exists both physically now and temporally across time and throughout history. Public space is also not limited by human reason alone but it is also open to the abundance of God and occurs both here in the earthly city and also simultaneously in the Heavenly City at the end of time, throughout time and especially on the cross and at the empty tomb to which the Church and Christians bear witness.

Christians, therefore, live in both cities; they are in the world but not of the world. Through our common baptism and joined to Christ in the mystical union by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians exist temporally but also simultaneously across time and space with God. They are not of the world, but are citizens of the City of God, the Heavenly City at the end of time, outside of time and existing in all of time. This does not abrogate the responsibility of Christians, though, to participate in the earthly city. In fact, Christian participation in the earthly city is a must if we are to fully live into our baptismal vows and participate in the comedy of redemption as members of the one body of Christ, sacrificed upon the cross, redeemed in the empty tomb and sojourning until our ascension into the Heavenly City at the end of time.

### **3.5 Baptism as Citizenship**

The principle of the baptismal covenant does not stem from human hands nor is it a human creation. Rather, it stems from God, who acts first to initiate a covenant with His creation. The covenant for Christians takes its form, first and foremost, in the sacrament of baptism and does so for a few reasons. First, baptism marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry here on earth.<sup>35</sup> Baptism takes us into God's family and marks us as Christ's

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35. Matt 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:29-34 NRSV

own.<sup>36</sup> Baptism provides us with the means by which we help redeem the earthly city and its political associations, economic organizations and affect the general will, general welfare and general consensus of society and Christians do that namely by being sealed with the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the promises of scripture, most notably to dying to our old self and rising again to a new life, Christians receive new citizenship by being adopted into God's family. In Christ, baptism and the promise to share in Christ's resurrection, God's promises to the faithful in baptism, Christians are to respond by professing and enacting their portion of the baptismal covenant, which includes (to quote the language of my own tradition): continuing in the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread and the prayers, in resisting evil, repenting and returning to the Lord, proclaiming by word and example the good news of God in Christ, serving Christ in all people and loving our neighbour as ourselves, and striving for justice and peace among all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being.<sup>38</sup> These promises we make are not limited in any way, or to any one public space, but they encapsulate a Christian life that is lived in covenant with others and is decidedly public, as both Tracy and Smit have demonstrated.

Christ's political teachings aside, the basis of the baptismal covenant grounds Christian action in the world, in the Political, the Economic, and Civil Society where Christians are to seek the general welfare of all, help inform the general will and help direct the general consensus towards the respect of the dignity of all human beings, in a particular society but also globally. It is the Christian's baptism that informs the priesthood of all believers to be actively part of the *Missio Dei*, the reconciliation of the entire world.<sup>39</sup> By grounding Public Theology in baptism, this marks a different approach than others have taken, such

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36. The Anglican Church of Canada, *The Book of Alternative Services* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1985), 160.

37. Ephesians 1:13-14 NSRV

38. The Anglican Church of Canada, *The Book of Alternative Services*, 159.

39. 1 Peter 2:4-9

as William Cavanaugh. Cavanaugh grounded his Political Theology and the publicness of the church and the body of Christ in the Eucharist, rather than in the individual Christian sent into the world, united to God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit to teach all that Christ taught and baptizing new believers, new citizens, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>40</sup>

For Cavanaugh, if the church is to be effective “it must realize its true nature as a locus of social practices, the true body of Christ capable of resisting the discipline of the state.”<sup>41</sup> Cavanaugh sees this citizenship being realized in the church, by the body of Christ, priest and people. Cavanaugh is correct in asserting that the body of Christ, sacramentally God acting first, is one means by which the church may act politically. Yet before the church can gather to practice the Eucharist it must corporally form in the here and now, in the body of Christ, and that occurs through baptism.

Cavanaugh argues that baptism, much like the Eucharist, is “based on the always-overlapping temporalizations of future, past, and present.”<sup>42</sup> The initiated Christian is joined to the historical body of Christ, the saints of the past, and the corporate body yet to come in the here-and-now. The baptized exist as both citizens of the earthly city, but also as citizens of heaven. They occupy both cities in the same time and space, occurring simultaneously. As a symbol of the covenant itself that God makes with his people, baptism is in many ways prior to the Eucharist. For only the baptized may share in the Eucharist, but all may share in the transformation of the earthly city into the Heavenly City. This is reflected in the covenant God makes with his people, with Noah, Abraham and is renewed in Jesus Christ on the banks of the Jordan and again at the last supper. To amend Cavanaugh, “[baptism] is the true heart of this dimension of the church’s life, because it is in [baptism] that Christ

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40. Matthew 28:19-20

41. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ (Challenges in Contemporary Theology)*, 206.

