

## **Cavanaugh's Aversion to the Modern State, a Response**

**Paul Miller**

### **Abstract**

This article examines Catholic theologian W.T. Cavanaugh's influential 1995 article, "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House." Here Cavanaugh asserts that the modern democratic, liberal state – in which the Church is largely privatized – is, at its basis, rooted in a rejection of Christian values. This rejection, Cavanaugh argues, legitimizes itself through a fraudulent historical argument: that political liberalism, with the "state as Savior," was necessary to bring peace between the warring factions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries "Wars of Religion." This article disagrees both with Cavanaugh's history and his political theology. Instead, it roots modern political liberalism in Christian history. The tragedy is that this political liberalism has loosed itself from its roots and forgotten its debt to the Church. Nevertheless, contrary to Cavanaugh, the article argues both for the legitimacy of the modern state and for the necessity of Christian participation in it.

### **Bio**

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## Cavanaugh's Aversion to the Modern State, a Response

### Introduction

W.T. Cavanaugh, co-editor of the *Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, wants a vibrant church making a vital difference in the public square. His 1995 article "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House": The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State" laments that the Church's prevailing strategy is far too tame and ineffective. Instead of merely "encouraging Christians to get off the sidelines and into the game,"<sup>1</sup> something far more radical is needed: a complete tearing down of the current mythology of the state.

In arguing his case, Cavanaugh's article makes:

- first, an **historical point**, that modern (16<sup>th</sup>- & 17<sup>th</sup> -century) liberalism, birthed out of the "Wars of Religion," gave rise to a new type of public power, the state, which incorporated a radical new relationship between the Church and the State, thereby injuriously reversing Christianity's historical trajectory;
- second, a **political-historical point**, that the modern liberal state's claim to have been the peacemaker between warring religious factions is an untruth masking its invidious real purpose – the "taming of religion";
- third, a **theological-political point**, that political liberalism has used all this to foist upon us a new, narrowed definition of religion that is anemically privatized and defanged of public significance, a move which can only be resisted by theologically-informed re-envisioning of the church as an alternative public space.

This paper will take the position that Cavanaugh is wildly overstated in each of his claims. It will disagree with Cavanaugh, not in his tearing down the "current mythology of the state" but in his *accepting* it in the first place. That is, there is a "contest of narratives" going on as to the very birth of modern liberal democracy: some credit religion-rejecting secularism for its birth, while others credit Christianity. Cavanaugh holds to the first interpretation, and he is not alone in this. Duke theologian Stanley Hauerwas (under whom Cavanaugh did his PhD),<sup>2</sup> philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre and Anglican theologian John Milbank are influential voices, all showering "abuse" upon modern democracy and "outbidding [each other] in a rhetoric of excess."<sup>3</sup> For these thinkers, modernity and the rise of the modern liberal state are rooted in the rejection of true religion; it is a "scene dominated by vicious individualism in the epoch after virtue ceases to matter."<sup>4</sup>

Others hold to an entirely different narrative. Yale philosopher Wolterstorff stoutly defends liberal democracy as "born out of the seed-bed of biblical Christianity."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Brian Tierney, Cornell's Professor of Medieval History, and Peter Garnsey, Cambridge's Professor of History of Classical Antiquity, root modern liberalism's "natural rights" thinking in orthodox Christianity.<sup>6</sup> Richard Ashcraft, UCLA professor of political science, also supports this line of interpretation by refuting the idea that Locke – a *bête noire* for Cavanaugh/Hauerwas et al. in ushering in the modern secular era –

was a secularist. Ashcraft argues instead for the “architectonic importance of theology” as “a constant feature of Locke’s thought.”<sup>7</sup>

The argument is important; while debated by academics, it is more than simply academic. It determines one’s entire stance to our present politics: Is it redeemable and therefore worth our involvement, or should it be jettisoned entirely for an altogether different alternative?<sup>8</sup> Wolterstorff observes, “Christians are thoroughly confused today as to whether liberal democracy is a good thing.”<sup>9</sup> How, when confused about the very legitimacy of the modern state, can Evangelicals be “salt and light” in it?

Cavanaugh’s views are important here because they are influential. Gavin D’Costa, a Roman Catholic theologian at Bristol University, refers to Cavanaugh in his highly respected *Christianity and World Religions* (2009). In D’Costa’s section on “modernity” and its characteristics, he essentially reproduces Cavanaugh’s entire argument. D’Costa freely acknowledges his debt, saying, “I draw heavily upon William Cavanaugh’s *Theopolitical Imagination* ... [for] this alternative narrative.”<sup>10</sup> In Anglican circles, Cavanaugh has been praised by Archbishop Rowan Williams as “a brilliant commentator on the theological fault lines lying beneath the surface of the modern political disease.”<sup>11</sup> And Elizabeth Phillips, who lectures in the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, UK, also recognizes the importance of Cavanaugh’s contribution in her 2012 reader on political theologies. Here, she looks to him for her very definition of the term “political theology.”<sup>12</sup>

Cavanaugh, then, understands the birth of liberal democracy and the modern state to be a rejection of the West’s Christian heritage. This paper, by contrast, holds that the modern liberal democratic state is an expression of that Christian heritage which, over time, has been first rejected, then forgotten. These two very different perspectives will be evident below in addressing each of Cavanaugh’s points: historical, political-historical and theological-political.

## Response

### *Historical point*

Cavanaugh’s narrowly historical point is that the 16th- and 17th-century Wars of Religion triggered a new phenomenon in Western history: it “gave rise to quite new developments in the configuration of civil power” which “invert[ed] the dominance of the ecclesiastical over the civil authorities.”<sup>13</sup> This claim of historical novelty is central to his argument; his political and theological claims ride on the back of his historical claim. If his history fails, his political-theological propositions fail. That is, if the 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century inversion of power was not new but was actually a commonplace in earlier Christendom, then, of course, it is no revolutionarily new development. And if it is no revolutionarily new development, then it is not, as Cavanaugh implies, a betrayal of Christianity’s sacred history nor a overturning of its hallowed tradition. And here precisely is the problem: this inversion of power was not new. Ever since the dawn of Christendom with the Emperor Constantine’s accession to power in 312 AD, the church had been locked in a power struggle with the civil authorities, often finding itself subject to their dominance.

Indeed, Fr. Hugo Rahner, the renowned church historian, argues that Constantine “as the true heir of imperial religious policy could not conceive support apart from the Church’s submission.”<sup>14</sup> And Yale historian K.S. Latourette points out that “with Constantine ... a movement ... had begun ... for the domination of the Church by the Emperor and which made the Church an instrument of the state.”<sup>15</sup> Civil dominance of the ecclesial realm was, then, a fact of life. Indeed, the 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century inversion of power to which Cavanaugh refers seems more a return to pre-11<sup>th</sup> century normality, than a 17<sup>th</sup>-century novelty and abnormality.

