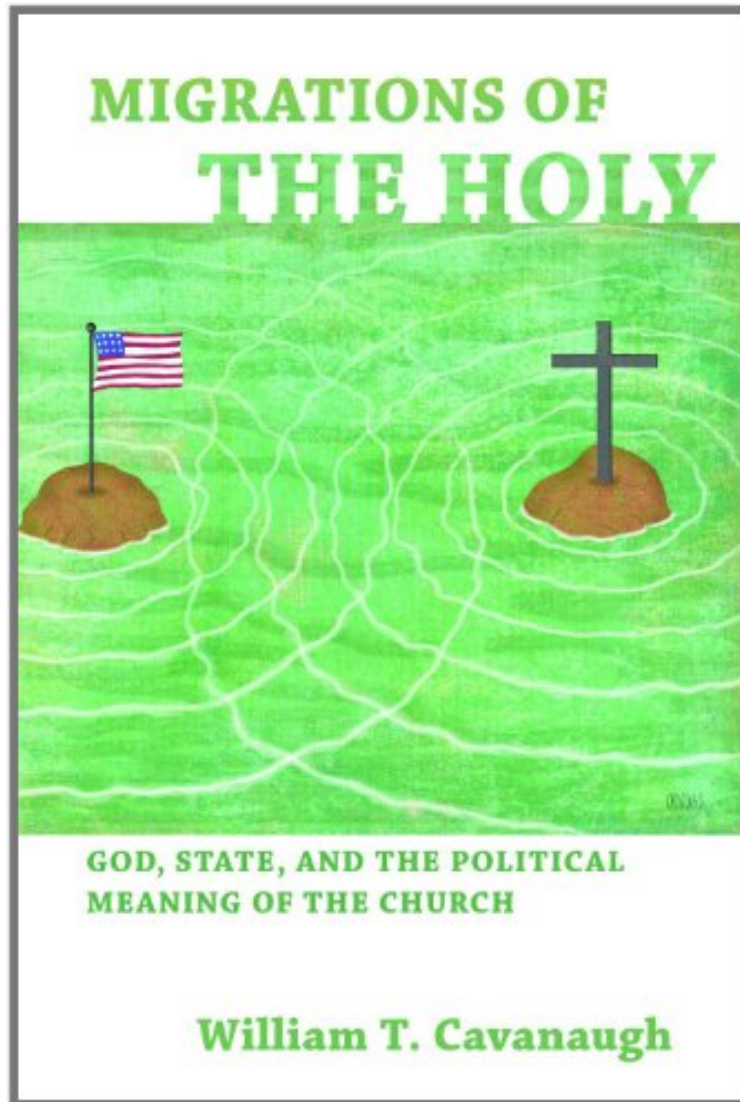


Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church

William T. Cavanaugh

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#284289 in Books William T Cavanaugh 2011-02-10Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .53 x 6.00l, .65 #File Name: 0802866093208 pagesMigrations of the Holy God State and the Political Meaning of the Church | File size: 41.Mb

William T. Cavanaugh : Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church:

28 of 31 people found the following review helpful. Best In Its FieldBy N. RoarkI struggled with the decision of

