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Render Unto Caesar. . . What? Reflections on the Work of William Cavanaugh

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Abstract: An increasing concern for the place of religion in global politics in the past decade is reflected in the work of William Cavanaugh, a political theologian coming from the radical orthodox movement of the Roman Catholic tradition. Taking aim at key tropes in international relations, Cavanaugh introduces a strong critique of the legitimacy of the state and against its martial attitude. This review questions the historicity and generalizability of Cavanaugh's analysis. It also challenges Cavanaugh's exaltation of the church from both an internal and external perspective. Finally, it considers the expanded role of the state as compared to Cavanaugh's vision of the martial state. By way of conclusion, it questions the extent to which Cavanaugh provides an alternative to consigning religious groups to civil society or a workable role for Christian engagement with global politics, even though he provides us with a strong critique of the state.

Introduction

The past decade has seen significant growth in interest surrounding religion at the transnational level, from notions of civilizational clash to castigations of the dysfunctions of organized faiths.[1] Religion has assumed increasing centrality in discussions of state policy and global order.[2] In a challenging piece published in *World Politics* in the wake of September 11, 2001,

[1]Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998); Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007).

[2]A broad array of texts have arisen since the mid-1990s, including Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion: the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori, eds., *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); John Esposito and Michael Watson, eds., *Religion and Global Order* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000); Douglas Johnston, ed., *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Scott M. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

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Daniel Philpott explored the extent to which the assault of transnational religious organizations on America was, in fact, a challenge to the Westphalian synthesis that underpins the modern state. Philpott argued that out of religious beliefs, radical networks are able to "construct a political theology as well as a social critique that measures the distance between that theology and contemporary social conditions and prescribes action accordingly."[3] The broad range and depth of these organizations likewise call into question the continuation of the secular international system, either by replacing it entirely or by creating dueling ideological-cum-theological systems at the global level.

In the midst of the military response that has driven the putative challengers to the status quo into hiding, it would appear that this attack on the Westphalian state is in some ways overstated. Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network and their affiliates have been driven underground and seem unlikely to create a unified challenge to the international order. Their influence seems rather limited to portions of northwestern Pakistan and the inspiration of collected groups of radicals. Their would-be followers in the Middle East are torn between the poles of Sunni and Shi'i sectarian leaders. While they seem every bit as capable of launching another suicide operation that will claim the lives of thousands as they were in 2001, they are just as limited in their aim of replacing the secular world order with an eschatologically Islamic one.

A more serious question, however, is whether a more generic religious objection to the modern state system is likely to erode the confidence of the world's population in the authority and legitimacy of the state. While perhaps al-Qaeda militants do not have the power to overthrow Western civilization or the U.S. military, or even succeed in recreating the Caliphate, one does wonder to what extent developments in religious awakening worldwide will threaten the secular state system that has evolved since Westphalia. Clashes of civilizations might take a Huntingtonian or other form, but it is clear that basic substantive debates over values have taken center stage in transnational discussions. Distrust of the modern nation-state is by no means confined to the likes of Osama bin Laden or Sayyid Qutb.

Political scientists who are used to looking for challenges to world order from ideological radicals in the mold of Che Guevara or Abu Musab al-Zarqawi might miss those coming from bespectacled or overlooked quarters of academia and society. This is true even though intellectuals have had important roles to play in the establishment of important changes in the state system, from the Treaty of Westphalia to the end of the Cold War. So far, the work of William Cavanaugh, an American Roman Catholic political theologian, has not been well remarked. However, it is interesting to explore

[3]Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," *World Politics* 55, no. 1 (2002): 92–93.

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Cavanaugh's work as a deliberate and deliberately nonviolent attack on the Westphalian state.

As a postmodern critic of the state and proponent of a reinvigorated church, Cavanaugh is correct to take aim at the unquestioned place of the state. Still, Cavanaugh's arguments against the legitimacy of the state and in support of a religiously inspired ordering principle seem to provide strong ammunition for all opponents of the state. Does Cavanaugh's work only provide a Christian rationalization against the Westphalian state that runs the danger of being taken up by religious radicals of other bents who would agree with his attack on the secular nation-state while dropping his Christianity and pacifism? Does Cavanaugh set up a religious alternative to the state that is just as fraught with the potential abuse of temporal power and even authoritarianism as the state itself? Perhaps most importantly, does Cavanaugh dismiss the very vital and important role that religion plays as both an intermediary and critic of the state in civil society?

In the following article, I will explore these and other considerations. The review takes Cavanaugh's work at face value as both political theory and theology and, therefore, considers it from both angles. It comes from an analyst with shared roots in the Christian tradition, albeit grafted outside Cavanaugh's Roman Catholic arboretum. It serves as an attempt both to introduce his thought to a wider audience in political theory and political science as well as to serve as a critique from the perspective of a political scientist. I follow three lines of questioning. First, what are we to make of Cavanaugh's argument against the state, and in particular, the coercive nature of the state? Second, is Cavanaugh correct to challenge the independence of civil society as a part of the state apparatus? Third, is Cavanaugh creating a fulsome critique of the modern international system from a Christian perspective? In light of these assessments, I suggest that Cavanaugh has unduly criticized the state and even more civil society and that his view of the church speaks in a limited way to Christians but even less to non-Christians. I conclude with some reflections on the implications of Cavanaugh's thought.

Separating Church and State?

William Cavanaugh is associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota. With close associations with a new theological movement toward *radical orthodoxy*,[4] his work displays an unusual

[4]*Radical orthodoxy* is a broadly based ecumenical movement in Christian theology that combines postmodern analysis with a return to the earlier church traditions to provide a critique of modern Enlightenment reason. It tends to stress the Christian roots of various political concepts and theories as a means of assessing how in modern society they have departed from their original meanings. The term for this

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combination of the conservative and the radical. In bold strokes, he seeks to champion cultural primacy of religion over that of an artificial and incorrigible state in the modern international system. One might suggest that this channels Pope Benedict XVI's assertion of the primacy of Western reason through Noam Chomsky's equation of pirates and emperors.[5] Cavanaugh has an expanding opus of work in peer-reviewed articles and full-length books, including his strongly constructed critique of Chilean authoritarianism *Torture and Eucharist* and his broad treatise on political theory *Theopolitical Imagination*. Building on the work of Alasdair McIntyre, Cavanaugh stands as a colleague in the virtue-based political theology of Stanley Hauerwas. However, as a Roman Catholic who would have a natural bent toward the scholastic convergence of theology and polity, he has created a new style of theorizing that combines the liberationist's skepticism of authority with a faith in the institutions of the universal church. Furthermore, he has combined this perspective with the neomedieval analysis of modern globalization identified by Hedley Bull, in which "modern states . . . share their loyalties, on the one hand with regional and world authorities, and on the other hand with sub-state or sub-national authorities, to such an extent that the concept of sovereignty ceased to be applicable."[6] Cavanaugh thereby presents a critique of our modern understanding of the state as the repository of social goods. He sees the state as a primary modern rival to the church as a place of reverence and legitimacy, one that is, however, artificial and contrived. In consideration of Jesus' words to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, it would suggest to us that Caesar has little to demand of Christians beyond the mere payment of a few denarii.