For his novelty argument, Cavanaugh uses the medieval period as his benchmark. More specifically, he uses the “High Middle Ages” from 1050-1400.<sup>16</sup> It was only then that “the Church was the supreme common power.”<sup>17</sup> But this in itself was a novel development. Prior to this, in the “Early Middle Ages” (500-1050AD), the Church had never even sought civil dominance. Rather it sought, first, ecclesiastical freedom from civil interference and, second – as expressed in Pope Gelasius’ historic letter of 494 – jurisdictional authority over its own ecclesial field.<sup>18</sup> Gelasius defended a concept of dual rulership, dividing civil from religious – with each having its own authority.<sup>19</sup> Not superiority but complementary, co-ordinate powers was the Gelasian goal.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, after the fall of the Roman Empire, Christendom’s ruling dynasties – whether the Merovingians of the sixth through eighth centuries, the Carolingians of the eighth and ninth, and the Ottonians<sup>21</sup> of the tenth and eleventh – continued on with the Constantinian tendency to “exercise tight control over the Church.”<sup>22</sup> The Ottonian rulers even took it upon themselves to appoint popes. Indeed, twenty-one of the twenty-five popes who held office during the hundred years prior to 1059 “were directly appointed by emperors.”<sup>23</sup> Civil dominance was the order of the day. The Gelasian dual-rulership had, after the collapse of Charlemagne’s empire, given way to a monopoly of rulership by the civil branch. This is the opposite of the “dominance of the ecclesiastical over the civil authorities” which Cavanaugh claims held sway.

But with the eleventh century came a change. Especially under Pope Gregory VII (1073-85) did the Church begin to roll back “the custom throughout Europe” whereby “lay influence was everywhere in the Church.”<sup>24</sup> Civil rulers had grown accustomed to choosing bishops, enriching them with great fiefs and investing them with the ring and pastoral staff that symbolized episcopal office.<sup>25</sup> Gregory VII said no. He refused to grant lay rulers the right to invest bishops. But he went further. Not content with simply re-establishing the equilibrium between secular and sacred powers, his reforms even implied the “absorption of the State by the Church.”<sup>26</sup> Oliver O’Donovan explains:

The principal thrust ... of Gregorian apologetic was to redefine the equilibrium. But there was a new emphasis, breaking with the idea of equilibrium. Spiritual rule must have priority over secular. The reformers advanced new claims for the pope to exercise juridical supremacy, with the right to depose apostate rulers and to absolve Christian subjects from their oaths of allegiance. It had been a commonplace of the Gelasian idea that the responsibility of the clergy was more weighty than that of secular princes, since they would answer for the souls of princes before Christ’s throne. But this was now transformed into a constitutional supremacy.<sup>27</sup>

Due to these later Gregorian developments, Cavanaugh can with some accuracy describe the civil authority's role in medieval times as merely "the police department of the Church."<sup>28</sup> But this description applies only to the High Middle Ages from eleventh-century Gregorian times onwards. Were he to expand his historical frame to include the entire Christendom era from Constantine onwards, his alleged new development would be anything but new; it would simply be a return to pre-Gregorian normalcy.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Political-historical point***

Cavanaugh's second point is a political-historical one.<sup>30</sup> he a) seeks to undermine enthusiasm for the modern liberal state by b) denying its claim to be a peacemaker among warring confessional factions, and by c) denying – though with some unacknowledged ambiguity<sup>31</sup> – that religion was to blame for the Religious Wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Cavanaugh denies "religion" was responsible, putting the responsibility squarely at the feet of the civil rulers instead.<sup>32</sup> Cavanaugh is right, of course, that raw power politics bears significant responsibility for these Wars of Religion. However, he overstates his case. To dismiss religion as a major contributor in these wars is simply counter-factual – and frankly anachronistic, given the religious motivations and purposes plainly in view. Moreover, to deny that states contributed significantly to peacemaking is equally counter-factual.

Cavanaugh's attempt to deny religion's responsibility for these wars does not square with biographies of the participants of the day. While not remotely denying their civil ambitions, it is clear that many of these civil rulers were also motivated by religious considerations. Indeed, this mix of religious and civil motivations is unsurprising, given that Europe was then emerging from three centuries of Christendom in which the fusion of civil and religious duties was a foundational feature.<sup>33</sup>

Cavanaugh himself admits that rulership notions of the day typically combined the religious with the political. He writes, for instance, that the "sixteenth century maintained the conception of a single body."<sup>34</sup> But this was essentially a theological notion!<sup>35</sup> Moreover, this theological notion was central to the argument that the State had a duty to maintain a unified religion – an argument that pushed the State to support one religion over another.<sup>36</sup> But Cavanaugh never seems to draw the obvious conclusion: that genuinely religious notions were seriously implicated in the Wars of Religion.

These religious motivations were clearly at work right across Christendom. We see them in Luther's opponent, the Habsburg emperor Charles V, a man described as personally devout and as "thoroughly imbued with the Spanish type of piety ... which ... believes ... that 'powder against the infidels is incense to the Lord.'"<sup>37</sup> This is the Charles who abdicated his throne at the end of his life for a monastic cell. We see these motivations too in the Habsburg emperor Ferdinand II, whom Cavanaugh lists as yet another example of a *realpolitik*-driven-politico in his sparking both the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and the Austrian Counter-Reformation.<sup>38</sup> Ironically, Ferdinand II is almost the classic case exemplifying *the opposite of* Cavanaugh's thesis. He is widely recognized by historians as a zealous religionist largely moved in his political decisions by his deeply-held religious faith; historians "agree: the *emperor's Catholic convictions*

*amounted to a consuming passion.*"<sup>39</sup> Then next door, in France, with the Wars of Religion roiling the country from 1562-1629, religion was also a crucial factor. Indeed, Mack Holt's contends "that the series of French civil wars ... was a conflict fought *primarily* over the issue of religion" and not, as so often argued, with "religion only as a pretext."<sup>40</sup> Across the Channel is yet another example. Henry VIII's staunchly Catholic daughter, Mary Tudor, was known as "Bloody Mary" for her reign's (1553-1558) unique distinction: "nowhere in contemporary Christendom[,] not even in Spain[,] were so many men and women burned for their opinions."<sup>41</sup> Her determination to have the evangelical bishops Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer burnt at the stake was not primarily motivated, Oxford historian MacCulloch points out, by their alleged political treason; rather, it was because they "had committed a far more serious crime ... ha[ving] led the whole realm into heresy."<sup>42</sup> Cavanaugh, in denying these religious motivations and explaining them away as essentially politically motivated, actually ends up doing what he initially explicitly disavowed: the "mak[ing] a facile reduction of religion to more mundane concerns."<sup>43</sup> This is not helpful.

Cavanaugh ignores the reality of religion's influence in two ways. First, as noted above, he downplays the religious motivations of civil rulers. Second, he downplays the role of religious leaders themselves who actively sought political support for their religious reformations, thereby stoking the 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Wars of Religion. In Germany, Luther's reformation only advanced because he deliberately involved the civil rulers. Early on he concluded that the bishops and clergy had "refused to do their duty." Consequently, he sent out his "Address ... to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, respecting a Reformation" (1520) seeking to enlist those German nobles in his cause. He noted with thanksgiving that they "had recently offered their armed assistance."<sup>44</sup> He gladly accepted this. Thus it is that even a historian sympathetic to Luther's cause could conclude, "The Lutheran Reformers handed the work of re-organization largely over to them [the princes], and thus unwittingly introduced a caesaropapacy."<sup>45</sup>

Similarly in Switzerland, Calvin's work of reforming a "model theocracy in Geneva" was only possible because he worked hand-in-glove with the civil rulers, the Council of Two Hundred.<sup>46</sup> And elsewhere in Switzerland, Zwingli died in the prime of life on the battlefield, leading out his Zürchers against the Catholic Forest Cantons who opposed his reforms. Zwingli quite clearly "counseled ... the forcible introduction of the Reformed religion into the territory of the Catholic Forest Cantons (1531)."<sup>47</sup>

None of this combining of religion with politics meant they were not sincere religious reformers. To them, their involving of government actually strengthened their claim to be religiously serious. Government too had a duty to God. They understood religious duty to mean they "extended the authority and duty of civil government to both Tables of the Law."<sup>48</sup> The Reformers and their contemporaries "had no idea of toleration" such that "even Servetus" – the heretic arrested, tried and condemned to death at Calvin's behest – "himself admitted that incorrigible obstinacy and malice [in heresy] deserved death."<sup>49</sup> He agreed heretics should be punished; he just did not think he was a heretic! These Reformers, then, worked closely with the civil authorities in forming the very

governmental policies which resulted in the Wars of Religion. Religion was very much involved, Cavanaugh's claim notwithstanding.