whether to rate this book 4 or 5 stars. As I say in the title, this book is the best I've read in its field, which should surely necessitate a five-star rating. And if I rate it too low, it is only because Cavanaugh raises both expectations and possibilities in the area of political theology with this book, but does not quite manage to achieve them. Having read all of Cavanaugh's books and having heard him speak several times, I was impressed with his writing here. Here is a book that would satisfy professional theologians while remaining accessible to non-academics. In terms of the content, Cavanaugh presents one sustained argument for relocating the church's politics within its own political identity. He does this by touching briefly (his pacing is flawless) on a large number of common topics and common names in political theology: America/democracy/freedom as an object of worship, just-war doctrine, the problem of the sinfulness of the church, the problem of the church's history involving torture, the church's position in relation to nationalism and globalism, and the best account I've seen of Augustine's City of God in its application to contemporary political theology. Where *Migrations of the Holy* stands apart from other books addressing similar subjects is in the clarity of its central theme and the practicality of the view it articulates. The only thing that moves the book from 5 to 4 stars in my mind is the fact that it lacks a final conclusion that would tie all the pieces together and begin the process of giving the abstract idea concrete form. This was doubly disconcerting because Cavanaugh does such a good job of pointing toward this eventual conclusion, and the reader sees it coming just around the next corner, when the book ends on a purely theoretical note. The most concrete suggestions come tantalizingly in the center of the book (relocating the just-war tradition from the nation-state to the church, for instance), with no final form. Still, I am confident this book will set a new standard for writing about the political nature of the church, and no writer on political theology will be able to ignore *Migrations of the Holy* and its clear challenge to any who would either "translate" or privatize the Christian faith.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A must read for American Christians
By James D. Hudson, Jr. Cavanaugh has produced a great book, addressing one of the key areas of importance in the American church today: the idolatrous relationship between the church and the state, and how the church has surrendered so much to the American nation. This is a must read!
17 of 21 people found the following review helpful. Good start and finish
By D. Layman Cavanaugh gives us a useful survey of the latest thinking in political theology from a left/radical Catholic perspective. There are some useful and illuminating discussions here. The ones I found helpful, in the order given: (1) the origins of the nation state, and its relation to war and society, and how the state has become omniscient in structuring our lives; (2) there is some interesting theologizing in the chapter that attempts to account for the sinfulness of the church Christologically, using the insights of Lohfink, Nicholas Healy and Balthasar; (3) the relationship between the life of the church and contemporary democracy, examined through the debates among Hauerwas, Stout, and Romand Coles. This was for me the strongest chapter. Those 3 discussions constitute the first, and last two chapters of the book. Everything in between is, for me, much weaker. I have two primary problems. The first discussion of the nation-state is Eurocentric, and doesn't take account of the uniquely American mode of the state (federalism, religious pluralism). Ch. 4 tries to address this with a "Theological Critique of American Exceptionalism," but I don't find it convincing. There is a dialectical quality to American Exceptionalism. It is not "Christian," but *almost* Christian. The messianic actions of the community are mediated through its pluralistic and "democratic" polity. The politics and history of this messianic ideal is much more ambiguous than his analysis would indicate. He seems to think that the errors of messianism are all on the conservative side, whereas the left-radical movements in American society drink from the same well. He attacks the conservative appropriation of freedom as a way of acting Christianly in public affairs, but then develops a model of Christian involvement in democracy as "dialogical engagement and receptive generosity (conclusion last chapter)." It is not clear why his appropriation of American practice of freedom is better than, more Christian, or less theologically problematic than the conservative one. The second problem I have is that his solutions are always left-radical. The theologizing is good, and the solutions are defensible. But the grounding appears arbitrary: he doesn't convince me that his theologizing leads to THESE solutions. Also, I find it hard to believe that the religious left always lives up to its own standards--"dialogical engagement and receptive generosity." I kept thinking: "physician, heal yourself." Three stars for 3 interesting discussions.

Whether one thinks that "religion" continues to fade or has made a comeback in the contemporary world, there is a common notion that "religion" went away somewhere, at least in the West. But William Cavanaugh argues that religious fervor never left -- it has only migrated toward a new object of worship. In *Migrations of the Holy* he examines the disconcerting modern transfer of sacred devotion from the church to the nation-state. In these chapters Cavanaugh cautions readers to be wary of a rigid separation of religion and politics that boxes in the church and sends citizens instead to the state for hope, comfort, and salvation as they navigate the risks and pains of mortal life. When nationality becomes the primary source of identity and belonging, he warns, the state becomes the god and idol of its own religion, the language of nationalism becomes a liturgy, and devotees willingly sacrifice their lives to serve and defend their country. Cavanaugh urges Christians to resist this form of idolatry, to unthink the inevitability of the nation-state and its dreary party politics, to embrace radical forms of political pluralism that privilege local communities -- and to cling to an incarnational theology that weaves itself seamlessly and tangibly into all aspects of

daily life and culture. Read more about the book in a blog post by Cavanaugh on EerdWord.

Luke Bretherton King's College London "In these essays William Cavanaugh continues to provide leadership and vision in the field of political theology. He addresses essential questions about the religious status of the nation-state, the political character of the church, and how the tradition of Christian political thought might be brought to bear upon contemporary politics. In doing so Cavanaugh unfolds a theological response to present political conditions and a political response to our theological condition."Robert Benne Center for Religion and Society, Roanoke College
"Another vigorous but distinct voice in the burgeoning conversation about the role of religion generally and the church specifically in political life. . . Worth a careful read."