Cavanaugh begins with a common assertion of studies of politics and nationalism: that the state as we see it today is a modern construct, dating, in fact, to the late medieval period in which the principle of royal sovereignty was gradually extended to the boundaries of the territorial entities that we now identify as the core of the state system. The state as an administrative

perspective arose with the publication of John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999). See also James A. K. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004).

[5]For Benedict XVI, see the (in)famous Regensburg address, Benedict XVI, *Faith Reason, and the University: Memories and Reflections*, Lecture of the Holy Father, September 12, 2006, available at http://vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_benxvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html. For the reference to Chomsky, see Noam Chomsky, *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New* (Cambridge, MA: Southend Press, 2002), vii. It is perhaps noteworthy that Chomsky's image comes originally from St. Augustine.

[6]Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 254.

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apparatus arose, according to Cavanaugh, as a means of consolidating the power of a small royal elite, and not to promote a common good, as is often portrayed in modern philosophizing over the authority of the state. It overrode more time-honored local and traditional forms of political organization, a process that "took place to serve the particular interests of dominant groups, and not as the expansion of common space."[7]

In contradiction to the traditional view of the so-called wars of religion of the 1500s and early 1600s as the ultimate outcome of dueling transnational religious forces, Cavanaugh posits that they were "in fact themselves the birth pangs of the State."[8] In other words, far from being the curse of religious fundamentalism, the wars of the 1500s and 1600s introduced us to the martial flaws of modern statecraft. The creation of the modern state system ushered in the era of modern warfare, but secularized it, so that the state might arise as the primary repository of social power. It created a justification for the use of war as a means of extending authority and thereby consolidated the state's mediation of just war doctrine as against that of prior moral and cultural communities.

In becoming the primary fulcrum of political order in the post-Westphalian age, the state increasingly took upon itself an all-embracing totality that had never obtained previously. Civil society as a cultural form independent of the authority of the state effectively disappeared as the state penetrated all aspects of society, regulating, streamlining, legitimating, and otherwise controlling it. The state perpetuated the myth of an independent civil society even though it effectively bounded and controlled civil society so that it might claim sovereignty over a social and territorial entity coterminous with the nation. Thus Cavanaugh's critique of civil society is as strong as his critique of the state—a view of civil society as benign and foundational to the state is dismissed as naïve and counterintuitive.[9]

Furthermore, the nation-state as a territorial and cultural device arrived with the emergence of the phenomenon of nationalism in the early modern age. Cavanaugh points to the absence of a national common good in the work of Hobbes and Locke, arguing that, in fact, the state arose in the 1700s and 1800s absent a societal base, civil or otherwise. Law here is based on will, order, and ownership, not upon a shared notion of the good.[10] Calling upon the well-developed tradition of scholars of nationalism from Hans Kohn to Benedict Anderson, Cavanaugh taps into the notion that nationalism is an invention of the industrializing and modernizing period.

[7]William T. Cavanaugh, "Killing for the Telephone Company: Why the Nation-State Is Not the Keeper of the Common Good," *Modern Theology* 20 (April 2004): 247.

[8]William T. Cavanaugh, "'A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House': The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," *Modern Theology* 11 (October 1995): 398.

[9]William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination* (New York: T. and T. Clark, 2002), 70ff.

[10]Cavanaugh, "Killing," 251–54.

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The state was, thereafter, a colonizer of the nationalist impulse, not the responsive institutional expression of common beliefs and opinions. It differed markedly from prior political organization in that it did not "grow organically out of the self-government of social groups," but instead consolidated its control over preexisting social and cultural institutions.[11]

As a result, Cavanaugh views the state as an organization that has (improperly) absorbed and defined civil society as a part of its own ambit. Since the modern state is a collection of unalike interests and serves as the arena for mediation among such groups, it would be overly indulgent to assume it is the repository of the values of all. "The sheer size of the nation-state precludes genuine rational deliberation; deliberation is carried on by a political elite of lawyers, lobbyists, and other professionals. For the same reason, the unitive community that the idea of the nation offers is an illusion."[12] It is a strong illusion, however—one that competes directly with religion for legitimacy.

While Cavanaugh clearly takes aim at the state, it is not the modern welfare state or the expansion of state bureaucracy that vexes him (in distinction to many modern religious neoconservative, and even Catholic, critics of the state such as Richard John Neuhaus or Michael Novak). From the standpoint of political theory, the primary issue for Cavanaugh is the Weberian notion of the state as the "human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of armed force."[13] Cavanaugh takes aim at the legitimacy of the state as a purveyor of violence in the name of order, in particular targeting state use of torture and military force. He contends that "torture is a kind of perverted liturgy" used by the state to eliminate alternative social bodies.[14] The expansion of concern over state use of torture in recent years seems only likely to reinforce the extent to which the state is singularly defined in the Weberian sense by its use of violence. This critique of the state as the bearer of the sword has situated Cavanaugh well as an apologist for the Roman Catholic cynicism toward American actions in the war on terror and the invasion of Iraq, as well as the arbitrary use of torture and imprisonment in the campaign against radicals.[15]

Calling upon the nationalistic imagery of civil religion in America, where "the nation competes with the church on the same religious grounds,"[16] Cavanaugh challenges the state's claim to secular legitimacy as against the

[11]Ibid., 256.

[12]Ibid., 263.

[13]Max Weber, "What Is a State?" in *Comparative Politics: Notes and Readings*, 9th ed., ed. Bernard E. Brown (Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers, 2000), 147.