Lastly, in arguing his political-historical point, Cavanaugh denies that these civil states contributed to peacemaking. This can be addressed cursorily. First, it is undeniable that it was the states that struck the various peace treaties (both the Peace of Augsburg (1555) and the Peace of Westphalia (1648)) which terminated various religious wars. If striking a peace treaty is not contributing to peace, then it is difficult to know just what is. Second, Cavanaugh's essay does not actually argue that civil rulers did not strike a peace; his real argument is that it is they that caused the war, therefore cancelling out the validity of any peace settlement they subsequently reached. But this is a complete non-sequitur. To assert the one does not imply the negation of the other. Both war-making and peace-making can and do co-exist. While states should be faulted for their war-mongering, they should be equally credited for their peacemaking. Cavanaugh labors to place all the blame on the state. But both religion and politics were to blame for the strife; both were also responsible for the peace.

### ***Theological-political point***

Cavanaugh advances both his historical and political-historical claims above as the foundation for his final and central claim – that the state executed its power grab, thereby sidelining the Church, by successfully hoodwinking the Church into swallowing a baseless theological-political claim. This theological-political claim had two components: First, the state's radical redefinition of the very notion of religion; second, the state presenting itself as "Savior." Cavanaugh then claims the solution to all this lies in re-discovering the Church as the alternative "real" public space. Each of these assertions errs at fundamental points.

### **Error #1: 'religion's' redefinition overstated**

First, then, Cavanaugh argues that "What is at issue behind these wars is the creation of 'religion' as a set of beliefs which is defined as personal conviction and which can exist separately from one's public loyalty to the State" and whereby "Religion moves from a virtue to a set of propositions."<sup>50</sup> Cavanaugh supports his case by a lengthy etymological discussion of the term "religion" – first arguing that term "religion" was rare before these centuries and, second, arguing that this novel term was then filled with false meaning. "Religion" was allegedly now understood as an "interiorized ... set of privately held beliefs without direct political relevance."<sup>51</sup>

Cavanaugh's argument is here unconvincing. On the one hand, it gives far too much credit to the civil rulers to portray them as clever etymological specialists, subtly redefining terms and foisting this off on gullible theologians. On the other hand, it is simply inaccurate to claim, as Cavanaugh does, that "Religion moves from a virtue to a set of propositions." Propositions have always been key to the Christian religion. Ever since Paul instructed Timothy to "watch your life and doctrine closely" (I Tim. 4:16), the Church has always valued both lifestyle and concepts. The church's long history of pursuing creeds, confessions and even heresy trials attests to that. Roman Catholic theologian Gavin D'Costa rebuts William Cantwell Smith's – a main source for

Cavanaugh in this article – idea that “in pre-modern time ‘religion’ was an inward piety” and that “[o]nly in the modern period does it become associated with ‘beliefs, practices, and values’.” Augustine was no modern figure, yet D’Costa points out, “To say that ‘religion’ does not include a system of true beliefs for Augustine is simply false.... There is not only inner piety and theism, but a robust Trinitarian confession of belief.”<sup>52</sup>

It is equally inaccurate to claim, as Cavanaugh does, that “Religion is no longer a matter of certain bodily practices ... but is limited to the realm of the ‘soul.’”<sup>53</sup> So interiorizing religion as to render one’s actions irrelevant was the old gnostic heresy, which all orthodox Christians of the day, whether Catholic or Protestant, rejected.

Lastly, Cavanaugh claims that the religious arrangement settling the Wars of Religion was achieved by the “privatization” of religion,<sup>54</sup> a claim that flies in the face of the very settlement mechanism used, i.e. *cuius regio, eius religio*. This Latin phrase meaning “Whose realm, his religion,” meant that the religion of the ruler dictated the religion of the ruled.<sup>55</sup> This territoriality principle was absolutely central to both the Peace of Augsburg (1555) and the later Peace of Westphalia (1648). But this is the polar opposite of privatizing religion. In fact, the private convictions of the individual citizen were dismissed as wholly irrelevant. It was the public, civil ruler around whom the matter turned. Now, one can surely decry this approach is a coercive, manipulative misuse of religion, but one can scarcely call it the privatization of religion. Indeed, the ruler considered religion as *too important* to leave to simple private choice.

Cavanaugh is fully correct to accuse the civil rulers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries of seeking the “domestication” of the Church, of bringing it into “the service of the State” through “manipulation” under “the dominance of the State.”<sup>56</sup> He errs, however, in attributing this chiefly to definitional trickery – the creation of “religion” – and he errs in seeing this as a uniquely modern phenomenon. The separation of powers between Church (the “religious”<sup>57</sup>) and State (the “civil”) and the struggle between them as to who has dominance over what – this is a struggle as old as Christianity itself.

This becomes even clearer when detailing more fully developments mentioned earlier in this essay: the Church/State struggle from Pope Gelasius’ period through the early Middle Ages up until Pope Gregory VII. Pope Gelasius was the author of the famous formula, “there are two by which this world is governed, the sacred authority of priests and the royal power.”<sup>58</sup> He explained his formula in a letter of 488, even before he became Pope:

In religious matters it is for him [the emperor] to learn, not teach. He has the privileges of his position granted him by God for the governance of the state, but ... he cannot interfere in matters of Faith. God has willed that it is the duty of bishops, not of civil authorities, to govern the Church.<sup>59</sup>

The wrestle between Church and State is clear here. Each is wrestling to establish their own jurisdiction, defending themselves from intrusions by the other. This Gelasian formula was used down the centuries, with adaptations along the way by contributors such as ninth century bishop Jonas of Orléans.<sup>60</sup> The next significant development occurred under Pope Gregory VII in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Gregory VII claimed “juridical



supremacy” for the papacy over civil government, the right to “depose emperor[s]” and to “absolve subjects” from their duty of civil loyalty. Presumably, this would be too much even for Cavanaugh. Even some contemporaries of Gregory’s, such as papal mentor Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), felt a deep ambivalence about papal overreach.