42. *Ibid.*, 221.

himself, the eternal consummation of history, becomes present in time.”<sup>43</sup>

This grounding of Christian citizenship in both cities through baptism, propels the new citizen out into the world and is the foundational piece of Public Theology and how the individual interacts with the three public spaces of Government, Economic Structures and Civil Society. Through baptism, each Christian interacts with the publics as described by Tracy and seeks the general well being, general will, and general consensus of all society, not just those who may participate in the Eucharist.<sup>44</sup> Baptism includes the Christian in the public acts of the church of which the Eucharist is part but not whole. Baptism becomes the central means through which God acts in the world to help transform the world, first by transforming the individual believer and then using that believer to transform Government, Economy, and Civil Society, all three aspects of Public Theology.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”<sup>45</sup> Christians are not to be conformed by this world but to transform it, a tale of two cities.

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43. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ (Challenges in Contemporary Theology)*, 223 My alterations of Cavanaugh’s original quote. I purposely substituted baptism for where Cavanaugh wrote Eucharist.

44. At the time of this writing in the Anglican Church of Canada, only baptized Christians may receive the Eucharist. This is even more exclusive in Cavanaugh’s own denominational tradition of Roman Catholicism where only Roman Catholics are welcomed at the altar to receive the Eucharist.

45. Romans 12:1-2

## Conclusion

Each time a citizen approaches a voter's booth or engages in public activity they do so as their whole selves, citizens of the Heavenly City and the earthly city. The Christian's daily actions, therefore, are always rooted in and directed towards the public good, the general will, general well being, and general consensus of society. The Christian's faith, therefore, must be a lived faith, a faith of action in the world and designed to help redeem the world.

There are countless examples of this type of faith and lived citizenship of the Heavenly City. Each time the Christian volunteers at a soup kitchen, petitions city council on behalf of those who have no voice, or simply holds a door open for another individual, the Christian is enacting the comedy of redemption. This is because they are not acting alone, but are acting in concert with God, to whom they have been joined through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit in the waters of baptism.

As we have seen, this comedy of redemption occurs not just on the political level with Government and Economic Powers, it also occurs within Civil Society. The Christian is to re-engage in society in a true publicness, the publicness advocated by Tracy and Smit, not just in Civil Society and the institutions that may be influenced but also directly with Government and Economic Structures. The event of Jesus Christ compels the Christian to act publicly, to enter into dialogue with those not of the faith, to have their assumptions challenged in an hermeneutical process and to contribute to the building of the general will, the general well being, and the general consensus of all of society.

It is that process to which Christians are joined in baptism. For this reason, baptism is central to the church's work in all three of the public realms: Government, Economic Structures and Civil Society. Through baptism, God acts in the earthly city, transforming that city into the Heavenly City. Without baptism humanity would not be able to participate in the comedy of redemption. Therefore, baptism places the agency among the citizens of heaven. While Cavanaugh sees the Eucharist as the ultimate political act of the church, the Eucharist is, in effect, the ultimate political act of God. The participation of the church, the one body of Christ, made up of the baptized occurs strikingly through the sacrament of baptism. Without baptism there would be no Public Theology where Christians would seek to transform the earthly into the Heavenly City.

Over the course of its history, Political Theology has retreated further and given the bodies and souls of the faithful over to the state. Public Theology, with its emphasis on engagement of the baptized to address the three public spaces, opens a new way in Post-modernity to re-incorporate the individual narratives of Christians, and the church in general, back into the criticism and transformation of Governmental Powers, Economic Powers and Civil Society.

Political Theology has evolved into Public theology and it has re-opened the discussion of religion and politics in the same breath, where the principles that inform the values and ethics of the citizens of the Heavenly City may be once again used to help transform the earthly city, to be the comedy of redemption in the fallen and tragic world in which we find ourselves.

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# Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Martin Levesque

**Post-Secondary Education and Degrees:** Carleton University  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
2001 - 2007 B.A.

University of Western Ontario  
London, ON  
2007 - 2010 M.Div.

**Honours and Awards:** Dean's List  
Huron University College  
2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010