[14]William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 12.

[15]William T. Cavanaugh, "How to Do Penance for the Inquisition," *Review of Faith and International Affairs* 5, no. 2 (2007): 13–16.

[16]William T. Cavanaugh, "The Liturgies of Church and State," *Liturgy* 20, no. 1 (2005): 25–30.

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sacred as a false dichotomy. To divest the sacred of the secular and to invest the secular state with a status significant enough to justify murder in war is, in fact, impossible.

> Nation-states are fetishes. They have power because people believe in the need for their security. They have power because people will kill and die—and sometimes torture—for them. Christians in modernity have often bought into a devil's bargain in which the state is given control of our bodies while the church supposedly retains our souls. This arrangement would be bad enough if it stopped there. But the state cannot be expected to limit itself to the body; it will colonize the soul as well.[17]

The state inevitably creates a comprador civil society that it uses to maintain its imperial, even totalitarian role.

According to Cavanaugh, the Christian approach would be to deny the state the transcendent political role it has arrogated to itself. Cavanaugh views the ideal of the separation of church and state as an artifact of the creation of a notionally secular state in the years following the Treaty of Westphalia. Prior to the creation of the modern state system, according to Cavanaugh, "the civil and ecclesiastical powers were different departments of the same body, with the ecclesiastical hierarchy of course at the head."[18] The definition of religion as a domain apart from the state is, therefore, a modern contrivance: "The creation of religion, and thus the privatization of the Church, is correlative to the rise of the State."[19] If Cavanaugh's critique of the state is correct, the argument for the separation of church and state has wrongly extended Jesus' words to the modern state. Caesar's demands went no further than the denarius, but the modern state requires much more of us: loyalty, legitimacy, commitment, sacrifice, social engineering, surrender to a set of rules and demands, and (perhaps most egregiously according to Cavanaugh) service in war. Instead, the proper community for these efforts would be the sacramental community, for Christians the church community represented in the Eucharist.

The Nation-State as Historical Artifact

Having considered Cavanaugh's theoretical positions, let us first consider his contentions against the state. Cavanaugh brings to the topic of the state an impressive grasp of European history, political theory, and theological reflection. His marriage of the three is largely unparalleled. In particular, his points about the artificiality of the state and its roots in the close of the feudal system are well made. He is certainly correct to point out that the wars of religion of

[17]Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 195–96.
[18]Cavanaugh, "A Fire," 400.
[19]Ibid., 403.

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early modern Europe were only euphemistically driven by religion. While the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformations and their intellectual predecessors such as Hus and Savonarola brought revolutionary social change to Europe, this only predated the Enlightenment and Romantic periods, each of which has a great deal of blood to commend its own role in international warfare. A survey of the history of anticlericalism will demonstrate that irreligion is at least as lethal as religion, a point that Cavanaugh returns to again and again.[20] Additionally, the very secular city-states of Italy had already long developed a states system that was very effective as a template for power relations among the squabbling kings and princelets of Europe in the years leading up to the conflagrations of the 1500s and 1600s. When the Thirty Years' War began in 1618, only the Hapsburg Holy Roman Emperor could press the claim that it was a war of religion. Within a very few years, the defection of France to the side of the northern European Protestant kings was sufficient to reveal the paucity of confessional solidarity as a motivating force for war.

I am, therefore, sympathetic to the way in which Cavanaugh presents the origins of the state. However, his contention that the concept of the state is new and that local entities prevailed before the nation-state is stretched. This argument is based on the assumption that the nation-state as a territorial and sovereign entity did not exist prior to the period of state consolidation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. To a point this is factually correct—it is true that modern bureaucratic and secular theory of the state dates to this time. But the ancient empires *were* nation-states in that they created an embryonic notion of the nation, complete with national gods associated with their success. The first conflict in recorded history pitted the nation-states of Lagash and Umma over a water boundary known as Gu-Edin. Assyrian palace inscriptions celebrated the exploits of their military for foreign audiences to consolidate their rule. Egyptians defined themselves quite clearly against their foes among the Asiatics, Hyksos, and others. Jesus' own statement "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's" pointed to the existence of an authority apart from locally conceived communities.

What is more, territoriality in the ancient world was conceived differently only insofar as sovereignty could not be consolidated in the modern sense of defended borders. Often, however, it reflected the very geographic notion of the state that we know today. Thucydides' Greece contended over quite clearly defined spheres of influence, and the division of Greece among city-states was similar to our modern understanding of the state boundaries. Babylonians delineated internal boundaries using standing-stones known as *kudurru*. Roman power in Britain extended only as far as Hadrian's Wall.

[20]Jose Sanchez, *Anticlericalism: A Brief History* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972). See also Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics, from the Great War to the War on Terror* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007).

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Likewise, the Great Wall of China illustrates that the Chinese conceived of frontiers of their own national control. In general, then, the state is not so modern a notion after all. While the medieval conception of the state was very much tied into the feudal system, underpinning it was the imperial concept as an ideal from the past. The European Empire of the day did not simply derive its authority from that of the universal church, as Cavanaugh contends. It was not simply the *holy empire* but the *Holy Roman Empire*, implying origins in an early version of the nation-state.

One might also suggest that Cavanaugh's strength as a historian is his weakness as a theorist. Most scholars agree with Cavanaugh, to one degree or another, that the notion of the nation-state has evolved and that the consolidation of the state system arose in the midst of the conflagrations of the seventeenth century. Kenneth Waltz, for example, argued that the rise of nationalism imbued ancient loyalties with a new "loyalty to the state that overrides their loyalty to almost any other group." He went on to presage Cavanaugh by suggesting that this loyalty replaced that of the church at this time in history.[21] It is also clear that the state arose in many ways to justify the very secular power of royal factions, republican revolutions, and military dictatorships rather than to seek the common good.

But just because the state arose as an artificial concept does not mean that it is just as artificial today. The historic origins of the state are of relevance to history, but they are not necessarily binding upon the contemporary state. Nor do the sins of the father condemn all states to behave as did the states of the Enlightenment. True, the state arose as a means of consolidating the authority of monarchs and to an extent the very idea of the nation-state was a myth back in the seventeenth century. But myths in themselves may have a reality in that they are accepted as prevailing justifications for norms of behavior. Likewise over time, an institution such as the state may evolve to exceed its original mandate. Modern constructivists do not argue that international regimes are necessarily established for the common good, but this does not rule out the possibility that they may be used for the common good.

