In his seminal work, *The Politics of Jesus (1972)*, John Howard Yoder re-examined the slogan of the 1948 Amsterdam Assembly "let the church be the church." More specifically, Yoder was arguing for the "centrality of the church" as a "social strategy." According to Yoder, to the degree that the church becomes a "restored society," it does so *for the sake* of an authentic witness in the greater society.

> The church must be a sample of the kind of humanity which, for example, economic and racial differences are surmounted. Only then will it have anything to say to the society that surrounds it about how those difference must be dealt with. [1]

Since Yoder penned his idea concerning the centrality of the counter cultural church as a social strategy, the church in the West is beginning to understand its new situation as a disenfranchised minority in an increasingly post-Christian *and* post-liberal world. That is to say that while the *social* significance of northern hemisphere Christianity is undergoing a steady decline, however you want to measure it, there is an emergent rediscovery of the critical role of the local and counter-cultural positioned Christian congregation for the sake of ethical formation and even public contribution. David Fergusson has observed that "the emergence of pluralism and secularism in the late-twentieth century have led to the breakdown of any clear Christian consensus under girding the standards, assumptions, and policies of multiracial and multi-religious societies." He further acknowledged that the present social predicament "has led to calls for greater Christian authenticity " wherein "we can no longer assume that Christian ethics simply endorses what everyone recognizes to be good for human beings *qua* human being." And to the point of this present essay, Fergusson contends:

> The time has therefore come to bear witness to the specific virtues of the Christian life through reference to its setting within the church under the guidance of Holy Scripture and the lordship of Jesus Christ. Christian witness in this social context bears the character not of seeking common ground with those who dwell *extra muros ecclesiae* [outside the walls of the church] but of articulating a vision that is distinctively and sometimes counter to the prevailing

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[1] Yoder, John Howard, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd Edition (Eerdmans: Grand Rabids, Michigan, (1972), p. 150-152.

culture."[2]

Simply stated, the aim of this study is to explore this so-called "post-liberal" vision vis-à-vis the centrality of the counter cultural (as distinguished from anti-culture) church as a social strategy in the context of a post-Christian world. It will be discovered how the "post-liberal" vision has all but abandoned the idea of Christendom and the eschatological vision of modern liberal millennialism. Such an idea, it will be argued, sought to "correlate the moral ethos of the church and civil society" leading to the demise of "ecclesial identity" and subsequently "a failure in Christian witness."[3] Moreover, and contrary to H.R. Niebuhr's depiction in his highly influential typology, *Christ and Culture*, a brief survey of the Calvinistic tradition will make the case for a distinctively "reformed" pedigree of the post-liberal idea of "Christ and Culture in Paradox," even if for the sake of transforming culture indirectly. A reflection of the implications of this strategy for social ethics will be explored as a conclusion.

The Post-Liberal Vision Defined:

In a recent lecture at Yale University, Stephen Carter observed how "conflict is the principal way in which religion and democracy relate, and may be the principal way in which they *should* relate." What Carter didn't mean was that religion is opposed to the state, or necessarily to any one vision of society per se. Rather, as he further explained about the American context, "American styled separation owes its origin not to a sense of the danger of religion but a sense of the importance of religion. They were separated because a mixing of the two had a tendency of corrupting the true faith."[4] To be sure, anyone who is familiar with Stephen Carter's writing knows that his point is not to rid the public square of the religious voice or influence.[5] Rather, Carter's concern is to preserve the authenticity and clarity of the religious voice and influence. And more specifically, his point is that to loose the integrity of the "true faith" from the context of an alien (relative to the state) communal context is to loose

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[2] David Ferguson, *Community, Liberalism and Christian Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.1-2.
[3] Ferguson, *Community...*, p. 5.
[4] Stephen Carter, The Role of Religion in a Political Democracy,
[5] c.f Stephen Carter,

the integrity of that very witness that is the single most vital hope in the maintenance of a good state and society even. It is the danger of a totalitarian nation state, even if expressed vis-à-vis the populism of a sovereign electorate and its corresponding political rhetoric, that warrant the preservation of a distinctively "other" voice in society.

Perhaps the most vocal proponent of a "post-liberal" perspective in America concerning Christian ethics is Stanley Hauerwas. He, in turn, very candidly acknowledges his indebtedness to John Howard Yoder. As explained by Hauerwas, "prior to Yoder the subject of Christian ethics in America was always America." As further explained by Hauerwas, modern liberalism was the context for the "social gospelers," and "the ethics of Christianizing the social order." As such, "the social gospel spawned ethicists who became social scientist, or at least read social science in the interest of social transformation." "In this mode," says Hauerwas, "Christian ethics continues, but it [became] increasingly difficult to say what makes it Christian. Indeed, the effort to discover the relationship between policy questions or basic moral principles and theological warrants now preoccupies many ethicists."[6] It should be noted on the outset that this description is *not* description of one or the other side of political or social ideology, in that it could readily be demonstrated that the language of "Christian" is co-opted in the interest of both red and blue America agendas.

In other words, and in relation to Carter's earlier point, a totalitarian theocracy can exist whether in the context of a partisan monarchy or a partisan democracy, whenever the agenda is primarily to Christianize the social order as to tie the Christian voice to one or another social vision necessarily.[7] Whether under the guise of a Christian Monarch, or the Christian right (or left) in American styled partisan politics, "Christian" is increasingly loosing anything distinctive with respect to its own "politic" and "polis" as it where. It is therefore into this context of the so called "Christian

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[6] Stanley Hauerwas, "John Howard Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus."* It could be observed at this point that the so called "social gospel", while often identified with social and even theological liberalism, was historically an outgrowth of evangelical revivalism. C.f. George Marsden. As Marsden has pointed out, the relation of "social transformation" and the church is the same, whether reflecting the agenda of the political "right" or "left." AS a theological/ecclesial topic, it concerns the church in so far as it has as its mission the tranformation of society *directly through political and social* activism that is shared on both sides that Yoder and Hauerwas are concerned.