On the one hand, Bernard wrote his “spiritual son” Pope Eugenius III, and “rebuked ... the papacy for their preoccupation with legal and political affairs.”<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, Bernard fully supported the papacy’s right to direct coercive, governmental force. In his *Treatise on Consideration*, written for Pope Eugenius in 1153, Bernard tells the pope:

Nevertheless, he who would deny that the sword belongs to thee, has not, as I conceive, sufficiently weighed the words of the Lord ... to Peter, “Put up thy sword in the scabbard.” (John 18:11) For it is here plainly implied that even the material sword is thine, to be drawn at thy bidding, although not by thy hand.... We can therefore conclude that both swords, namely the spiritual and the material, belong to the Church, and that although only the former is to be wielded by her own hand, the two are to be employed in her service ... by the authority and will of the priest and by the direct command of the emperor....<sup>62</sup>

Bernard of Clairvaux’s the-Church-has-both-swords stance, while being Catholicism’s majority stance in the post-Gregorian centuries,<sup>63</sup> was not the only Catholic voice. French Dominican theologian John of Paris (1250-1306) – a “proto-modern” whose importance is “difficult to overestimate” – argued against it.<sup>64</sup> In his *On Royal and Papal Power*, John of Paris took the position that in “the Gospels, six powers were granted to the Apostles and disciples,” all of which were “spiritual”; nowhere was there a “power to coerce” except as to “excommunication,” as indicated in Mt. 18:17.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, “[W]here a king offends in spiritual matters like faith and marriage ... which fall to ecclesiastical jurisdiction,” the pope can admonish and excommunicate, “But the pope may inflict no further penalties.”<sup>66</sup>

John of Paris’ line of thinking was broadly followed<sup>67</sup> by the Spanish Dominican theologian Francisco de Vitoria (1483-1546), the Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548-1617) and the Italian Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621). These too rejected the “unrestricted, universal, temporal power” of the papacy while admitting an (admittedly problematic) “indirect” temporal power.<sup>68</sup> John Courtney Murray points out the variety of strands within Catholic theology as it came to grips with the issue of Church and State:

In Catholic terms, of course, the cardinal question is that of the spiritual authority of the Church over the temporal—its bases, extension, fields and manner of exercise, techniques of effectiveness, etc. This is an ancient question, with a complicated history; in the details of its answer there has never been, nor is there yet, complete uniformity of view. Writing in the sixteenth century, St. Robert Bellarmine said: “The fact that there is in the Pope a power in regard of temporal affairs is not a matter of opinion but of certainty among Catholics; although there is no lack of disputes over what kind and manner of power it is.”<sup>69</sup>

“What kind and manner of power it is” – but that makes all the difference! Precisely here, Murray points out, “there has never been ... uniformity of view.” Cavanaugh neglects this wide disparity within Catholic theology when he contrasts *the* old view with the radical newness of 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century political theology. Cavanaugh’s contrast

assumes a uniformity that simply did not exist. Without this assumption, his argument for the re-definition of “religion” falls apart.

### **Error #2: state as “Savior” overstated**

Second, Cavanaugh errs in identifying the problem he is attacking – that the state claims to be the “Savior” of its people.<sup>70</sup> In using the term “Savior,” Cavanaugh does not mean it loosely or metaphorically, but in its strictest, religious sense. This is clear when he alleges that the state’s “supposedly ‘secular’ political theory is really theology in disguise built upon a soteriology of rescue from violence.”<sup>71</sup> It is clearer still when he adds that the state supplants the gospel with “a heretical theology of salvation,”<sup>72</sup> then adding that “the modern state is but a false copy of the Body of Christ.”<sup>73</sup> This is wildly overstated. A state’s aspirations after temporal peace and order cannot automatically be equated with the transcendental aspirations implied in the word “salvation.”

His main reasoning seems to be that “the Christian story of creation, fall, and redemption” centers on “the loss and regaining of a primal unity” such that “salvation is essentially a matter of making peace among competing individuals.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, the State, by assuming a “monopoly on the means of violence” and using it to bring peace among competing individuals, is acting as “savior.” But this does not follow. Savior and salvation are strong words. When used in a strict, theological setting – as Cavanaugh does – they imply transcendent claims impinging on the unique role of Christ himself. But this is simply not what the state is doing. Not every referee in a boxing match, nor mediator in a border dispute between neighbors can be accused of pretensions of saviorhood simply because they seek, in Cavanaugh’s words, to “make peace between competing individuals.” In both cases, they aim at a limited, temporal peace rather than an ultimate, eternal peace with God.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, the state only aims at a limited, temporal peace.

Cavanaugh’s radical theological assessment of the State (as heretically assuming a substitute Savior role) leads him to an equally radical political assessment: that the modern state is illegitimate. To be clear: He is *not* just saying that the state has serious flaws in both its execution and make-up (one could agree); he is suggesting it is fundamentally illegitimate. Cavanaugh does this by approvingly citing the sociologist Charles Tilly’s article, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.” He especially likes Tilly’s comparison of “the State’s monopoly on legitimate violence with the protection rackets run by the friendly neighborhood mobster.” Here, Tilly claims, “the main difference between Uncle Sam and the Godfather is that the latter did not enjoy the peace of mind afforded by official government sanction.”<sup>76</sup> With Tilly’s argument as a backdrop, Cavanaugh then exhorts the Church to beware the “illusion” of “recognizing the legitimacy of the State’s monopoly on coercive authority.”<sup>77</sup> Questioning legitimacy is his focus. In a similar vein, his book *Theopolitical Imagination* condemns Christendom, one of its chief failings being that it “assumed the legitimacy of the nation-state.”<sup>78</sup>

One could argue that Cavanaugh is doing no more than Augustine did in the *City of God* IV:4. Here Augustine cited the captured pirate’s witticism to Alexander the Great, “But

because I do it [raid the seas] with a tiny craft, I'm called a pirate; because you have a mighty navy, you're called an emperor." But unlike Cavanaugh, Augustine went on to admit that though the City of Man cannot realize true (complete) justice or true peace, yet it accomplishes "some peace."<sup>79</sup> Additionally, Augustine went on to grant that for this reason the Heavenly City "does not hesitate to obey the laws of the earthly city." Furthermore, Augustine went on to say that, "(for whatever divergences there are among the diverse nations, those institutions have one single aim – earthly peace).... Thus even the Heavenly City ... makes use of the earthly peace and defends [it]."<sup>80</sup> That is, Augustine acknowledges the peace-seeking aim of earthly states and approves of the godly who recognize and cooperate with the peace thus provided. In contrast, Cavanaugh calls this state-orchestrated peace an "illusion," a reversal of the truth: "Indeed the modern State depends on violence, war and preparations for war, to maintain the illusion of social integration."<sup>81</sup> Cavanaugh faithfully echoes Augustine's negative assessment of the state while wholly jettisoning his more positive comments.

Cavanaugh's mistake here is that he confuses the state's inability to accomplish "complete" justice with the lack of "true" justice. Simply because a state does not do everything, does not mean it does nothing; because it is not heaven, it is not necessarily hell. Here Cavanaugh makes the mistakes of many radicals who demand a transcendence that this world simply will not deliver.<sup>82</sup>

Luke Bretherton, reviewing Cavanaugh's 2002 book, suggests that "the account of the state is overly negative"<sup>83</sup> – a classic case of British understatement. Cavanaugh's negativity is actually a theological mistake. That is, Cavanaugh's denial of state legitimacy seems rooted in a strangely (for a theological thinker) deficient doctrine of divine providence vis-à-vis the state. Nowhere in his works does a Rom. 13 theology surface in which there is a recognition that governing authority has been established by God as his "servant to do you good." Equally missing is a I Tim. 2:2 theology which legitimates a governmental framework in its simple role of enabling "peaceful and quiet lives." Indeed, the state's ability to achieve limited, pragmatic "peace and quiet" fails to impress him; he actually decries the "stability" it provides as a mere ploy, a bribe to get the citizens to shut up and submit.<sup>84</sup> Cavanaugh's theological deficiency here distorts his view of the state, leading him to see conspiracy theories at every turn.