Conceptions of the state evolve over time and relate as much to the way the state behaves today as they do to its putative history. Realist and Weberian notions of the state have in large part given way to more nuanced definitions. Liberal theorists would suggest to us that there are significant differences between liberal-democratic and coercive states.[22] Even Alexander Wendt, one of the principal defenders of the Weberian notion of the state in international relations today, argues that nation-states have developed different

[21]Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 177.

[22]See, for example, Ted Robert Gurr, "War, Revolution, and the Growth of the Coercive State," *Comparative Political Studies* 21, no. 1 (1988): 25–65.

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"cultures of anarchy" over the years. Wendt suggests that the "Hobbesian" cultures of the past are being replaced by the "Lockean" and "Kantian" cultures of the present.[23] His point is that structures that constrain and control the nature of the state are changing, and changing in progressive ways: "In fact, it seems obvious that today's international system represents considerable progress over that of 500 or even 1500 A.D.; progress there has been."[24] Liberal and alternative theorists typically picture the state as a secondary or derivative force in world politics, a Gulliver held down by the ropes of thousands of Lilliputians.[25] Recent liberal assessments of international society have stressed the extent to which the rise of democratic norms, interdependence, and intergovernmental institutions has tamed the martial instincts of the state.[26] To the extent that the state reflects an array of contending forces and voices in civil society, it resists categorization as a modern analogue of the secular nationalist replacements for the religions of the past. It is instead a much more complex creature, reflecting both anti- and prosocial behavior.

As to the coercive apparatus of the state, the modern liberal-democratic state has proven less and less likely to demand the participation of its citizens in warfare or to engage in torture against its people, notwithstanding recent concerns over the conduct of the "war on terror," to which we shall return. While government in the United States has been increasingly perceived as a coercive state in the wake of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the concomitant expansion of domestic and international military presence, this is by no means a universal phenomenon. Given the budgetary limitations increasingly placed upon the United States, going into the future, and the tendency among its allies to resist foreign adventurism, there might even be reason to believe it to be a temporary development. Be that as it may, in places such as Europe, Latin America, and Canada, the military impulse of the state has dramatically waned since its high point in the earlier portions of the last century such that praetorian rulers like Hugo Chavez are a distinct minority. In most of the developed world, the state has largely become a mediator of contending social forces, many of which use its institutions as means of making themselves heard. Modern developed states have, therefore, become more like a social contract than those of the past, and arguably this process of evolution may continue as states seek new and innovative ways to engage their citizens.

[23]See Wendt's "Three Cultures of Anarchy," in *Social Theory of International Politics*, ed. Alexander Wendt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 246–312.

[24]Wendt, *Social Theory*, 311–12.

[25]This has been the chief claim of many liberal and neorealist arguments against the autonomy of the state in the international system at least since the publication of Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye's *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1977).

[26]Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001).

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The evolution of the Western tradition is, therefore, ignored by Cavanaugh in an effort to demonstrate the militant secularism demonstrated by its founders. Yet it is important as well to note that the Western tradition has much to credit the Christian tradition out of which it evolved. Philosophers of the state did not arise simply to grant unconditional authority to the state but to find ways in which the state might serve as a means of Christian charity for those with whom we disagree. Theorists such as Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, Mill, and even Hegel arose out of a Christian civilization and spoke to a Christian society even as they sought to create a secular sphere in which those Christians might interact.[27] It is not until the Romantic period of the early nineteenth century that philosophers such as Marx and Nietzsche began to theorize out of avowedly secular and even pagan principles. Cavanaugh himself is dialoguing with a society that shares much of his Catholic heritage.

These philosophers emerging from the Christian tradition of the state did not create the state as a rival for the legitimacy of the masses. In a sense, they were serving the independence and authority of the church every bit as much as they supported the secular state. Detaching the church from the state (even as an intermediate) was a way to create the church as a separate and unbounded entity. For example, in England, the collusion of church and state led to the creation of a new state church that, in turn, engaged in the persecution of Roman Catholic and nonconformist sects. As a result, the Reformation created a state designed to protect the people from clerical authority combined with that of the monarchy. Ultimately the state's ambitions were tamed to get out of the business of religious persecution entirely, as in the case of American disestablishmentarianism, and only later the modern secular state. Surely, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers were seeking to create space for the ultimate authority of challengers to the state in places such as Britain where the state had improperly overstepped its bounds. In other words, the state rising out of the traditions of the European Reformation and later Enlightenment, pace Cavanaugh, was in effect created to avoid the very crisis of legitimacy that Cavanaugh decries. If it has failed to achieve these ends, it is likely the fault of application rather than design.

[27]It is perhaps important to note that I don't mean to suggest that these philosophers were seeking to engage in Christian reasoning or to engage in religious discourse: indeed, Hobbes and others were seeking to do quite the opposite. However, these foundational philosophers cannot be separated from their dialogue with the Christian tradition, and they largely understood the world through the lenses of Christian thought. Mark Lilla has recently argued that this was a long process "opened up by a unique theological-political crisis within Christendom" whereby political theology was largely replaced by political philosophy. Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 308.

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Violence, the State, and the Expanding Role of the State

I have stated previously that Cavanaugh's primary complaint against the state is that it has arrogated to itself power over life and death, that modern society has taken too seriously the Weberian proposition that it boasts the monopoly over the legitimate use of force. For Cavanaugh the state is flawed because it is a martial state. But the modern liberal-democratic state is increasingly defined by its very reticence to use armed force. Cavanaugh's interest in the state arose in Chile, where the Pinochet regime used torture and violence as a matter of course. But Chile has shed bureaucratic authoritarianism and embraced a more democratic form today. What is more, South American states have not gone to war in more than a century, with the one exception of Argentina's war over the Falkland Islands. Notwithstanding the American incursions in Iraq and Afghanistan, postcolonial wars of this sort have generally been on the wane. The past decade has been replete with explorations of the democratic peace, and while the jury may remain unconvinced, liberal-democratic capitalist states seem very unlikely once again to pick up the swords of war among themselves.