[7] c.f. for the distinction between theocratic monarchy and theocratic populism, see below the Scottish reformation compared to the American Civil war.

ethics" movement from the vantage point of Christendom that Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus* was introduced, as from the "sectarian badlands" says Hauerwas (in his customary *tongue and cheek* manner). Contrary to the focus on the Christianization of America, Yoder's ethical vision emphasized how "both the subject and the audience of Christian ethics are Christians -- the people who are constituted by that polity called church."[8]

In hearing the perspective of Hauerwas and Yoder, one can readily discern the *post-liberal* point of view espoused by the so called Yale School advocates such as Hans Frei and George Lindbeck. In reference to George Lindbeck's influence in post-liberal theology for instance, David Fergusson observes:

> IN a time of increasing dissociation between church and society, Lindbeck argues that the Christian future will be a sectarian one. The primary task of the church is not to baptize whatever elements of secular culture seem most religiously promising. Its task is to make greater Christian authenticity possible by socializing its members into a new way of life. This way of life is structured by the canonical texts of the community and the ways in which they recite the stories of Israel and the church. These stories, as they are read and followed by the church, have the communal power to shape belief, experience and action.[9]

This description of the "Yale School" perspective in Christian ethics, in so far as it is primarily an emphasis upon "ecclesial ethics," is predicated upon a theological premise as concerns the epistemological and hermeneutical importance of the communal narrative as a basis for belief and ethics. It is identified with the term "post-liberal" in so far as it distances itself from the individualistic emphasis of classic and enlightenment oriented liberalism concerning it's epistemological emphasis on the "unencumbered self." In the post-liberal shift from liberalism, there was a philosophical shift back to an understanding of community as a basis for forming and believing universal truths.

That is to say, according to this post-liberal epistemology, there is a kind of knowledge that cannot be known by the study of propositional texts alone, but by participation in the communal "texts" of a social *narrative*. For if, it is argued, we are inherently rational *qua* "human," we are also at our core communal such that some

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[8] Stanley Hauerwas, "John Howard Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus*"
[9] David Fergusson, *Community, Liberalism and Christian Ethics* p. 35

things can be known only by participating (communing) within a community. Belief and ethics as such is not something we attain to individually based on the enlightenment's optimism concerning the power of individualism and human reason. Rather, faith and ethics as such is viewed as emerging from *within* the "text" of communal life, rituals and teaching—the very context wherein faith was historically discovered in pre-modern history. The way George Lindbeck describes it, "Christian conversion," contrary to the modern-individualistic oriented order of things looked like this in early Christianity:

> *Pagan converts to the [Christian] mainstream did not, for the most part, first understand the faith and then decide to become Christians; rather, the process was reversed: they first decided and then they understood. More precisely, they were first attracted by the Christian community and form of life… they submitted themselves to prolonged catechetical instruction in which they practiced new modes of behavior and learned the stories of Israel and their fulfillment in Christ. Only after they had acquired proficiency in the alien Christian language and form of life were they deemed able intelligently and responsibly to profess the faith, to be baptized.[10]*

With then an emphasis on the formative importance of communal narrative upon faith and ethics, the "Yale School" naturally placed a greater emphasis on the centrality of the church in relation to Christian witness and social justice even. In relation to Christian ethics, Robert Jones has succinctly summarized the post-liberal counter to liberalism in the following way:

> The post-liberal critique of liberalism is that it promotes isolated individual selves endowed with rights but few responsibilities, universal truths independent of particular (communal) narratives, and an almost-blind optimism about progress and the promise of human reason; above all it is a tradition that has lost a distinctive theological voice through cultural accommodation. Post-liberalism resists each of these and emphasizes community, narrative, skepticism about human reason, and distinctiveness. If the motto of modern liberal Christianity was to "Christianize the social order" through work for social justice, the motto of post-liberal theology is "to let the church be the church" (Hauerwas 1983).[11]

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[10] George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 132c.f. A redemptie historical survey seems to support Lindbeck's point, if but one observes, for instance, the centrality of "temple" in both the Old and New Testaments wherein God is over and over again said to be present in the midst of the people in their communal gatherings, and it became the means by which people believed in God!   [c.f. the story of the early church in Act 2:1-47, note especially vs. 44-47, and then a more theological discourse about the relation of faith to participation in the life of God in, with and through the "temple" of the New Testament church in Ephesians 2:1- 22.]

[11] Robert P. Jones The unintended consequences of Dixieland Postliberalism,

New Testament ethics, as such, is viewed not primarily in individualistic terms, but communally, or better yet, as ecclesial ethics. As noted by Richard Hayes, there is an "ecclesial basis and orientation" in Biblical ethics.[12] Apart from the fundamental "ecclesial" character in Pauline ethics, "Paul's ethic can only appear to be what many critics have thought it to be: a haphazard conglomeration of moral notions drawn eclectically from the commonplaces of his time."[13] Instead, Hayes states:

> Paul nowhere sets forth a systematic presentation of "Christian ethics." Instead, he responds ad hoc to the contingent pastoral problems that arise in his churches… he is seeking to shape the life of a particular community in accordance with his vision; his exhortations are aimed at defining and maintaining a corporate identity for his young churches, which are emphatically countercultural communities. Thus, his letters should be read primarily as instruments of community formation… Indeed, the focus on community is a part of the gospel itself. How so? If we ask, "What is God doing in the world in the interval between resurrection and *parousia*?" The answer must be given, for Paul, primarily in ecclesial terms: God is at work through the Spirit to create communities that prefigure and embody the reconciliation and healing of the world.[14]

It should be observed from the above descriptions that a post-liberal ethic is not, as some have portrayed it, "church against the world." Rather, the language of ecclesial "polis" is crucial to this vision, as it highlights the idea that the church must be both, and at the same time, separate but public. It is the church that maintains its unique Christian identity of being corporately and ethically *not of this world* albeit while its membership participates in "in the world" *and* both *for sake of the world* in so far as the Church is "witness" and the individual Christian functions directly as an activist-transformer of culture. Such a vision will stress the *a*-political (vs. *non* or *anti* political)nature of the church when acting in its joint or corporate capacity. Such a church, it is believed, stands to have the greatest social-political impact through its informed and re-formed membership who are acting severally and actively within society for social change. Whereas the church acting jointly is as "witness," vis-à-vis its own communal expression and practice, the church dispersed through its

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[12] Richard Hayes, *Ecclesiology and Ethics in 1 Corinthians*, p. 4
[13] Ibid, p. 1.
[14] Hayes, p. 1-2.

membership is acting severally and directly and even politically for the sake of whatever vision for social mercy and justice is inspired by the Christian witness of the church. Along these lines, David Fergusson in his recently published *Church, State and Civil Society* describes the post-liberal "counter-cultural church" this way:

> It exists not to withdraw people from the surrounding society but to transform it. Hence it is not detachment that is advocated but a more dialectical form of engagement. Descriptions of the so-called sect churches, for example in Troeltsh and H. Richard Niebuhr, tend to overlook the point that a selective, critical, appraisal of society is called for on distinctively Christian grounds.[15]