Cavanaugh is every bit the convinced state-conspiracy theorist of the sort more commonly found among right-wingers; his is simply a more sophisticated version. Thus he believes that the modern state – both its practitioners and apologists – deliberately created a new "concept of religion" so that the church could "be manipulated by the sovereign for the benefit of the state"; it has been purposefully "designed to tame the church."<sup>85</sup> His conspiracy-theory credentials come especially to the fore when he describes, in his *Theopolitical Imagination*, how the state accomplishes all this: "It is not necessarily that the state directs a conscious conspiracy aimed at ... its citizens."<sup>86</sup> Cavanaugh is not here denying a conspiracy by the state; rather, it is *conscious* conspiracy that is denied. The conspiracy is so deep that the state need no longer push it consciously; it all proceeds unconsciously. The state has so effectively "co-opted" all the other organs of society (family, unions, churches) into cooperating happily to

“produce the state project,” that they do so without even being aware of it.<sup>87</sup> The lack of evidence for a conscious conspiracy only goes to prove how insidiously effective the conspiracy actually is! This is classic conspiracy thinking. It simply goes too far.

### **Error #3: his Solution good in its assertion, wrong in its denials**

Cavanaugh wants a robust theology of the church. He insists that the solution rests in a Church which refuses to “accede[] to the role of a voluntary association of private citizens,” but instead accepts its role as a legitimate “public space”<sup>88</sup> with its own disciplinary resource. Indeed, all “depends on a recovery of the Church’s disciplinary resources ... the Church’s own practices of binding and loosing.”<sup>89</sup> This is to be applauded. Many could agree with him here: church discipline needs strengthening. However, the very fact that his solution is so acceptable hints at the problem. His *real* solution is not in what he explicitly asserts, but rather elsewhere in what he implicitly assumes. That is, he assumes that the Church will typically be using its disciplinary machinery against the state rather than in participation *with* the state. Denying, as he does, the legitimacy of the state, he denies an important role for Christian participation (vs. confrontation) in politics: “Christian ‘politics’ cannot be the pursuit of influence over the powers, but rather a question of what kind of community disciplines we need to produce people of peace capable of speaking truth to power.”<sup>90</sup> In the end, Cavanaugh’s solution seems to be a pastiche of patristic church discipline,<sup>91</sup> Anabaptist retreat and anarchist denial of state legitimacy. In all this, his negatives are his strongest statements, but they help us the least.

### **Error #4: his approach too culturally-bound**

Lastly, Cavanaugh’s analysis is too culturally-bound. His critiques resonate within the Western church, burdened as it is with a bad conscience regarding its long history of often oppressive Christendom. But Cavanaugh’s critiques have far less relevance when applied to non-Western Christians where there is no history of Christendom. Furthermore, in contrast to Western Christians who comfortably reside in securely-established nation-states, many non-Western Christians live in modernizing states at vulnerable stages of nation-building. In these non-Western settings, Cavanaugh’s challenges to national legitimacy may be missiological and political suicide; very different from Western settings where Cavanaugh’s approach seems stimulating and intriguing, if largely academic. In settings where Christians are suspected of colluding with “foreign devils” as lackeys and “agents of the foreign powers,” to heed Cavanaugh would only further confirm this suspicion. China is a prime example. It was just such suspicions that fed China’s Boxer Rebellion of 1900.<sup>92</sup>

Sensitive to this climate of suspicion, many of China’s Christian reformers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century focused their efforts not only on the church but equally on national betterment. They sought to be “pioneers in modern education, medicine, media, diplomacy, public leadership roles for women, civic organizations, and social work.”<sup>93</sup> These Christian reformers joined in with their countrymen who, responding to the humiliating military defeats at the hand of Western powers, saw China had to change: “Many urban Chinese came to share an optimistic modernizing agenda, centered on the vision of making China a strong, modern nation-state through ...

education, citizenship training, and social reform.”<sup>94</sup> This is the opposite of what Cavanaugh advocates.

Rong Hong (1828-1912), the first Chinese to graduate from an American institution of higher education (Yale), was typical on this point. Having become a Christian during his time in the United States, he returned to China with a vision to build his country with “both Western expertise and Christian moral culture.”<sup>95</sup> These Chinese Christians wrote articles advocating “Reasons Why Chinese Patriots Should Become Christians” and that “Chinese Christians Should Take the Responsibility to Reform Society.”<sup>96</sup> While many of these Chinese Christian reformers worked to “counter the narrow nationalism rampant in Europe and China,” yet their “common conviction was that China must adopt the best of Western science and the Christian religion, ... in order to survive and to compete in the international system of nation-states dominated by the Western powers.”<sup>97</sup> Strengthening and supporting the nation-state was central to their vision and purpose.

It is difficult to conceive that Cavanaugh, with his fundamental challenge to the very legitimacy of the modern nation-state, could support any of this. But this suggests not so much the prophetically insightful nature of his approach as its cultural limitations. My vote goes with these Chinese Christian reformers.

## Conclusion

Cavanaugh is not simply wrong, he is wrong in important ways. Cavanaugh’s first (historical) point, that the state worked to overturn all of Christianity’s past by seeking to “invert the dominance of the ecclesiastical over the civil authorities” is not only wrong, but tragically so. We are led off into some conspiracy theory whereby the state pulls all the levers behind the scenes. This does not aid sober analysis. Yes, the state *has* sinned. No, all of Christian history has *not* been reversed. No, the Church has *not* been unknowingly duped at every point. This sort of analysis blinds its adherents to the fact that modernity, including its political liberalism, is actually “the child of Christianity ... [though] prodigal,”<sup>98</sup> that it was largely Christians who provided the key raw materials enabling the West’s current political make-up, and that therefore hope exists that faithful political engagement today can bring improvement tomorrow.

Cavanaugh’s second (political-historical) point, denying root and branch any state pretensions to peacemaking is biblically erroneous – surely the state’s essential calling is to be a peacemaker. Equally, it is philosophically harmful in its delegitimizing of the state. Cold realism is helpful; over-heated demonization is not. If only Cavanaugh had stuck to his more moderate claim, that of puncturing secular presumptions and showing that “the separation of the Church from power did nothing to stanch the flow of blood,”<sup>99</sup> one could have cheered him on. But he simply cannot resist the big prize, the more sensational point that it is the state itself that is the essential source of our problems and our wars. Here he neglects the regrettable fact that animosity and wars are part of our fallen human nature; even traditional, small-scale societies prior to the modern state

could be equally warlike, if not actually *more* so.<sup>100</sup> People are the problem, not just the states they create.