Admittedly, war has not ceased, and some would argue that the past decade has been as warlike as any in the history of humankind, in spite of the unprecedented growth of liberal-democratic principles. But warfare has been confined largely to areas of the nondemocratic periphery. What is more, since 1945 warfare has increasingly pitted substate elements in contestation over the direction of the state rather than states against one another in a pattern Holsti calls "people's wars."[28] The concerted response of Western states to September 11th and the ill-begotten 2003 invasion of Iraq are not particularly representative of the modern pattern of warfare. Yet even among NATO allies in Afghanistan, developed nations have displayed their reticence to engage in armed conflict, many of them bound by caveats that keep them out of combat roles, with publics at home fretting that the price of young soldiers' lives is too high a price to pay. The development of fearsome technologies of warfare have certainly increased the lethality of war, but at the same time states are often taken to be less likely to use a nuclear device than would nonstate elements with a radical agenda.

It may seem utopian to suggest, but if scholars such as Francis Fukuyama or Bruce Russett and John Oneal are correct to suggest that there are zones of peace in international politics that will grow as democracy spreads, the state may someday get out of the business of warfare entirely.[29] Americans have

[28]K. J. Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[29]Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992); Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*.

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recently come to question the likelihood of a peaceful realm emerging from the end of the Cold War, but modern conflicts have continued to pit the liberal-democratic states individually and together in an increasingly familiar pattern. Outside the United States, the primary preoccupations of many Western industrialized states have moved beyond war and peace toward more vexing issues of social management. Government intervention in favor of social rights has been the primary point of polarization for religious activists in North American and other societies, yet Cavanaugh does not generally address the limitations of the state in regulating or controlling these questions. This is so in spite of the fact that transnational organizations are increasingly affected by these concerns, as demonstrated in debates over the wording of the European Union constitution and direction of expansion or in periodic controversies over family planning initiatives, such as at the 1994 UN International Conference on Population and Development. A recent issue of *The Economist* explored the expanded role of government in providing a "nanny state" for its citizens, encouraging their use of green technologies, access to exercise, provision of child care, and discouraging social vices and unhealthy behaviors.[30] One would assume that such soft paternalism would also run afoul of Cavanaugh's limitations on the state. But consigning these issues to the management of global civil society would also run the risk of compromising with these authorities. Cavanaugh provides us with no general model for temporal management of these affairs other than his vaunted Church.

Even if the state remains first and foremost the purveyor of war, does Cavanaugh's challenge to the legitimacy of the state extend beyond this moral fault? Does a state that engages in warfare either abroad or against its own citizens thereby give up the legitimate right to administer social programs, to build roads, to encourage citizen activism, to print and circulate currency, or any number of other services and projects? In Western societies, the state has shed much of its coercive apparatus and become a service provider. If the state is perverted by its aspirations to rival the faith, is it an institution to be trusted at all? Again, it is unclear where Cavanaugh's assessment will lead us.

The State and Civil Society

I have considered Cavanaugh's critique of the state, but what of his consideration of civil society? Cavanaugh has learned well some of the lessons taught to political scientists over the past few decades. These include that the state is not homogenous nor is it the simple repository of the collective authority of a nation, that the state should not be understood apart from the interests in which it is embedded, and that the state is one of many prominent actors

[30]"The Avuncular State," *The Economist*, April 8, 2006, 67–69.

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in world politics.[31] He sounds a proper cautionary note about the extent to which the state has permeated much of modern civil society. While he does not always use the terms of political analysis, what Cavanaugh is arguing is that the state has risen to permeate, colonize, and dominate the society in which it is embedded. His critique of the state comes at a time when the future of the state is a matter of significant debate. On one side are political economists and others pronouncing the retreat or the end of the state.[32] On another side are many suggesting that the state has only found new ways to reassert its authority.[33]

Yet even if we accept Cavanaugh's argument that the state is an artificial construct of modernity, his contention that the "public realm outside the State is, however, largely a fiction, as is therefore the ideal of a noncoercive public marketplace of ideas" seems to be an overstatement.[34] Indeed, the work of several prominent social scientists has reinforced the extent to which religion and politics reflect the noncoercive public marketplace of ideas that Cavanaugh denies.[35] The choices that citizens make for identification with religious and nationalist movements seem to contradict the premise of Cavanaugh's all-consuming state. Many modern political scientists see the erosion of state power as one of the most important developments of the post–Cold War era. In many areas of the world, such as Somalia, Afghanistan, or Haiti, state failure has given way to anarchy. Elsewhere structural adjustment, neoliberalism, and budget crunches have limited the capacity of the state to achieve many of its aims. In the midst of the retreat of state capacity, states may take new forms and use non-governmental agencies and civil society actors to reinforce their authority, functioning as hegemonic blocs (to use a Gramscian turn of phrase).

On the other hand, civil society actors may increasingly present an insurmountable obstacle to the state and may operate increasingly in ways that ignore the authority of any one given state. In the words of Robert Cox, "Civil society is itself a field of power relations; and forces in civil society

[31]Along these lines, see Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[32]Following Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[33]For example, Adam Harmes, *The Return of the State* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2004).

[34]Cavanaugh, "A Fire," 414.

[35]Jelen and Wilcox use personal choice in the midst of a market of ideas as a template for the operation of religious groups in liberal-democratic societies. They present several case studies in areas throughout the world to support their contention. Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective: The One, the Few, and the Many* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

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relate, in support or opposition, to powers in state and market."[36] Civil society seen in this way is not solely the penetrated space described by Cavanaugh but instead a field over which state and social forces may do battle. Cavanaugh's use of the term *civil society* seems closer to the notion of civil religion in the sense of the cultural trappings and underpinnings of the state in society. On the other hand, the typical use of the term in political science today tends instead to refer to the various plural groupings that contend with the state. Often they do so as veritable equals to the state, far from Cavanaugh's "intermediate associations." If, as Cavanaugh states, the church must "promote the creation of spaces in which alternative economies and authorities flourish,"[37] how would this be done outside the assertion of its role within civil society, as understood by analysts such as Cox? By using this artificially narrow notion of civil society, such that civil society cannot even be conceived outside its relationship to the state, Cavanaugh unfortunately seems to miss the power of his church in civil society fearing that it might be compromised by simple semantics.