Along these lines, Fergusson advocates for a kind of modification in post-liberal ethics wherein through the formation of "subsidiary" (or intermediary) faith based organizations, there is a organized presence that can mediate the church vision into the social context without compromise to the ideal church or state.   This intermediary (in American terms, separate 503(c) regulated organization) is capable of exploring the social and political ramifications of the Christian vision that stand between the ecclesial witness of the corporate counter-cultural church and the Christian activist (individual) as a transformer within society. Such organizations are inspired by the social vision it sees and understands from within the church, albeit outwardly focused on the needs outside the church. He explains, for instance, the role of intermediary organization on behalf of social welfare as follows:

> The inclusion of the voluntary sector may also be seen as another expression of subsidiarity. Its value resides not only in enhancing welfare provision but also in promoting social capital, facilitating local forms of community, providing fora for debate, and fostering skills in citizenship.[16]

In short, the post-liberal vision for the counter-cultural church *for the sake* of the culture transcends the kind of Neibuhrian and Troeltsh depictions of the counter cultural church. Richard Hayes, for instance, has observed how "theological ethics in the Niebuhrian tradition rendered Jesus and the gospels mute and irrelevant and thus left the church free to conform itself to the political and economic conventions of its surrounding environment. Once the diagnosis was made, the remedy was clear: the

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[15] (p, 100)

[16] Ferguson, p. 145.

church should be directly guided by the teaching and example of Jesus, not by prudentially calculated approximations of the ideals of love and justice." And characteristic of the post-liberal emphasis upon the role of the local community in ethical and moral formation for the sake of society even, Hayes further confesses with respect to his own conversion to a post-liberal way of thinking:

> I began to grasp more fully that Jesus was not a figure who preached religious ideas that might or might not have political implications; rather, he called followers to a way of life that necessarily entailed the formation of a new *polis*. The kingdom of God was not merely a figure of speech; it was a claim about the concrete manifestation of divine sovereignty in the world.[17]

According then to a post-liberal vision of the church, Fergusson declares that the classic dichotomy between Ernest Troeltch's "sect-type" and "church-type" forms of Christian organization (c.f.*The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches)* needs to be challenged. For if Troeltch's church-type organization "accepts the prevailing social order, tends toward universality and seeks to dominate the masses," then the sect-type organization "tends to organize itself into small groups, eschews secular domination, and tends to shun state and civil society. It operates on a principle of detachment from the world." And yet, Fergusson argues, such a dichotomy does not take into account a pre-Christian or post-Christian context wherein the reality is that a subgroup (local congregation) "may seek to distance itself from the prevailing culture *in order to* make a distinctive contribution to its self understanding and to provide agents better equipped to contribute to its well-being." And to be clear, contrary to the characterization of Trosuch's "sect church" or Niebuhr's "Christ and Culture in Paradox," the "mission of the church is directed toward the world" says Fergusson, even if by remaining institutionally "out of the world" so that its impact is by *indirect* contribution rather than by direct contribution![18] Here again, Richard Hayes recalls in his own journey toward the post-liberal perspective.

> Theological ethics in the Niebuhrian tradition rendered Jesus and the gospels mute and irrelevant and thus left the church free to conform itself to the political and economic conventions of its surrounding environment. Once the diagnosis was made, the remedy was clear: the church should be directly

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[17] (Richard Hayes, *Gospel and Community*
[18] Fergusson, p.100

guided by the teaching and example of Jesus, not by prudentially calculated approximations of the ideals of love and justice. I began to see that this perspective implied a fundamental critique not only of the mainline establishment church but also of the left-wing politics that had shaped my thinking during my undergraduate years.[19]

A Reformed Pedigree for the Counter Cultural Church?

Having described the so called "post-liberal" vision as concerning the counter-cultural church—or what Hayes has defined as a Christian ethic that is synonymous to "ecclesial ethics," a curious question emerges: Is the so called "post-liberal" vision for ethics necessarily "sectarian" as per the vision of the counter-reformation, or can it be located within the reformed tradition as well?   And to be sure, and perhaps largely due to the widespread influence of Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*, the post-liberal vision for Christian ethics is most often identified as a "sectarian" emphasis in relation to the counter-reformation vision of "Christ against culture" traditions. Anecdotally, one thinks of John Howard Yoder, Richard Hayes,[20] William H. Willimon and perhaps most popularly Stanley Hauerwas as those who would credit the counter reformation with at least some of their way of thinking.[21]   And perhaps too one could broaden the theological pedigree to include the Lutheran "two kingdom" view or Niebuhr's "Christ and Culture in Paradox." Again anecdotally, one things of George Lindbeck[22] and Hans Frei of the so called "Yale school" in narrative theology, and even Lutheran sociologist Peter Berger,[23]   But what of the Reformed tradition? Can one locate a vision for the counter-cultural church as a social strategy for social *transformation* within the reformed tradition?

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[19] Richard Hayes

[20] Richard Hayes, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* (San Francisco: Harper SanFrancisco, 1996.), *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 587 Embodying the Gospel in Community.

[21] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon. *Resident aliens, life in the Christian colony : a provocative Chrisitian assessment of culture and ministry for people who know that something is wrong* Nashville : Abingdon Press, c1989. Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian existence today : essays on church, world, and living in between.* (Durham, N.C. : Labyrinth Press, c1988). *After Christendom? : how the church is to behave if freedom, justice, and a Christian nation are bad ideas*, (Nashville : Abingdon Press, c1991). *Unleashing the scripture : freeing the Bible from captivity to America*, Nashville, Tenn. : Abingdon Press, c1993

[22] Lindbeck, George, *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (London: SCM, 2002)

[23] Berger, Peter, "The Descecularization of the World; A global Overview" in Peter Berger (ed.) *The Desecularization of the World World: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

Indeed, there has been a recent reappraisal of the classic Niebuhrian typologies in *Christ and Culture* as within the post-liberal *and* reformed camp.[24] There are, to be sure, various "post-liberal" voices across traditional lines that are increasingly advocating for a Christian inspired vision for social transformation (Niebuhr's "Christ the Transformer of Culture") *by means of* the counter-culturally positioned local congregation. By way of an historical context for a reformed expression of what we have labeled the "post-liberal" vision,. one thinks of the 20th century reformed theologians Karl Barth[25] and Dietrich Bonhoeffer amidst Nazi Germany, or the 19th century Presbyterians during the American Civil war, or the 17th century Presbyterians during the Scottish Reformation, or John Calvin's vision of church and state in Geneva of the 16th century, and even St. Augustines "two cities" vision during the 5th century under the Roman context?[26] As each of these contexts will suggest, there is arguably a reformed pedigree for the so called "post-liberal" vision, albeit one that is "Christ the transformer" by means of the counter-culturally positioned local congregation. Indeed, "In pleading for a more counter cultural nature of Christianity, one can thus draw upon resources from other periods of ecclesiastical history."[27] Our desire is to briefly consider the historic reformed context, again, even if very cursorily.