Cavanaugh's third (theological-political) point, that political liberalism has radically redefined religion, is simply wrong historically and theologically. This re-definition, in the way he states it, simply never happened as a matter of history. Moreover, his theological point, that the state is a false "Savior" supplanting the gospel with "a heretical theology of salvation" such that God-honoring "Christian 'politics' cannot be the pursuit of influence over the powers" is also wrong. It is wrong because, while possessing a vigorous doctrine of the Fall, it lacks an equally vigorous doctrine of Creation and Providence. As a result, it is too quick to shout "No!" to the state. It is always in the negative and simply does not have the theological resources to ever say "Yes." But surely the God of creation and redemption says "Yes" to his creation, even if fallen. This inability critically handicaps Cavanaugh's otherwise energetic essay.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> W.T. Cavanaugh, "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House": The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," in *Modern Theology* 11.4, October 1995, 397-420, 409. Found at: <

<http://www.jesusradicals.com/wp-content/uploads/wars-of-religion-and-the-rise-of-the-state.pdf> >

<sup>2</sup> "[S]urely the most ... influential theologian now working in the United States," says Jeffrey Stout (Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 140)

<sup>3</sup> Stout 2004:118

<sup>4</sup> Stout 2004:149. Oliver O'Donovan locates this rejection of liberal democracy in the wider rejection of modernity itself: "[T]he critique of liberalism is now a standard element in the work of modernity-critics...." (Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 227)

<sup>5</sup> See Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Are There Christian Foundations for Political Liberty?" 22 March 2005, public lecture at the University of Virginia. *Veritas Forum*. Available at: <

<http://www.veritas.org/Media.aspx#!/v/212> >

<sup>6</sup> See P. Garnsey, *Thinking About Property: From Antiquity to the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and B. Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997). Tierney especially zeroes in on refuting the claim that "natural rights" were rooted in the heretical ideas of the 14<sup>th</sup> century thinkers William of Ockham and Marsilius of Padua. Instead, he shows that they were well rooted in the Church's canonist writers 300 years earlier.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), 35

<sup>8</sup> We shall see later in this essay that Jeffrey Stout's criticism against Stanley Hauerwas could equally be leveled against Cavanaugh that, though "Hauerwas sometimes writes as if no such rejection of American society is necessary," his overall commentary "continually reinforces the impression that total rejection is in fact required." (Stout 2004:148)

<sup>9</sup> Wolterstorff 2005

<sup>10</sup> Gavin D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 75. In drawing heavily upon Cavanaugh's *Theopolitical Imagination*, D'Costa is equally drawing upon Cavanaugh's 1995 "Fire Strong Enough to Consume" article, because this 1995 article reappears in *Theopolitical Imagination*, where it forms the kernel of his first chapter entitled "The Myth of the State as Savior." (See W.T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 20-46)

<sup>11</sup> R. Williams, his back cover comments in Cavanaugh's, *Theopolitical Imagination* (Cavanaugh 2002)

<sup>12</sup> "Political theology is ... the analysis and criticism of political arrangements ... from the perspective of differing interpretations of God's ways with the world." (Elizabeth Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T International, 2012), 3) Phillips serves as Tutor in Theology and Ethics at Westcott House (a Church of England theological college).

<sup>13</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:399

<sup>14</sup> H. Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 40

<sup>15</sup> K.S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1975), 283

<sup>16</sup> Here I am adopting the conventional, if somewhat arbitrary, division between "early" and "high" medieval periods. The dividing line focuses largely on the emergence of a new Christianized and Germanized civilization out of the ruins of Rome and out of the subsequent migrations and invasions. By 1050 "the invasions had run their course ... Muslims were in retreat ... Vikings and Hungarians had adopted Christianity ... [c]ities were growing ... and commerce was increasing ... [while t]he Church was entering a period of reform...." C. Hollister, *Medieval Europe: a Short History* (San Francisco: University of California, Santa Barbara, 1998), 4-5, 156

<sup>17</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:398

<sup>18</sup> Rahner 1992:39, 133

<sup>19</sup> The pope rebuked the emperor for attempting to insert himself into ecclesial affairs (concerning the schism then separating Rome from Constantinople over the Chalcedonian one-nature/two-natures of Christ question), reminding him that, "There are two, august Emperor by which this world is governed, the sacred authority [*auctoritas*] of priests and the royal power [*potestas*]." (Rahner 1992:174)

<sup>20</sup> In taking this interpretive line, I am falling in step with Otto von Guericke's reading. He writes: "In general throughout the Middle Age the doctrine of the State's partisans remained content with the *older teaching*

of the Church: namely, that Church and State were *two Co-ordinate Powers ... and ... two independent spheres* instituted by God Himself. This doctrine therefore claimed for the Temporal Power an inherent authority not derived from ecclesiastical canons. In century after century it [the 'anti-papal' party] fought a battle for the principle that the *Imperium*, like the *Sacerdotium*, proceeds immediately from God ..., and therefore depends upon God and not from the Church." (Otto Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Ages*, reprint of 1900 edition (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996), 16-17) (emphasis added) It is no surprise that Gelasius' letter suggests different interpretive lines, subject as it is to "troubling ambiguities." (O'Donovan 1996:159)

<sup>21</sup> The Ottonian dynasty (919-1024) (named after their kings Otto I, II and III), also known as the "Germanic Empire" (Dawson 1991:92), rose out of the collapse of the Carolingian Empire, uniting the fractious feudal dukes in Germany and conquering northern Italy.

<sup>22</sup> E. Duffy, *Saints & Sinners: A History of the Popes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 84

<sup>23</sup> Berman 1983:91

<sup>24</sup> Duffy 1997:89; B. Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050-1300* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 25

<sup>25</sup> Tierney 1988:25. The first steps toward this process of royal investiture had been laid already in the sixth century, as Chadwick points out: "But it is in the West, especially in Merovingian Gaul in the sixth century, not in the Greek East, that we find emerging a regular system of royal nomination of bishops." (H. Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 166)

<sup>26</sup> Gierke 1996:16. Gierke describes the Gregorian program as "absorption" of the State by the Church because in Gregorian thinking, the State is but a derivation of the Church: "From Pope Gregory VII onwards ... [t]he Church has the spiritual and temporal power.... [S]he is the true *politia*, of which the State is only part." (Gierke 1996:107-108 n.13; 106 n.10)

<sup>27</sup> O'Donovan 1996:205

<sup>28</sup> Cavanaugh 199:398 (citing J.N. Figgis, *From Gerson to Grotius, 1414-1625* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1960), 5)

<sup>29</sup> This is not to deny that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did not trigger a new development in Church-State relations which eventually led to modern liberal democratization. It is simply to deny that the Church had always, since Constantine, been the "supreme power."

<sup>30</sup> Cavanaugh ups the stakes by deliberately avoiding a more moderate version of his thesis. The moderate position holds: a) the state is part of the problem; b) it was no innocent bystander in the Wars of Religion, but rather actively fomented strife, often using religion to mask its own power ambitions. Such a claim could be instantly granted. But Cavanaugh explicitly distances himself from this more moderate version. (See Cavanaugh 1995:398)

<sup>31</sup> The ambiguity is to be found in the very way he makes his claims. That is, he initially stakes out a clear position through bold, large, unnuanced assertions. The reader thinks he knows Cavanaugh's position. It is radical, and it is its radicalism which attracts. However, careful subsequent reading reveals Cavanaugh substantially retreats from these bold assertions by little qualifications sprinkled here and there. This can be seen in his critique of the modern liberal narrative concerning the Wars of Religion. Cavanaugh objects that it "puts the matter backwards.... I do not wish merely to contend that political and economic factors played a central role in these wars, nor to make a facile reduction of religion to more mundane concerns. I will rather argue that to call these conflicts 'Wars of Religion' is an anachronism. The 'Wars of Religion' were not the events which necessitated the birth of the modern State; they were in fact themselves the birthpangs of the State." (Cavanaugh 1995:398). His claim is large, bold and unqualified. He deliberately rejects the more nuanced position which "merely ... contend[s] that political and economic factors played a central role" and which gives to religion only a subordinate role. Giving a non-religious factors a "merely ... central role" is insufficient for him; he wants to deny to religion *any* role. Indeed, so distant was religion's role in the 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Wars of Religion that Cavanaugh argues that to even call them such is an "anachronism." (Cavanaugh 1995:398).

