

Week 7: Theology of Communication and Politics

Church and World

Intro:

Last Week: Everyone builds toward a *telos*, i.e. some goal/end that is simultaneously a destination and a description of the good to be pursued in our action. We noted that the true *telos* is the glorification of God through the obedient reception of the whole history God has given to creation, including the specific part he has given each of us within it. That history stretches from the origin of all things, through Israel, to Christ, and ultimately to the Last Day that will consummate Christ's Resurrection and Lordship and on which God will judge whether our building has built on Christ according to his concrete will for each of us. We also noted that in this whole process of building toward to final *telos* of the Last Day, we are "priests" who take up the given "material" realities of creation into the spiritual history that presents it to God with praise and thanksgiving.

Key Transition: as noted, within this Good of the history that draws creation toward its ultimate goal, God assigns *different* concrete histories to specific people and communities.

- Corollary 1: we cannot confuse God's "mandates" for one community with his mandates to other communities. In particular, we cannot confuse God's mandates to the Church *as Church* with his mandates for *the world* which by definition does not belong to the people of God whose specific core, mandated form IS faith.
- Corollary 2: we likewise cannot confuse the REALITY God works in one community with the REALITY he works in another. They are different forms of community/communication [*koinonia*].

The Specific Reality of the Church's *Koinonia*

1 John 1:3 "we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship [*koinonia*] with us; and truly our fellowship [*koinonia*] is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

1 Cor 10:16 "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation [*koinonia*] in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation [*koinonia*] in the body of Christ?"

What core dynamic and form are detailed here as the "reality" of the Church?

OOD3: "[T]he church is also and supremely the 'communication of the Holy Spirit' (2 Cor 13:14). It is the Spirit which the church shares; yet the Spirit is also the ground for sharing everything else "*in the Spirit.*" In holding the Spirit as common possession, the church is possessed as community by the Spirit. There may also, unhappily, be *koinonia* in demons (1 Cor 10:20). But in the *koinonia* of the Spirit the church's unity is assured, for it is the characteristic only of the 'dumb' spirits of pagan worship that they lead spirit-possessed individuals off 'in all directions' (1 Cor 12:2). Within the church the spiritual endowments and contributions of individual members converge upon a common life and a common confession, "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 12:3), and individual

communications of various kinds are 'distributions' (*diairesis*, 12:4-6), particular performances within the divine operation of a single whole."

What core dynamic and form are detailed here as the "reality" of the Church?

What is the difference between a "form" and a "dynamic"?

How does it change our view of what the Church IS to think of it in terms of each of these (form, dynamic)? Do we need BOTH terms to adequately understand the reality of "Church"?

Church and World, Differentiated

John 17:14 "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

CAN the world have the form and dynamic described as foundational to the Church's life?

John 18:36 "Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.'"

How else does Jesus differentiate the *form and dynamic* of the church's reality from that of the world in this passage?

The “City” of the People of God

Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16 “⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God... ¹³These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.”

Hebrews 13:14 “here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.”

Where is “the city of God,” and what effect does this knowledge have on our life in this world?

Ephesians 2:11-19 “¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *commonwealth* of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has *made us both one* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might *reconcile us both to God in one body* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,^[a] but you are *fellow citizens* with the saints and members of the *household of God*...”

What does this passage imply about the nature of the church?

The City of God and the Earthly City

St. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, Book XIX, Chapter 17 (part 1): “But the families which do not live by faith seek their peace in the earthly advantages of this life; while the families which live by faith look for those eternal blessings which are promised...The earthly city, which does not live by faith, seeks an earthly peace, and the end [*telos!*]it proposes, in the well-ordered concord of civic obedience and rule, is the combination of men's wills to attain the things which are helpful to this life...[but the heavenly peace] alone can be truly called and esteemed the peace of the reasonable creatures, consisting as it does in the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God and of one another in God”

How does Augustine define the *telos* pursued by the earthly city, in contrast to the *telos* pursued by the church as foretaste of the heavenly city?

City of God XIX.17, part II: “But the families which do not live by faith seek their peace in the earthly advantages of this life; while the families which live by faith look for those eternal blessings which are promised, and use as pilgrims such advantages of time and of earth as do not fascinate and divert them from God, but rather aid them to endure with greater ease, and to keep down the number of those burdens of the corruptible body which weigh upon the soul. Thus the things necessary for this mortal life are used by both kinds of men and families alike, but each has its own peculiar and widely different aim in using them. The earthly city, which does not live by faith, seeks an earthly peace, and the end it proposes, in the well-ordered concord of civic obedience and rule, is the combination of men's wills to attain the things which are helpful to this life. The heavenly city, or rather the part of it which sojourns on earth and lives by faith, makes use of this peace only because it must, until this mortal condition which necessitates it shall pass away. Consequently, so long as it lives like a captive and a stranger in the earthly city, though it has already received the promise of redemption, and the gift of the Spirit as the earnest of it, it makes no scruple to obey the laws of the earthly city, whereby the things necessary for the maintenance of this mortal life are administered; and thus, as this life is common to both cities, so there is a harmony between them in regard to what belongs to it.