Concerning fifth century Rome, Garrett W. Sheldon has observed that "even after Christianity became the official Roman religion under the emperor Constantine I, the duality of civil and religious authority was affirmed by church fathers, such as Saint Augustine, and by Pope Gelasius (492-97)." He further observes:

> This doctrine of dual authority in church and state was referred to as the "two swords" doctrine. Saint Augustine considered all earthly governments, regardless of their form, as representative of the fallen and imperfect "city of man." The state provided the "sword" to discipline sinful man through law and

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[24]). In very general terms, It could be argued that the rather blatant omission by Niebuhr of an ecclesiology—one that distinguishes the actions of the church acting jointly vs. the actions of an individual Christian acting severally, is in essence the great failure of Niebuhr's otherwise brilliant analysis. Darrel Hart, David Fergusson among others. For other "non-reformed" critiques, John Howard Yoder, , "How H. Richard Niebuhr Reasoned: A Critique of Christ and Culture", in Glen H. Stassen, D. M. Yeager and John Howard Yoder (eds.), Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 31-90. ALSO, John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus. (1972*

[25] Barth, Karl, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community", *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings* (London: SCM, 1954)

[26] cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together, The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM, 1948)

[27] Fergusson, p.98

education. The church, for Augustine, represented the perfect and eternal "city of God," preserving the divine, otherworldly values of peace, hope, and charity. Hence, church and state were separate but related: they occupied different realms and held different values, but both existed in this world."

Right off, it is important to address an obvious question in so far as the issue of relevancy is concerned.   To be sure, Augustine's "City of God" was not identical to the church since the church is never "pure" according to Augustine (c.f. Donatast Controversy). Moreover, it was articulated that the members of the city of God were members of *both* the church and the state. But the important thing to observe is that for Augustine, the proper relation of the church to society was in so far as she limites her corporate (joint) activities to those things "spiritual" according to Augustine, in so far as they pertained to the things that concern the "heavenly city" as distinguished from the state that concerned itself with the all things "earthly city."   Notice, then, how Augustine himself defined the two spheres of activity:

> 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.[28]

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[28] St, Augustine, *City of God*, (Book XIX, Chapter 17)

The crucial issue here is to notice that in so far as general society is concerned, it is under the corporate jurisdiction of the state and is not a society that ought to be directly governed by "faith" (or the teachings of scripture per se). In other words, the *city of man*, in so far as it sojourns on earth, is under the jurisdiction of the state and is regulated by a kind of common vision for "civic obedience and rule" which are deemed "helpful to this life." There is even in Augustine room for a people of all faiths and none to live in "earthly peace" according to his vision of society.

The church as such, is defined as a separate organization within society that is a "part of" (but not equal to) the heavenly city... which "sojourns on earth and lives by faith." And clearly for St. Augustine, the church as such is a counter-cultural presence in so far as it exists like "a captive and a stranger in the earthly city," and yet, in a way that seeks for "harmony between" them with respect to their respective spheres. Augustine's vision for the church is quite "counter-cultural" even if also "for the culture."

All together, the two corporate organizations are distinguished by their respective jurisdictions and spheres of activity (acting jointly) even while individuals participate in both (acting severally) as per the proper vision that is related to one or the other sphere. Again, *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.* This sort of distinction between an ecclesial theology as per the subject matter of Christian ethics, and a social theology as per the subject matter of social/civic ethics, is the exact sort of thing that the post-liberal wants to recover.

Turning then to the 16th Century and John Calvin's Geneva, it is again crucial to understand Calvin within his pre-liberal context wherein the idea of religious toleration for the sake of civil peace was not yet conceived of. In other words, whereas Calvin will again, like Augustine, distinguish "ecclesial" from "civil", there was of course no strict separation between "church and state.' As per the overwhelming consensus of pre-enlightenment thinking, and as Calvin articulated in the end of his *Institutes*, religion was considered a universal human phenomenon. And if all peoples are religious, then every society must have a theological alliance such that civil ethics has no alternative but to choose which religion is to be promoted for the glory of God

and the well-being of society. In other words, as noted by David Fergusson, "the idea of state neutrality is still a long way off. It is not possible to conceive of a society which does not favor one form of religion or another."

That being said, while in Geneva, Calvin articulates a distinction between civil and religious jurisdiction and even ethics that is reminiscent of Luther and may have been set out as corrective to the more theocratic model in Zurich. For instance, in the *Institutes* (IV.20) it can be argued that Calvin established a mediating position that attempts to accentuate the transformist and separatist impulses in Zwingli and Ana-Baptist respectively, a position that is much closer to Luther than is typically acknowledged.   For in Calvin's Geneva, the magistrate was a viable Christian vocation as related to the common good and ordained by God for the purpose of civil peace and justice, even as the magistrate was authorized in the exercise of force to maintain a civil society as per Romans 13. And yet, contrary to a "strict theocracy" as some have confused it, Calvin clearly articulated a "two sphere" conception of ethical vision as per the church and state respectively. Here is the way Calvin articulated it:

> Having shown above that there is a twofold government in man, and having fully considered the one which placed in the soul or inward man, relates to eternal life, we are here called to say something of the other, which pertains only to civil institutions and the external regulation of manners… he who knows to distinguish between the body an the soul, between the present fleeting life and that which is future and eternal, will have no difficulty in understanding that the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things very widely separated. Seeing, therefore, it is a Jewish vanity to seek and include the kingdom of Christ under the elements of this world, let us, considering, as Scripture clearly teaches, that the blessings which we derive from Christ are spiritual, remember to confine the liberty which is promised and offered to us in him within its proper limits.[29]

Like Augustine, the church sphere was uniquely concerned with the so called "spiritual" concerns as related to Augustine's "heavenly city." John Calvin specifically distinguished the aims and mission of the civil and ecclesial polis in terms of the respective temporal and spiritual jurisdictions.   Calvin's use of "spiritual" (perhaps derived from Augustine) pertained to the extent of ecclesiastical power and mission as distinguished from the uniquely temporal power and mission of the civil state.

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[29] John Calvin, *Christian Institutes*, 4.20.1.