In the field of civil society, it is not just the state with which the church must contend—there is a constellation of actors that vie for the loyalties of citizens. If the state is indeed "a source of an alternative soteriology to that of the church,"[38] it is certainly not the only one. Obviously, other religious movements present a challenge to the logic of the nation-state: sometimes these movements even overtly boast the language of alternative soteriology.[39] Islamist movements boast that "Islam is the solution"; others foster ideals of an Islamic economic system; an Algerian group is even known as the Islamic Salvation Front (*front Islamique du salut*). Elsewhere, organized crime syndicates, sometimes coupled with resistance movements such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), have arrogated to themselves the role of ultimate arbiter of life and death. In spaces such as these, the church has often viewed the state as (at worst) the lesser of two evils as an interlocutor or protector. For example, in my own study of the church in Egypt, I have found that Christians have largely internalized a distrust of the state in keeping with Cavanaugh's critique, but they also tend to place greater trust in the state than they do in some of the radical elements of civil society. None of this detracts from the centrality of the Coptic Orthodox Church to the regulation of social affairs within the country. In this case, the

[36]Robert Cox, "Civil Society at the Turn of the Millennium: Prospects for an Alternative World Order," *Review of International Studies* 25 (1999): 25.

[37]Cavanaugh, "Killing," 267.

[38]William Cavanaugh, "The City: Beyond Secular Parodies," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), 182.

[39]For an excellent exploration of the broader concept of religion as an alternative to the modern international system, see Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11th," 66–95.

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church has not necessarily surrendered to the logic of the state so much as it has enjoyed the protection of the state when it turns a blind eye.

But Cavanaugh is generally interested in the role of the Christian church in the Western (and notionally Christian) traditions of political discourse. He bemoans the gradual surrender of the power of traditional authorities in European civilization, accepting for themselves the role of "intermediate associations" defined by their relationship to the state. For example, he cites the experience of the university: the level of transcendent independence enjoyed by the university in the medieval period came to be undermined by its subordination to the nation-state during the Enlightenment.[40] Similarly, civil society institutions, and even the church itself, have come to accept the geographic and social boundaries of the state as definitive.[41]

In the developed world, the surrender of the church (and of other actors) to the logic of the nation-state is uneven in its application. Two general models are posited for representation of organized interests: the corporatist model and the pluralist model. In the pluralist model, groups are self-constituted and are granted the autonomy to represent interests as citizens see fit. In the corporatist model, the state initiates the process of interest aggregation through gathering and classifying interests, creating peak organizations through which various societal interests are filtered. The corporatist model is most common in European states whereas the pluralist model is the more typically North American approach, although almost all states allow some mixture of pluralist and corporatist models.[42] The application of these models to religion suggests under pluralism that religion shapes interests, which then are represented to the state through domestic civil society; under corporatism, interests are defined by preexisting religious groups recognized by the state.

Clearly, Cavanaugh's fear that the state has colonized society comes closer to the corporatist approach. In Scandinavian states, labor unions, cultural societies, and indeed churches have been granted special relationship to the state for consideration in discussions surrounding their interests. The state

[40]William T. Cavanaugh, "Sailing under True Colors: Academic Freedom and the Ecclesially Based University," in *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society*, ed. Michael L. Budde and John Wright (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 41–42.

[41]Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 74ff.

[42]Note here that pluralism is used solely in the neoinstitutional sense, rather than the sense of *cultural pluralism*. A useful study of pluralism as a model as against established churches and strict separation of church and state is provided by Stephen V. Monsma and J. Christopher Soper, *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997). However, Monsma and Soper refer to pluralism as a mode of state neutrality, whereas pluralism as a model of interest representation could be used in a state with or without the application of strict neutrality.

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recognizes, funds, and helps to legitimize and empower such groups. The corporatist model has had an enormous impact in Germany over the years. During the 1930s, the Nazis famously sought to bring the Protestant and Catholic Churches into a patriotic union under the Nazi banner, while a small but heroic Confessing Church movement defied the union. Corporatism has not always been so egregiously used to penetrate civil society. But it does create a mechanism by which the state may seek to manage religious practice, among other forms of social organization. Today, Germany maintains the role of the state in directly taxing citizens so as to fund state-recognized churches. A movement critical of the state role has arisen in the Free Church. The permeation of the church under state auspices in these cases may well constitute a mistaken surrender of the church.

In pluralist systems, by contrast, the church remains a free institution and is less likely to be colonized by the state. In Canada and the United States, churches survive on the private donations of churchgoers, and though the state may regulate the zoning of church locations and the registration of weddings, or require proper accounting procedures of the church, the level of financial and regulatory control is far less significant. Instances in which the state follows a more corporatist philosophy in these states have typically been controversial in the extreme, as in the case of American funding of faith-based social services. What Cavanaugh envisions appears to be pluralism in its extreme—perhaps a pluralism that only applies to the church. However, no matter how he envisions the representation of interests within or among states, it seems rather unnecessary to rule out the very useful place of organized religious discourse in a civil society, whether corporatist or pluralist in its foundations.

Theopolitical Concerns: the Political Significance of Church

Beyond his assessment of state and society, a third consideration is Cavanaugh's particular take on political theology. It is rather unclear where Cavanaugh's critique of the state should lead believers. His conclusions are generally euphemistic in that he requests Christians to rediscover the ways in which the temporal and spiritual authority of God may be promoted. In one place, he suggests that Christians accept more deeply the discipline of the church, a discipline that "will more often resemble martyrdom than military victory."[43] But religious institutions of this sort cannot be promoted as mere interests, given that he negates the church's role as intermediary. Instead, Cavanaugh chooses to emphasize the exalted nature of the church as God's provision for world order. He disavows modern notions of citizenship as a sort of idolatry, for "citizenship has displaced discipleship as the

[43]Cavanaugh, "A Fire," 415.

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church's public key."[44] But given the existence of the modern state as an organizing principle, even a flawed one, this perspective limits the ability of the church to provide ministry and service to the present political order.

Here Cavanaugh, like Hauerwas, overstates the ability of the church as a socially and ethically constructed polity. Even given a commitment to the Christian faith, his exalted understanding of the church does not anticipate the venality of temporal authorities within the church or the potential for sin among its members. Faced with criticisms of the church's role in torture during the Inquisition, Cavanaugh admits that it is "one of the many sins of the Church for which Catholics should do penance," but he is rather dismissive of the possibility that these errors may be repeated.[45] A church that accepts the discipline of external accountability need not be one that sacrifices its claim to universal truth and the authority of the almighty.