His claim, then, seems clear: religion was not involved. Or so one thinks, until he begins to add nuances. He softens his claim to allow that these Religious Wars were "fought *largely* for the aggrandizement of the emerging State," (Ibid 398) that "doctrinal loyalties were *at best secondary*," (Ibid 401) and that the "*principal* promoters of the wars ... were in fact not pastors." (Ibid 403) (emphasis added) "Largely, secondary, principal" are all modifiers making room for other factors – which is nothing



else but the moderate version of the proposition that Cavanaugh originally claimed to foreswear; hence the ambiguity.

<sup>32</sup> See footnote above.

<sup>33</sup> The O'Donovans describe Christendom as being characterized by a "politico-spiritual unity under emperor and pope." (O'Donovan 1999:552)

<sup>34</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:400

<sup>35</sup> See Gierke 1996:7, 9-11, 103 n.7

<sup>36</sup> John Courtney Murray declares the "medieval principle of unitarism" within which there was "one social reality that was both Church and State, the one *respublica Christi*," to be the "first premise" and "overarching concept" which provides the key to how the medieval theologians of the middle and late Middle Ages thought. (J. C. Murray, "St. Robert Bellarmine on the Indirect Power," *Theological Studies* 9 (December) 1948: 491-535, 507-513)

<sup>37</sup> P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Modern Christianity, the German Reformation*, vol. VII (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 272. Schaff points out that "Charles inherited the ... piety of Isabella," took seriously that "[i]n his oath he pledged himself to protect the Catholic faith," that "Charles heard the mass daily, listened to a sermon on Sunday and holy days,... and was sometimes seen in his tent at midnight on his knees before his crucifix," and that when he resigned the crown of the Netherlands to his son Philip, he exhorted him to "above all, cherish the interests of religion." (Schaff VII:267-8, 273, 278) Additionally, the O'Donovans point out the importance of churchly, theological influence upon both Charles V and his predecessor (over Spain) Ferdinand I, modulating their otherwise savage colonial settling of the Americas: "Far from indifferent to the controversy [over pagan Indian rights] King Ferdinand had sought theological and legal advice and, guided by it, promulgated ... legislation to ... reduce the abuses.... His successor, Emperor Charles V, although party to the vast conquests in Mexico and Peru that desolated the Aztec and Inca empires, was receptive to more humane colonizing enterprises and to theological direction. Indeed, the comprehensive and drastic reform intention of his *New Laws of the Indies*, published in 1542, show the direct impact of the arguments of Vitoria and Bartolomé de Las Casas [both Spanish Dominicans], however sadly ineffectual they proved." (O'Donovan 1999:611)

<sup>38</sup> While the Austrian Counter-Reformation had been initiated far earlier in 1576 under Emperor Rudolph II, with Ferdinand II's accession to the throne in 1619 and then his victory at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, it took dramatic steps forward. (see G. Reingrabner, *Protestantismus in Niederösterreich* (St. Pölten: Nö. Pressehaus, 1977), 18, 22-4)

<sup>39</sup> Geoffrey Parker, professor of history at Ohio State University and fellow of the British Academy, writes: "The man [Ferdinand II] ... has always puzzled historians. Not surprisingly, since contemporaries themselves formed very diverse opinions of Ferdinand.... But on one matter all could agree: the emperor's Catholic convictions amounted to a consuming passion. He attended Masses at all hours of the day and night; he revered the Blessed Virgin and the relics of the saints;... he went on pilgrimages and endured self-abasement; his private life was a model of piety and familial virtue.... Indeed, the *ascetic faith lies at the root of all the emperor's political activity....*" (G. Parker, *The Thirty Years' War* (New York: Dorset Press, 1987), 83-84) (emphasis added) None of this, of course, meant that Ferdinand was "loath to pick a fight with Rome itself" nor that he did not keep "his clerical supporters on a tight rein." (Ibid 85-6)

<sup>40</sup> M. Holt, Associate Professor of History at George Mason University, "argue[s] ... that the series of French civil wars [1562-1629] ... was a conflict fought primarily over the issue of religion. This may startle some readers, used to the generations of historians and not a few sixteenth-century contemporaries who believed steadfastly that the main actors in the religious wars only used religion as a pretext ... to mask their political, dynastic, or personal power struggles.... While I would be the first to agree that the politicization of religious issues played a significant role ... and that socio-economic tensions were a permanent feature...., it seems to me that religion was nevertheless the fulcrum upon which the civil wars balanced...." (Mark P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-2) (emphasis added) He explains further: "Throughout the Wars of Religion ... the principal motivating force behind the violence ... was the perception of safeguarding and defending a sacred notion of community defined by religion.... Protestants and Catholics alike in the sixteenth century each viewed the other as pollutants of their own particular notion of the body social, as threats to their own conception of ordered society.... [T]here was a religious foundation to sixteenth-century French society that was shared by elites and popular classes alike, and it was the contestation of this essential

religious fabric of both the body social and the body politic that led to the French civil wars taking the shape they did.” (Holt 1995:190, 1, 3)

<sup>41</sup> W. Durant, *The Story of Civilization: The Reformation*, vol. 6 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), 600

<sup>42</sup> D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: a Life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1996), 558. Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer were “singled out as a representative symbol of everything that the new Catholic establishment hated. Between them they represented the whole span of the evangelical movement ... ‘special instigators and shock-troops’ of the attack on the Church’s unity.” (MacCulloch 1996:561) Will Durant, who elsewhere acknowledges the reality of the cynical, Machiavellian use of religion, places Mary Tudor in quite another category. He writes that she was “cursed with theological certainty and ... inflexible only where her faith was concerned,” who “[t]ill the end ... thought she was fulfilling by murder her obligations to the faith which she loved....” (Durant 1957:581, 583, 588-9, 600) For Durant, she was sincere, albeit sincerely wrong. Moreover, Durant details, “[S]he felt her religion too deeply to be politic with it. The skeptical generation that had grown up in London marveled at the frequency and fervor of her prayers, and the Spanish ambassador probably thought it a nuisance when she asked him to kneel beside her to ask divine guidance. She felt she had a sacred mission to restore the faith that had become so dear to her.... When (1558) war with France proved disastrous to her and England, she ascribed the failure to God’s anger at her lenience with heresy, and thereafter she positively promoted the persecution.” (Durant 1957:590, 596)

<sup>43</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:398

<sup>44</sup> Schaff VII:206

<sup>45</sup> Schaff VII:545. Caesaropapism is organizing the church so that the political ruler (Caesar) rules the Church.

<sup>46</sup> P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Modern Christianity, the Swiss Reformation*, vol. VIII (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 11, 355-8, 430

<sup>47</sup> Schaff VII:65

<sup>48</sup> Schaff VIII:462. Calvin wrote that civil government must “cherish and support the external worship of God, to preserve the true doctrine of religion....” (Schaff VIII:462)

<sup>49</sup> Schaff VIII:67

<sup>50</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:403-404. Surely Cavanaugh does not mean what he seems to be saying here: that before the 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-century, “personal convictions” were merely secondary to religion and that one’s religion were inseparable from and dependent upon one’s political loyalties.