Perhaps nowhere was the ecclesial/spiritual vision, as distinguished from the state/civil context more clearly set forth in history than in the 16th and early 17th century Scottish reformation.   For in the year 1568 a prominent physician at Heidelburg named Erastus wrote on the subject of the Church and set off a controversy that is very much relevant to the present proposal albeit under very different political context.. Then, the whole controversy concerned the role of the church as distinct from the state to declare who should and should not partake of the Lord's supper (i.e. church membership). In short, the Erastian theory denied the authority of Christ as mediated in a *visible church* by taking the powers of the so called "keys" (jurisdictional authority) from the ecclesial context and giving it to the civil magistrates.

The two most famous documents that refuted the Erastian position were the 1578 Scottish *Second Book of Discipline* and the famous *One Hundred and Eleven Propositions* as were placed by George Gillespie before the Westminster General Assembly of 1647. According then to George Gillespie,

> the great debate was over the proposition, Jesus Christ as King and Head of His church, hath appointed a government in the hands of church officers, distinct from the civil government.[30]

So, for instance, concerning the positive institution of the church by Christ in its spiritual or ecclesial ethic as distinct from the civil ethic, the *Second Book of Discipline* stated:

> The power ecclesiastical is an authoritie granted by God the Father, through the Mediator Jesus Christ, unto his Kirk gathered, and having the ground in the word of God; to be put in execution by them, unto whom the spiritual government of the Kirk be lawful."[31]

We can observe yet again the now familiar language of "spiritual" as related to an ecclesial ethic distinct from the civil.   In similar phraseology to the above citation, the *One Hundred and Eleven Propositions* of 1647 affirmed that

> The political or civil power is grounded upon the law of nature itself, and for that cause it is common to infidels with Christians; the power ecclesiastical

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[30]Quoted from Stuart Robinson's, *True Presbyterian*, "Gillispie's Account of Erastianism" April 10, 1862. See also *The Works of George Gillespie, One of the Commissioners from Scotland to the Westminster Assembly*, Vol. 1 & 2 (reprints by Still Waters Revival Books)

[31]# 5 of the 1578 *Second Book of Discipline*; Printed in *TP* , April 3, 1862.

dependeth immediately upon the positive law of Christ alone; that belongeth to the universal dominion of God the Creator over all nations; but this unto the special and economical kingdom of Christ the Mediator, which he exerciseth in the church alone, and which is not of this world.[32]

In the end, Erastianism was solidly rejected at Westminster when the delegation affirmed the above proposition[33] even adding about the church "out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.[34] And to be clear at this point, it was not that the Scottish vision would appose the church speaking on matters that pertain to general society at large (c.f. John Knox).   It was rather that when the church speaks, she does so no further than scripture speaks, leaving it then to Christians acting severally in their capacity as citizens of the state to locate the necessary inferences in public policy vis-à-vis the influence of so called "common sense" (our social science perhaps?). To be sure, it would be a vision inspired by the communal ethics of the church, but applied in a way that was inclusive of all the whole of society.

The Augustinian, Calvinistic and now Scottish vision for an "ecclesial/spiritual" as distinguished from "civil/state" ethic emerges during the American civil war, even described by some as the doctrine of the "spirituality of the church."   For by 1857, on the eve of America's Civil War, three major religious denominations had already split along regional lines.[35]   Soon after the first shots at Fort Sumter in 1861, another major denomination, the Old School Presbyterian Church, also succumbed to the regional splintering of America's denominations. As interpreted by C.G. Goen, such ecclesiastical splits along sectional lines suspiciously presaged the military conflicts and the human tragedy that would follow.[36] To be sure, even a cursory review of the historiography concerning religion during the American civil war suggests that American religion was politicized in a way that revved up the machinery of sectional strive leading to military warfare.   And yet, and to the present point, there was a

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[32]*# 44 from the One Hundred and Eleven Propositions of 1647*, Printed in *TP* April 3, 1862.
[33] Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 30, section 1-- "Of church Censures"
[34] Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 25, section 1-- "Of The Church"
[35] Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844, National Baptist societies in 1845, New School Presbyterian Split in 1857.
[36] G. C. Goen, Broken Churches, Broken Nation, Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War (Macon, Georgia: Mercer Press, 1985) p. 13

rather sizable minority movement of dissent, and one that involved border state Presbyterians especially, and one that specifically co-opted the Augustinian, Calvinistic and especially Scottish doctrine into the 19th century context of America.

The aforementioned 19th century "spirituality of the church" movement culminated in the Border State Presbyterian "Declaration and Testimony." By means of this document the border state Presbyterians denounced their mother denomination, the Northern Presbyterian Church, for its political activism and eventually led to their joining with the Southern "lost cause" at the end of the war, but only after the Southern church confessed its own "sins" of political activism.   As a movement it sought to resist the tendency to " obliterate all the lines of separation between the civil and ecclesiastical powers" and argued that the "*spiritual* independence of the kingdom of God in this world is a necessity so fundamental that no portion of the visible church has surrendered it without surrendering in an equal degree the spirit of its Divine vocation."[37]

Frequently citing Christ's declaration "my kingdom is not of this world", the so called "Scoto-American" vision was careful to resist actions of the state that infringed upon the actions of the church, but was mostly concerned for the actions of the church with respect to her political activism, especially in so far as this compromised the church in her gospel ethic and witness.   The border state Presbyterians, and the sizable inter-denominational movement from within = both the North and the South that eventually joined them, argued for the maintenance of a prewar, Calvinistic and Scottish ideology regarding an "a-political" church against "the vulgar fire of secular politics" that was said to have infiltrated the church pulpits and church courts such as to "meddle with civil affairs."[38] As summarized by one of the movements most popular leaders, Stuart Robinson, in his letter to President Lincoln:

> I have simply contended, first, on the highest doctrinal grounds that the church had no function touching such (political) questions, and violated fundamentally, her great charter in meddling with them. And secondly, on the grounds of the highest Christian expediency, that the church sinned enormously in thus driving from her ordinances and influences into infidelity

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[37] Ibid., p.37.
[38]   Stuart Robinson, *The True Presbyterian*, April 17, 1862. C.f. "Letter to Theological Students," *The True Presbyterian*, Vol. 1, No. 31, 1863.

and Popery ten millions of the people to whom she has been commissioned to preach the gospel.[39]

Accordingly, and with respect to the politicization of the church during the American civil war, the fight in the 19th century was nothing less than a fight against "Erastianism," albeit under a very different civil context.[40] For according to these Presbyterian's, the threat of "state sovereignty" in the Scottish context had been supplanted by the subtle egalitarian threat of "popular sovereignty" in the American context-- a thesis which has been convincingly argued by Nathan Hatch in *The Democratization of American Christianity* wherein concerning the history of American religion, "a central force has been its democratic or populist orientation... a reassertion of the reality of the supernatural in everyday life linked to the quintessential modern values of autonomy and *popular sovereignty.*"[41]