No matter one's perspective on the veracity of the Christian faith, Cavanaugh's faith in the church as the body of Christ does not fully acknowledge the diversity of spiritual and existential experiences of its members. There is here potential for monism. The church affirms its unity through a creed, but the insistence that this is a unitive fiction stronger than that of the modern nation-state stretches the traditional notion of the church as Christ's body, potentially justifying acts that seek to impose conformity. As one theologian has noted, "Cavanaugh's account seems to suggest a partial misconstrual of our possession of shared humanity as implying *unity rather than community*. Is our created and redeemed destiny not better depicted as a relational communion among individually distinct persons, rather than as participatory union?"[46] If this is true, the church is ultimately the sum total of the actions of individuals that lead and participate in it, either consistent or inconsistent with the Christian worldview.

Cavanaugh, instead, reposes in the church all the authority of God to discipline the believer. Individuals do not find their authority in relationship to God but in relationship to the church; in one place, Cavanaugh argues that "religious symbols are . . . embedded in bodily practices of power and discipline whose regulation belong to the authoritative structure of the Church, or at least did until modern times."[47] The individual's role is subsumed within the power of a collective unit, the church, rather than in one's own convictions or relationship to the Almighty. Christian theology holds that the church is the "body of Christ," but does this imply a homogenization of interests, or the necessary construction of a divine polity emerging from it?

[44]Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 83.

[45]Cavanaugh, "Penance," 14.

[46]Jonathan Chaplin, "Suspended Communities or Covenanted Communities? Reformed Reflections on the Social Thought of Radical Orthodoxy," in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, eds. James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthuis (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 166.

[47]Cavanaugh, "A Fire," 411–12.

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Commonality of purpose in a mystical sense does not imply, nor should it, that all Christians are unified in their personalities, their style of worship, or even their preferences for getting things done: hence the existence of an array of local churches and denominations. From the Christian standpoint, such apparent disunity results from both the fallen nature of human beings and from the mere existence of God-given diversity among Christians. Similar critiques of organized and centralized religion may be distinguished in other religious traditions: disputes over leadership in Islam between Sunni and Shi'i and over transcendence between fundamentalists and Sufis; the absence of centralized authority or dogma in Hinduism or Buddhism; diverse schools and sects of Judaism. Within each tradition, one can justify a certain suspicion of attempts to create a temporal order based on the unity of the faith. Beyond that, it goes without saying that Cavanaugh's perspective does not really provide Christians with a platform for interacting with those who do not hold to their faith.

In this sense, Cavanaugh does not identify the artificiality of national churches that consistently engage in rivalries with upstart denominations supposed to be of foreign origin. Arguments for the universality of the church are less often invitations to ecumenical understanding and more often attempts to solidify orthodoxy contrary to the freedom of the Christian faith or to create apologetics for the unchallenged authority of one group or another. For example, established churches in Russia, the Middle East, and even parts of Europe have jealously guarded their prerogatives against modern reformist movements, sects, and cults, perceiving them, rightly or wrongly, as challenges to their inherited authority. The unity of the church may well be a proper doctrine of the Christian faith, but this need not translate into an unremitting need to homogenize or institutionally unify Christians under a temporal banner. Indeed, history is replete with examples in which this attempt to cement religious unity itself became a source of political tensions and violent sectarianism.

Here we arrive at an important point about Cavanaugh's ecclesiology that, in turn, ties into his critique of civil society. If the state was not formed for the common good, neither was the church, by its own admission. Humanity's chief purpose, according to the Westminster catechism, is to "glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Roman Catholic doctrine gives the church a more central role as the City of God on Earth, but even so, the aim is spiritual beneficence rather than temporal. The primary reference to Jesus' use of the term *church* is in his response to Peter's declaration at Caesarea Philippi that "on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). This referred to a spiritual gathering of disciples committed to the teachings of Jesus, not a set of institutional responses to present problems. By the same token, the church is not a political institution, though by all means its teachings will have direct political import. "My kingdom is not from this world," Jesus himself stated under Pilate's questioning, "if my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting" (John 18:36).

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The church was to become the standing witness of Jesus' *spiritual* kingdom in the world. The fact that this had political and institutional implications was evident in the perceived challenge to existing authorities, Pilate included. It would provide alternative principles for leadership, reverse relationships of enmity, and create new conceptions of mercy, grace, and justice. As such, it devised new patterns for political thinking, which have challenged and will challenge the nature of the modern nation-state. But it did not create an alternative temporal order. Attempts to do so have been woefully inadequate, not because of the failures of the church as a spiritual entity but because the institutional church is by definition something more than that spiritual church to which the scriptures refer.

Of course, Cavanaugh's exalted notion of the church does not follow from this Protestant tradition, but rather from an assumption of the church in some way as a continuation of the theocratic polity of the Jewish Old Testament. In one place, he argues that the use of the word *ekklesia* in ancient Greek for the church of the New Testament indicates its identification with the assembly of all Israel in the Old. "In calling itself an *ekklesia*, the church was identifying itself as fully public, refusing the available language for private associations (*koinon* or *collegium*)."[48] The point Cavanaugh is making here is that the church is not a mediating influence between state and society, that it is properly an alternative locus of authority and tradition with a firmer grounding than the state itself. Insofar as it describes the *spiritual* gathering of the church universal, this is persuasive. It suggests that the Christian needs to filter the ideals of the state through a mind transformed by the power of Christ. But the *ekklesia* is not, nor should it be, conflated with the temporal institutions of the church, many of which have proven as tragically artificial and unfocused on the common good as the modern nation-state itself. One must remember that the wheat grows up with the tares.

This vision of the church as a continuation of the temporal community of Israel runs into the danger of creating a justification for theocratic rule not via the spiritual authority of the church universal but through its institutional and incompletely sanctified auspices. It is interesting to note that Cavanaugh disavows such theocracy, stating that the church is not a "polis," nor is "the call for the Church to be 'public' ... a call for the church to take up the sword once again."[49] By comparing the *ekklesia* of the New Testament Christians to that of the Old Testament, Cavanaugh does not seem to imply that the church is the representative of the nation. It is a public institution, certainly, but not constitutive of a polity as a whole—and hence, once again, may be a functioning part of civil society.

There is an element to which Cavanaugh is simply providing an apologetic for the continued supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church as a transnational religious order, even if it is a significantly reformed and chastened authority.

[48]Cavanaugh, "Killing," 267.
[49]Cavanaugh, *Theolopolitical Imagination*, 85.