<sup>51</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:398

<sup>52</sup> D’Costa 2009:71

<sup>53</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:405

<sup>54</sup> Cavanaugh writes, “The creation of religion, and thus the privatization of the Church is correlative to the rise of the State ... [with] the principal promoters ... kings and nobles with a stake in the outcome of the movement toward the centralized, hegemonic State.” (Cavanaugh 1995:403)

<sup>55</sup> The term itself, *cuius regio, eius religio*, was not used in the Treaty of Westphalia, but its principle is fully present.

<sup>56</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:405, 408

<sup>57</sup> The terms used for this realm are various: religious, sacred, spiritual etc. What terms is used is secondary.

<sup>58</sup> Rahner 1992:174

<sup>59</sup> Rahner 1992:172

<sup>60</sup> Almost three centuries after Pope Gelasius, Jonas of Orléans, a leading Frankish bishop from 818 tweaked the Gelasian formula of “Two there are by whom this *world* is ruled” (emphasis added) to now say, “Two there are by whom the *church* is ruled.” (Cavanaugh 1996:203-204) The change means that, “The king now exercised his office of ruling wholly within the church.” (Cavanaugh 1996:204)

<sup>61</sup> O’Donovan 1999:268; and see Tierney 1988:88

<sup>62</sup> Tierney 1988:93-4

<sup>63</sup> See Tierney 1988:87. Pope Boniface VIII used Bernard of Clairvaux’s “sword” language almost word for word in his 1302 papal bull *Unam Sanctum* (See P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: The Middle Ages*, vol. V (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 777)

<sup>64</sup> O’Donovan 1999:398

<sup>65</sup> John of Paris, *On Royal and Papal Power*, chs. 12-13, cited in O’Donovan 1999:405-408

<sup>66</sup> John of Paris, *On Royal and Papal Power*, ch.13, cited in O'Donovan 1999:408

<sup>67</sup> See O'Donovan 1999:612

<sup>68</sup> O'Donovan 1999:611. The problem with attempting to limit the pope's political power by calling it merely "indirect" – a term and concept dismissed by the French Jesuit Cardinal Henri de Lubac as "a bastard compromise" – is that it still remains "more than simply a spiritual power," being "formally political" (Murray 1948:499-501). That is, in calling it more than a merely spiritual power, one has not really limited it.

<sup>69</sup> Murray 1948:491

<sup>70</sup> See Cavanaugh 2002:9 with its chapter heading "The Myth of State as Savior"

<sup>71</sup> Cavanaugh 2002:2

<sup>72</sup> Cavanaugh 2002:5

<sup>73</sup> Cavanaugh 2002:46

<sup>74</sup> Cavanaugh 2002:10, 18. Cavanaugh's claim that the Fall was centrally about breaking this "primal unity" between humanity is questionable. First, the Fall was much more about breaking primal unity with God himself; second (and perhaps more relevantly in this context), one could argue that the opposite was the problem – that there was *too much* primal unity on the scene! That is, one could argue that Adam erred in not showing enough *individualist* spirit when he "listened to" and too readily joined his wife in the temptation she presented (Gen. 3:17).

<sup>75</sup> It is true that a secular government may claim transcendental justification (and even religious justification) for their temporal actions, but that by itself does not transmute its actions into "saviorhood" pretensions. So parents may claim transcendental (and specifically biblical) justification for disciplining their children, but one would hesitate to accuse them, on that basis alone, of thus having pretensions of saviorhood for their children. Jeffrey Stout's observation is pertinent here: "Cavanaugh clearly strives to put the 'secular state' in the worst possible light. He achieves this objective in part by unfairly omitting mention of the fact that most liberal theorists have taken pains to deny that the state is appropriately seen as a vehicle of salvation." (Stout 2004:101)

<sup>76</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:413. He repeats these claims in *Theopolitical Imagination* (Cavanaugh 2002:74-75)

<sup>77</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:414

<sup>78</sup> Cavanaugh 2002:3

<sup>79</sup> *City of God* XIX:12-13

<sup>80</sup> *City of God* XIX:17

<sup>81</sup> Cavanaugh 2002:414

<sup>82</sup> Cavanaugh's all-or-nothing approach reminds me of the radical Christian writer, William Stringfellow, who dismisses "the ostensible American victory" (so the Nazis really won?) over Nazi totalitarianism as "morally inconclusive" and having "accomplished little or nothing. (W. Stringfellow, *An Ethic for Christian & Other Aliens in a Strange Land* (Waco, TX: Word, 1973), 19, 117, 125) Tell that to the cheering crowds throughout France when the Allies rolled through in 1945; tell that to the Jews!

<sup>82</sup> Bretherton goes on to point out, "Yet Christians have often had recourse to align themselves with the state, not simply in pursuit of power, but as a means to limit the place of the market in shaping human life." (Luke Bretherton, "Book Review: Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism," in *Studies in Christian Ethics* (2005) 18: 141-4, 142)

<sup>83</sup> Bretherton, 2005:142. The view of the state with which Bretherton here takes issue is the same view as in Cavanaugh's earlier essay "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House."

<sup>84</sup> Cavanaugh writes that the stability that issued from "state monopoly on the means of violence" was only, on the one hand, ratified by the general populace from "fear of retaliation" and, on the other hand, by the "power elites ... who benefit from stability" by "the desire to maintain that stability." (Cavanaugh 2002:76)

<sup>85</sup> Cavanaugh 2002:82, 35

<sup>86</sup> Cavanaugh 2002:78

<sup>87</sup> Cavanaugh 2002:71, 77-8, 101-2. It is precisely here, when arguing for this unconscious conspiracy, that Cavanaugh brings in Foucault's image of Panopticon where "*self-discipline becomes the norm.*" (Cavanaugh 2002:78) The rulers need not control the ruled at every moment because the ruled have now internalized the rules the rulers desired.

<sup>88</sup> Cavanaugh 2002:84-5

<sup>89</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:398, 414

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<sup>90</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:415.

<sup>91</sup> One thinks of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who in 390 refused Emperor Theodosius communion, not even allowing him to enter the Church until he had done public penance for eight months. Ambrose disciplined the Emperor for his grievous sin in ordering the massacre of seven thousand innocent citizens of Thessalonica. (See P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity*, vol. III (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1910), 359, 963-4)

<sup>92</sup> See John Gittings, "Lost souls," *The Guardian*, Aug. 4, 2000. Available at: < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2000/aug/05/china.johngittings> >

<sup>93</sup> Carol Lee Hamrin, ed., *Salt and Light: Lives of Faith that Shaped Modern China*, vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, an imprint of Wipf and Stock, 2009), Kindle Loc. 59

<sup>94</sup> Hamrin 2009:loc. 141

<sup>95</sup> Hamrin 2009:loc. 174

<sup>96</sup> Hamrin 2009:loc. 763

<sup>97</sup> Hamrin 2009:loc. 262

<sup>98</sup> O'Donovan 1996:275

<sup>99</sup> Cavanaugh 1995:414

<sup>100</sup> See Jared Diamond, UCLA professor of geography at the University of California, a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and a Pulitzer prize winning author (for his *Guns, Germs, and Steel*), who argues that "Average values for modern states ... of war-related death rates ... are about one-tenth of average traditional values [traditional small-scale societies]". (J. Diamond *The World Until Yesterday: What Can We Learn from Traditional Societies?* 2012:2445-2465)

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