Again, one of the crucial aspects of this "spirituality of the church" movement was to distinguish the role of the church acting corporately from the role of church members who organize and act severally. As observed in one secular 19th century journal concerning the ethical vision of this movement:

> Individual members of the Church have their responsibilities as citizens and as politicians and their duties are of a totally different sort from those of the church collectively. Their religion should indeed make them better citizens; but their citizenship in this world is one thing, and their citizenship of the great church is another thing. The church owes no allegiance to any earthly power since there is no divided loyalty in it, and no part of the church, in Jerusalem or Antioch, in England or America, on earth or in heaven owes any allegiance which all the other parts do not equally owe. The mistake of confounding the duty of the

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[39] "Letter to President Lincoln," p. 3. (Filson Scrapbooks)

[40]In a journal entitled "The True Presbyterian" published out of Louisville KY, articles to this effect include "The Ancient Presbyterian Theory of the Relation of the Civil to the Ecclesiastical Power-- Testimony of the Scotch Reformers", April 3, 1862; "Theology without a Church", October 29, 1863; "The Style to which the Civil Power Propagates the True Faith", May 1, 1862; "The Battle of Scottish Presbyterianism during three Centuries for a free Christian Commonwealth", June 9, 1864; "The London Ministers of the Era of the Westminster Assembly", April 24, 1862; "Test Oaths just Two Hundred Years Ago", April 24, 1862; "Archbishop Usher's views of the distinction between the Secular and the Spiritual Powers", April 24, 1862; "Gillispie's Account of Erastianism" April 10, 1862; "Political Preaching against our Grandfathers", April 10, 1862; These are just a few example out of many more.

[41] Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT; 1989) (p.213)

individual citizen and church-member, with the duties of the church, has led to the most fatal errors in this country.[42]

A good sample of the way the border staqte Presbyterian argued can again be discerned in the writings of Border State pastor Stuart Robinson. As from the example of Christ in the gospel, he writes:

> The great question of His day was the question of our day – it was the question of loyalty to country. This was the affair with which they tried to entangle Him. And while He decided most clearly obedience to government as a duty, He refused at all times to decide the questions of patriotism or party politics. It was with an immutable purpose and wisdom that He refused to decide all matters pertaining to the legal and political tribunals of the country. And if Christ set this example, His ministers and Church violate it at an awful hazard. Whenever men become wiser than Christ they become fools. And eager and ostentatious patriotism operating in pulpits and church courts is as unlike Christ as darkness is unlike light. As Christian citizens, men are to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and as members of Christ's Kingdom, they are to "render unto God the things that are God's." Christ was a citizen, and, as such, conducted Himself as one obedient to the laws of the land. But as the Head of His own Church, and as the example of His own people, He utterly refused to do anything nor to be any thing, as a decider of matters, either legal or political. Nor did He ever teach any thing, nor did He allow His disciples to do or teach any thing looking in that direction….

And in perhaps a most profound anticipation not only of what eventually happened in the 19th century context, no less than in the "culture wars" of our present context, Robinson warned *then:*

> If the churches and church courts all over this land are to be great boiling cauldrons of political wrath and excitement, they will necessarily become the most powerful of all instruments of strife, discord and disunion. If these bodies will follow their own precedents, whenever political divisions arise in our land, they must follow one party with denunciation and the other with an eager adhesion and complacency. And should division follow division, until we have thirty or forty nations, instead of that many States, then these political ecclesiastical bodies must follow each division with their patriotic thunder. As

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[42]*TP* "Wise and Profound Words of Caution from a Secular Journal," May, 22, 1862. (regarding the Journal of Commerce.) Perhaps the phrase "owes no allegiance to any earthly power" depicts the unique difference between the Southern church and the border state church. Whereas the social realities meant that the "government" was still under debate in the border states, the context of the southern church was such that the government had been decided and was therefore no longer a political question.   As stated by Thornwell, the secular sphere was to be determined by "providence and human wisdom". This interpretation argues against Maddex in asserting that the southern church borrowed the ideology of a "spiritual church" from the border states. Rather, the idea is seen to be different in a context where the "Government" is decided by providence in contrast to when it is not.

a matter of course, they thus become the inevitable agents of political and ecclesiastical ruin. They will soon, jostle and dash themselves together and be broken as when a potter's vessel is dashed in pieces. And if there be any thing which a statesmen of large and definite views of things should dread, it is just such a condition of churchly interference as now exists in this country. Instead of a bond of union, instead of a great power of love and conciliation, the church becomes a great power of dissolution in all kinds of government. Thus the church reverses its very nature. A hot political and war-worshipping spirit is wholly incompatible with the church, and he who makes her speak the dialect of blood and to cry out for the carnage of battlefields, for widow's tears and orphan's cries, and all the terrible calamities that follow in the train, and extend far beyond the duration of war, compels here to bear false testimony against here own heavenly nature. Christ did not set up his church in the world as a great martial power, nor did he constitute here a great military counselor to the nations of the earth. On the contrary, she is the great peace power of the world. Christ is the Prince of peace. His is a reign of peace on earth and good will to men. The peace of civil governments often comes and has come through bayonets and cannon's mouths, but not so with the peace which the church of Christ has to minister to the souls of men.

Amazingly "pacifist" sounding, and yet from the Calvinistic and Scottish perspective so less!   To be sure, one of the criticisms of the "spirituality of the church" perspective is a concern is that it could be relevant in social ethics and strategy. Or, in what sense can the church be "missional" in its holistic endeavor of redemption as to include social transformation even? Perhaps nowhere is the so called 'post-liberal' answer better illustrated than in the 20th century context of Karl Barth and Deitrich Bonhoffer under the regime of Nazi Germany, and most especially as articulated in the *Barmen Declaration*. For by 1934, the escalation of Hitler's powers made Germany look much like Orwell's society, wherein most sectors of Germany-- the business communities, the universities, the cultural groups and even the churches-- had almost without exception capitulated to the Nazi vision. In the church, there was the formation of the *German Christian Party*. It's emblem, of all things, was *a Christian Swastika* represented by the synthesis of Cross and swastika symbolizing the "coordination" of the church with the National Socialist government! For prior to the event of the Holocaust, and many who would say making way for the Holocaust even—the principles of nationalism and Christianity were blurred as to combine a vision for a new Christian society with a political partner!