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His argument that the state is an artificial contrivance of the modern age dovetails conveniently with a contention that the separation of church and state was a mistake of the Reformation.

> Luther rightly saw that the Church had become worldly and perversely associated with the wielding of the sword. His intention was to prevent the identification of any politics with the will of God, and thus extricate the Church from its entanglement in coercive power. In sanctifying that power to the use of secular government, however, Luther contributed to the myth of the State as peacemaker which would be invoked to confine the Church.[50]

There seems to me a sort of circular reasoning here. Nation-states were formed to control the venal power of the church. These nation-states became artificial and venal contrivances themselves, and the church must come to the rescue. Is it not possible that the problem is institutionalized and unchecked power rather than the state per se?

Conclusions

William Cavanaugh has engaged in an important and interesting convergence of theology and politics. He has identified the relationship between religion and politics in bold terms. "To identify politics and religion as acts of the imagination is to recognize their historical contingency and thus give hope that things do not necessarily have to be the way they are. It is also to put the political and the theological imaginations on an equal footing."[51] For many political scientists and theorists, this equation of the religious and the political is likely to be disconcerting. For others, it will only echo contentions they have been making for many years.

Nevertheless, Cavanaugh's exaltation of the Christian church over and above the state argues for the higher levels of legitimacy contained in the neomedieval model of world organization. It suggests that when people organize themselves around the poles of loyalty created by the higher plane of religion there is a pull to a higher power that transcends interstate relations and calls them to more pacific and constructive relations. Indeed, it does stand to reason that people are most likely to accept calls to solidarity and mutual help through the language of their own sacred tradition. Furthermore, these sacred traditions are far more likely to be constructive and enriching to modern society than they are to be divisive or injurious. Far too often has the modern state sought to be, in T. N. Madan's phraseology, secular*ist*, rather than secular.[52]

[50]Cavanaugh, "A Fire," 399.

[51]Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 2–3.

[52]"Secularism is the ideology that argues the historical inevitability and progressive nature of secularization everywhere" (T. N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds* [Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998], 5–6).

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There is a danger, however, that Cavanaugh fails to address—the extent to which these transcendent ties are likely to talk past one another. As Hedley Bull pointed out many years ago:

> It is conceivable that a universal society of this kind might be constructed that would provide a firm basis for the realisation of elementary goals of social life. But if it were anything like the precedent of Western Christendom, it would contain more ubiquitous and continuous violence and insecurity than does the modern states system.[53]

Of course, Cavanaugh disputes the ubiquity of violence in the medieval past, but he does not seek to consider the ways in which the Europe of 1600 was far less plural in its societal dynamics than the modern international system, which includes diverse traditions, from Christian to Muslim, from materialist to particularist. Is it not possible, even for the true believer, to accept that such intellectual diversity is enriching, if only due to its role in helping modern society to explore issues of ultimate value, especially issues of peace and conflict?

Returning to the larger constitutive questions of international relations theory, the fear that religious traditions seeking to challenge the place of the nation-state will inevitably clash with one another and with modernity suggests that the diversity of religion represented by Cavanaugh's devotion to the Eucharist will inevitably be destabilizing. I hope to suggest otherwise: that the international stage is, indeed, a place for contending values to play themselves out, and often in political ways, but that this need not translate into uncontrolled conflict. What is necessary here, however, is a category of social relations in which such relations can play out. Cavanaugh may be right that the state is the wrong category. But he may also have ruled out more promising venues. His counterparts in other religious traditions have too often done the same.

The Christian tradition has had to deal with this level of diversity for two thousand years in many locations around the world. The very Eucharist that Cavanaugh describes as the ideal archetype of unity is a source of disunity for the various sects of Christendom. Without the state, or its attendant civil society, how do modern religious organizations of this sort seek some sort of common ground? By eliminating the secular state and civil society, Cavanaugh has left us with precious little space to construct common ground with the *Other*. If nation-states are indeed fetishes, so too can faith groups become cults gathered around esoteric minutiae, condemning and excommunicating those who disagree, or looking askance at them as alien intruders. Cavanaugh creates a strong notion of Christian solidarity, but no notion of how relations with other sacred communities can work—and have worked in the past. Where would this take place, if not in an arena of

[53]Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 255.

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debate and discussion such as a modern global civil society? Cavanaugh is unhappy with the term, but his alternative political model of the church in the Eucharist does not provide us with a strong alternative. The church remains a prophetic voice, one challenging authority through its own perfectionist logic, a voice of alternative theology and politics—but it is still a member of a civil society distinct from the state.

William Cavanaugh's critique of the state also leaves modern Christians in an uneasy place. How does the modern Christian interpret Jesus Christ's injunction to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's? If the state is an artificial construct of the wars of the 1500s and 1600s, and has unjustly usurped, constrained, and colonized the universal church, how far does it have the right to assert its authority? Was Jesus referring to the state when he made this claim? Was he not in fact declaring the separation of church and state or was he making a pronouncement in the absence of the modern state? Or is it simply that the state must be constrained against the wanton use of violent means?

I have suggested here that Cavanaugh's coverage of the state suffers on a few counts. His theory of the state assumes that the state remains what it was originally created to be. He gives little attention to the evolution of the tradition of separation of church and state out of the theoretical perspectives of Christians themselves. He takes aim primarily at the coercive apparatus of the state without answering important questions about the myriad of other responsibilities that states take on. His theory remains concerned primarily with the state but leaves out the many contenders for legitimacy that reside outside the state. It is also founded on an exalted notion of the church as a sacred community that is not particularly well suited to the history of the church universal on earth. In the final analysis, Cavanaugh thus eliminates the state and, more importantly, civil society from their constructive roles in the world. He replaces them with an exalted notion of the church that is not likely to be attractive to nonbelievers and may not match up to the experience of believers either.

Still, Cavanaugh is right to give us pause about the permeation of the state throughout modern society. It is certainly possible that the extension of the modern state into the management of social life in deeper and deeper ways sows the seeds of its own crisis of legitimacy. These challenges do not simply come from Islamist radicalism but from citizens who share much of the Western liberal heritage and its motivations. I have suggested that the statist and corporatist approach may need reassessment. As liberal-democratic states increasingly take on postmodern aims that are not seemingly as ethically dubious as warfare and internal enforcement, the problematic that Cavanaugh has opened up for us becomes more complex but equally significant.

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