What basic form(s) of interaction does Augustine see between Church and World?

Augustine, *City of God* XIX.26: “Wherefore, as the life of the flesh is the soul, so the blessed life of man is God, of whom the sacred writings of the Hebrews say, Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord. Miserable, therefore, is the people which is alienated from God. Yet even this people has a peace of its own which is not to be lightly esteemed, though, indeed, it shall not in the end enjoy it, because it makes no good use of it before the end. But it is our interest that it enjoy this peace meanwhile in this life; for as long as the two cities are commingled, we also enjoy the peace of Babylon. For from Babylon the people of God is so freed that it meanwhile sojourns in its company. And therefore the apostle also admonished the Church to pray for kings and those in authority, assigning as the reason, that we may live a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and love. And the prophet Jeremiah, when predicting the captivity that was to befall the ancient people of God, and giving them the divine command to go obediently to Babylonia, and thus serve their God, counselled them also to pray for Babylonia, saying, In the peace thereof shall you have peace, Jeremiah 29:7 — the temporal peace which the good and the wicked together enjoy.”

So what is the biblical basis?

***City of God* XIX.17, part III:** “But, as the earthly city has had some philosophers whose doctrine is condemned by the divine teaching, and who, being deceived either by their own conjectures or by demons, supposed that many gods must be invited to take an interest in human affairs...and as the celestial city, on the other hand, knew that one God only was to be worshipped, and that to Him alone was due that service which the Greeks call λατρεία, and which can be given only to a god, it has come to pass that the two cities could not have common laws of religion, and that the heavenly city has been compelled in this matter to dissent, and to become obnoxious to those who think differently, and to stand the brunt of their anger and hatred and persecutions, except in so far as the minds of their enemies have been alarmed by the multitude of the Christians and quelled by the manifest protection of God accorded to them. This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace. It therefore is so far from rescinding and abolishing these diversities, that it even preserves and adopts them, so long only as no hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God is thus introduced. Even the heavenly city, therefore, while in its state of pilgrimage, avails itself of the peace of earth, and, so far as it can without injuring faith and godliness, desires and maintains a common agreement among men regarding the acquisition of the necessaries of life, and makes this earthly peace bear upon the peace of heaven; for this alone can be truly called and esteemed the peace of the reasonable creatures, consisting as it does in the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God and of one another in God. When we

shall have reached that peace, this mortal life shall give place to one that is eternal, and our body shall be no more this animal body which by its corruption weighs down the soul, but a spiritual body feeling no want, and in all its members subjected to the will. In its pilgrim state the heavenly city possesses this peace by faith; and by this faith it lives righteously when it refers to the attainment of that peace every good action towards God and man; for the life of the city is a social life.”

How do Church and World relate, here?

Tension: (how much) does ultimate *telos* in Christ-life reshape earthly goods?

Upshot: what is the effect of this difference on the church-world relation?

Related Tensions in Lutheranism:

Luther/Lutherans will often propose a fairly strong distinction between the following:

Creation	Salvation/Christ
Body	Soul
Earthly Goods	Spiritual Goods – faith, forgiveness, etc.
“Temporal” Life	“Spiritual/Eternal” Life
Law	Gospel
<i>Reason</i> in common with others	<i>Faith</i> in specifics of Gospel

Resulting Problems:

- This stops the “referring” of all things to God, which Aug highlights; it ignores all the ways the ultimate end negates earthly goods; it ignores the ways the Word of God gives these things specific forms (e.g. family life is always to be the life of a Christian family raising disciples of Jesus); in short, it ignores the history that establishes the *actual* form life is to take at any given point in God’s ordained history.

- As a result, it gives us two competing ends: sometimes we act to “earthly ends” *in pretty much the same way everyone else does*; other times, we are doing a “spiritual thing.” (Stanley Hauerwas: Lutheran “schizophrenia”)
- It also leads us to misunderstand why others don’t have our views about the earthly matters, because we think everyone has a common view of “creation/nature,” whereas in fact, even our views of creation/nature are *actually based on revelation and the specifics of life in Christ, from the origin to consummation of Creation’s history.*

But also...in the world?

Amos 9:7 “Are you not like the Cushites to me, O people of Israel?” declares the Lord. “Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?”

What *dynamic* does this passage indicate to be at work *also in the world*?

So is *the world* a “static form”? Or, can it be brought *to some degree* into the form and dynamics of the Church / heavenly city? Can you think of examples where this has happened *historically*?