And yet again, there were dissenters! Largely in reaction to the excesses of the "German Christians" this other group called themselves the *Bekenntnis Kirche* (the Confessing Church), and was formed chiefly out of the Lutheran and Reformed churches wherein the *Barmen Declaration* was drafted at its initial synod in May 1934. The first two articles speak for themselves:

> **First Article**:*Jesus Christ, as he is attested to us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God whom we have to hear, and whom we have to trust and obey in life and in death. (c.f. John 14:6) We reject the false doctrine that the Church could and should recognize as a source of its proclamation, beyond and besides this one Word of God, yet other events, powers, historic figures and truths as God's revelation. (c.f. John 10:1, 9)*

> **Second Article:** *As Jesus Christ is God's comforting pronouncement of the forgiveness of all our sins, so, with equal seriousness, he is also God's vigorous announcement of his claim upon our whole life. Through him there comes to us joyful liberation from the godless ties of this world for free, grateful service to his creatures. We reject the false doctrine that there could be areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ but to other lords, areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him. (c.f. 1 Cor.30)*

The third article continue, *the church is not "permitted to transform.. its message and order… according to prevailing and political convictions."* The position of the Barmen Declaration was based on Col.1:13-20 and other such passages wherein it was argued that the within the church, and by its political activism wed to a partisan agenda, that Christ as "first" was being supplanted by a nationalist agenda. According then to one of the participants of that historic synod, Heinrich Vogel,

> The synod simply repeated in a new situation of temptation against *sola Christus*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide* of the Reformation that Jesus Christ alone as mediator, grace alone, which justifies the godless in faith alone!

Here again, as not under the inspiration of the counter-reformation, but the reformational *sola's,* there was an remonstration against the temptation to compromise the church's public witness in so far as she was a partisan to national politics.   As the primary architect of the *Barman Declaration*, Karl Barth, later explained, the core idea was to distinguish the church from the state in order to resist subsuming ecclesial ethics to a nationalist agenda. In his essay, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," he therefore distinguished between the "Christian community" (by which he meant the jurisdiction of the organized church), and the civil community (by

which he meant the jurisdiction of the State). He explained. "an equating of the state and the church on the one hand and the State and kingdom of God on the other is therefore out of the question."[43] Sounding very much like Augustine before him concerning the counter-cultural positioning of the church, Barth writes:

> the church waits for 'the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb.11:10) It trusts and obeys no political system or reality but the power of the Word, by which God upholds all things (Heb. 1:3; Barmen Thesis No. 5) including all political change.[44]

Based then on this careful distinguishing of the ecclesial and civil spheres, Barth further articulated a kind of Christian ethic that was confessionally grounded, even if communally experienced, and yet for the sake of public witness!   To be sure, Barth was no pasifist if by this it is meant anti-transformationist!   His doctrine of the church was very much tied to his concern for why the church failed to speak, or why its members failed to resist the "nationalist" party of Hitler.   Barth's point is that individual Christians, and even the church when speaking corporately, would have been less compromised if the church as such had sufficiently distinguished itself by its confession vs. its social-political agenda that had become wed to a political party.

> In this sense, therefore, the existence of the Christian community is political… the object of the promise and the hope in which the Christian community has its eternal goal, consists, according to the unmistakable assertion of the New Testament, not in an eternal Church but in the polis built by God and coming down from heaven to earth, and the nations shall walk in the light of it and the kings of the earth will bring their glory and honour into it (Rev. 21:2, 24)... The church must remain the church. It must remain the inner circle of the kingdom of Christ. The Christian community has a task of which the civil community can never relive it and which it can never pursue in the forms peculiar to the civil community... The Christian community shares in the task of the civil community precisely to the extent that it fulfils its own task. [45]

In other words, as Barth further reflected in another essay, he was arguing that the errors which led to the church's compromise during the Nazi regime could be directlytraced to the tragic loss of the "marketable doctrine of the separation of the

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[43] P. 32. Barth, Karl, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community", *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings* (London: SCM, 1954), 15-50.
[44] p. 26.
[45] P. 19, 22.23 "The Christian Community."

"two kingdoms." He further lamented, "it was hardly any longer being defended with the old inflexibility even on the Lutheran side."[46] In relation then to the *Barmen Declaration,* he remembered how when the church defined itself by its spiritual confession and not by it partisan nationalism, it was able through the 1934 *Declaration* to purify its witness:

> not only to protest in due and proper form against the doctrine of the totalitarian State that was then officially valid, but it reminded men in positive terms of "God's Kingdom, God's commandment and righteousness and of the responsibility of governors and governed.

The essential thing here is to observe how the document was in protest against the Nazi-supported "German-Christian" movement, not so much against a theocracy per se, but against a church that had formed a partisan-political alliance in order to accomplish its supposed ends. It was a protest against the merger of an extreme nationalism with Christian faith—one that is as much applicable to Nazi Germany, in theory, as to the politics of modern America! As again noted by Heinrich Vogel "the fateful history of synthesis had brought us face to face with the attempt to force the Church to coordinate the word of God with the power and myth of human ideology." He then warn:

> None of us today… are safe from the temptation to enter into new synthesis with the ideologies prevailing here and there. We must not take it for granted that the synthesis with its mixture of truth and lies will be seen through and cut through. What does it mean to say "no" to the synthesis of God's word with socialism and collectivism, but also "no" to the liberalism and individualism, "no" to the synthesis with common sense humanism, which so many people today think to be the essence of Christianity? Yes, we must see what ever few recognize today, that he synthesis can also be "Anti-anythingism."

By then even a brief review of history, once can readily discern a "reformed" pedigree for what is today often presumed to be a sectarian and therefore counter-reformational emphasis in ethics. Whether under the concept of "two cities," the "spirituality of the church" or simply "the confessionalchurch", the idea is basically the same in support of the maintenance of an a-political (as distinguished from non-

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[46] P. 149, Barth, Karl, "Political Decisions in the Unity of the Faith", *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings* (London: SCM, 1954), 149-164.

political) church whose primary focus is the formation of a counter-cultural (as distinguished from against culture) community as "witness" to the nations.

Conclusion: Praxis Explored!

In a similar way to Stephen Carter, and based upon his creedal subscription to "original sin," C. S. Lewis once confessed that "no man or group of men is good enough to be trusted with uncontrolled power over others. And the higher the pretensions of such power, the more dangerous I think it is both to rulers and to the subjects. Hence theocracy is the worst of all governments…*and the nearer any government approaches to theocracy the worse it will be.*"[47] Lewis was of course speaking in the context of theocratic England, and especially the union of church and state vis-à-vis the Monarchy. But the point is the same, Christendom as a social strategy, however it is actualized-- whether qua state established or politically established via the egalitarian voice of partisan politics-- has the tendency of corrupting the Christian vision of church, even to the detriment of society in so far as her witness is compromised. Whereas Stephen Carter and C. S. Lewis are not typically associated with post-liberalism, their concern to preserve the distinctive witness of the church vis-à-vis its ecclesial context for the benefit of society at large, is!

Having then defined the post-liberal vision for social transformation vis-à-vis the counter-cultural positioned church and the preservation of an ecclesial ethic, and briefly illustrated this vision as within a reformed spirituality even, the question is rightly raised, so what? What in short, would this actually look like in the context real pulpits, communal formation and Christian witness? Perhaps then by way of conclusion, snapshot as from the perspective of a local congregation will suffice, as especially focused on the role of "pastor" and the role of "organization."

From within the context of the office of pastor/preacher, would a minister, acting as minister, identify with one or another political party in America. In the words of Karl Barth in another such controversy, "NON." Here again, the crucial

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[47] C. S. Lewis, "A Reply to Professor Haldane." *On Stories*. ed. Walter Hooper. Harcort & Brace Co: Orlando, Florida. 1996).

qualifier is "acting as minister" or from "the context of the office…" Surely the pastor, when *not* acting as pastor, but as common citizen, could participate in party politics. Surely, the pastor, when not acting as pastor, but as an individual, will have his/her opinions about what policy or social strategy is most especially suited to a particular context in order to execute his/her otherwise broadly conceived Christian vision for social justice, compassion, etc. And yet, the pastor will want to carefully distinguish that which can by good and necessary inference be deduced from scripture, vs that which is "scriptural" albeit also wed to this or that theory in macro-economics or socio-political theory.

In other words, the so called "post-liberal" vision for pastoral ministry would be cautious to identify the church with any one of Alan Wolfe's "two nations" of American social-political theory. Not to be confused necessarily with two theological visions per se, theological conservatism vs. liberalism but two nations corresponding to two social demographics. Here is how Wolfe describes the two nations:

> "There is the quicker-growing, economically vibrant, morally relativist, urban-oriented, culturally adventurous, sexually polymorphist and ethnically diverse nation. Then there is also the smaller-town, suburban, nuclear-family, religiously oriented, traditional values, white-centric other America with its diminished political and economic force."

To be sure, BOTH "nations" are often spiritualized by the religious in order to justify their social policies. But the question remains, how much of their ethics is a product of scripture, and how much a product of their socialization? Whereas it well exceeds the present point to spin off on a conversation in "sociology of knowledge" popularized by the likes of Thomas Luckmann and Peter Berger et.al. Suffice it to say that there arguably IS a "sociology" to what we know and believe. And in an age of polarizing politicization of knowledge, it is no wonder that a socialized way of reading the bible has characterized the two nations respectively. But of course the question remains, does the Bible conform so neatly and perfectly with an exclusivist blue or read vision for American in so far as an ethics of justice and mercy? How much of our "spirituality" is informed by our sociology? And to what degree then is this spirituality really the spirituality of the Bible?

So for example, should the pulpit be used to promote the increase in minimum wage in America?   The knee jerk temptation for the preacher out of a Biblical concern for social justice and compassion for the poor is, of course.   But not so fast, is an increase in the minimum wage really the most just and compassionate solution to poverty and a more equitable economy?   Many conscious Christian economist would argue that it is not, regardless of the political and religious rhetoric that is so often used to support an increase in minimum wage (c.f. Brian Fikkart's *Biblical Principles for Economic Life Dr. Brian Fikkert* for instance) Should the city pastor, out of concern for the displacement of poor families within urban neighborhoods preach against gentrification in the city? Many pastor do! And yet for some who are actually living and working for social justice in the inner cities, gentrification is viewed as a good thing, albeit in so far as it is "Gentrification with Justice" in service to neighborhood revitalization for the sake of the poor through the formation of subsidiary mortgage cooperatives, for instance (c.f. chapter 18 of Robert Lupton's *Compassion, Justice and The Christian Life, Rethinking Ministry to the Poor*).

On and one it goes, Biblical concerns shared by people within the Kingdom of God who come out very differently in their reading of macro-economics—BUT NOT SCRIPTURE, necessarily.   And yet the pastor, who knows little about macro-economics, splits the church over this or that specific program directed toward Biblical justice and compassion for the poor.

Having then said what the church ought not to do in its corporate contexts of preaching, what then can the church do in its corporate context of *doing* justice and compassion? And again, for one, it can create programs within the church to alleviate poverty within its own ranks.   To be sure, the church ought not to have the poor among it!   Real communal participation in the body and blood of Christ, wherein there is a real and mystical communion with Christ and those "in" Christ should translate into a holistic redemptive economy within the church that "knows no distinction." Sessions and diaconal leadership ought to be concerned to create specific housing cooperatives, for instance, for the sake of its membership wherein there really is no homelessness in the midst of Christ's church-- wherein there is a voluntary "*koinonia*" rivaling the *koinonia* of Acts 2 such that those within the church really do

share all things as common—perhaps via a housing cooperative wherein everyone who is a member in good standing within the household of God is with home! This and many other sorts of co-operatives (medical, food, clothing, insurance, etc) ought to distinguish the Christian community in a way that would in fact be a witness to the kind of social justice and compassion that Christ envisioned by his "one anothering" commands. Each of these programs will reflect local issues as related to the universal ideas of Biblical justice and compassion, which is why such initiative need to be "parish" oriented and driven.

In other words, we have heard David Fergusson argue for the church whose "vision is distinctively and sometimes counter to the prevailing culture." In a culture of growing disparity between the rich and the poor, and when each looks after his/her own economic interest in the lassie-faire interest of economic individualism, can anyone doubt that when the world sees the church as an Acts 2:43ff communion that *holds all things in common* such that Christ's promise concerning his witness to the world is fulfilled? (*I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me*. John 17:23)

Is there no other witness than what the church does within herself and for the sake of its membership? This is where the reformed distinction between Christianity acting corporately and Christianity acting several plays out. While the church acting corporately is "Being the church," the Christian inspired by the church is forming all sorts of subsidiary organization, perhaps even "owned" by the church but governed outside of the church, for the sake of expanding the church's social strategy to those outside of the church. These organizations will necessarily be engaged in the political and economic controversies more directly, but not as to tie the church to any one position. These organizations could form all sorts of neighborhood cooperatives for people of all faiths and none, albeit inspired by the Christian vision, yet without implicating the church in its otherwise socio-political agenda. And a single church might well have people engaged in different subsidiary organizations that are taking very different socio-political stands for social justice and compassion, and yet these people would continue to share one holy communion together within the local parish,

albeit a church that is not so "red" and "blue" as their respective subsidiary organizations.