

## Article

# The Universal and the Particular in Christian Political Life: Secular and Sacred Reflections on Christian Nationalism

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**Abstract:** Being human in a world that is both physical and metaphysical confronts us with legitimate though competing obligations that pull us between particular and universal goods. This is superlatively true for Christians, as they live consciously and conscientiously in two kingdoms, one earthly and the other heavenly, serving a divine king and, under him, also an earthly one. The kingdom of God directs our sights to the universal relationship in Christ while leaving us separately embodied in particular families and communities—the one does not supplant these others—which both require and merit devotion and self-sacrifice. This tension between love of one's own and the uniquely Christian universal love can be seen in the currently employed and contentiously scrutinized term Christian nationalism. Though seemingly an oxymoron, it recognizes and makes sense of the necessary coincidence of our inescapable particularity with our participation in and dependence on larger realities.

**Keywords:** embodiment; community; love; nation; nationalism; polis; transpolitical

## 1. Introduction

This is 2024, and we still live in a modern liberal democracy. Most of us are happy with that, but we are not entirely happy with the state of that. There are limits to most people's liberality. Bob Dylan sang in "I Shall Be Free No.10," "Now, I'm liberal, but to a degree./I want ev'rybody to be free./But if you think that I'll let Barry Goldwater/Move in next door and marry my daughter,/You must think I'm crazy!" Case in point. Some lovers of a sort of liberty may tear up with tender joy whenever they hear about Drag Queen Story Hour and kid-friendly pole-dancing in gay bars on family night, but most people find these outer limits of liberality unsettling, and some see them as a sign of things having gone terribly, terribly wrong.<sup>1</sup>

For the past fifty years, conservative and Evangelical Christian Americans have seen the source of what they consider to be this cultural and political downturn as an aggressive and advancing public secularism. America has always been a liberal democracy—deepening in both our liberalism and our democracy—but our public and community life has not always been secular, much less aggressively so. Mark David Hall's findings in *Did America Have a Christian Founding?* should not have come as a surprise, viz., that "America's founders were influenced in significant ways by Christian ideas" and that they "drew from their Christian convictions to create a constitutional order that benefits *all* Americans, not just Christians."<sup>2</sup> So, some of these conservative Christians have started asking why a predominantly, though somewhat nominally, Christian country should not give itself Christian laws, laws which they know are pleasing to God and are therefore "just" by the standard of what God says is just and that help us to lead good lives measured by what God has revealed to us as being a good life. Some have started working this out theoretically and theologically into what sometimes has been called Christian nationalism, or the political theology of a Christian nation.<sup>3</sup>

Christian nationalism sounds to some like an oxymoron. Christians are called, as Christians, to love everyone. Nationalists love their own people in preference to others.



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But the question wedged between those two words, “Christian” and “nationalist,” is a deeply human question concerning our inescapable particularity and our participation in and dependence on larger realities. Aristotle notes that, while we are separately embodied with separate bodily-related interests, we are “by nature political animals.”<sup>4</sup> For this reason, classical political philosophy insisted on “the small-scale polis as the natural site for the true flourishing of the human being as ‘the political animal.’”<sup>5</sup> The *polis* or political community comes into being for the sake of living—those issues of personal self-interest, viz., life and livelihood—but it continues in being for the sake of living well, by which Aristotle means living virtuously with one another.<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, the Christian in any age, like any thoughtful and morally serious human being, is confronted with rival loyalties, the legitimate though competing loves that pull us between particular attachments and universal obligations. We have separate bodies, separate souls, separate births, deaths, and eternal ends. But in this life, we are embodied in families which are themselves set within larger communities and which are themselves particulars. Beyond them, however, we also share a particular nation situated among other nations. In political life hitherto, there had always been a tension between one’s own and the common, what is good for me and what is good for us, what I hold particularly and what we hold with one another. The former must at times be sacrificed for the latter. Attachment to one’s own undermines the successful flourishing of one’s community. Yet a healthy shared life requires a healthy private sphere.

The kingdom of God further complicates political life. Beyond this tension, Christians are members of the transnational, universal church. As such, we are called to love our enemies and thus to transcend the friend-enemy distinction that is fundamental to political life. This presents a challenge. In a fallen world, nations sometimes confront one another as enemies. Whereas, individually, we can forget ourselves for the sake of loving an enemy, a nation may not so sacrifice itself any more than one person may lay down another person’s life for the sake of loving a bandit. Thus, the universally affiliated Christian must recognize his nationality, community, and family with appropriate support. God himself, moreover, gives government for our good (Rom 13:4), part of which good is the protection of those under the government against threats from foreign enemies.<sup>7</sup>

We face this dilemma between the particular and the universal even in our own distinctly particular bodies. We quite legitimately feed ourselves, clothe ourselves, and rest ourselves with a natural preference for ourselves. With this natural self-preference in view, Jesus echoes Moses in affirming, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31).<sup>8</sup> This form of self-love is assumed. Yet Jesus also tells us, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his [own] life will lose it, but whoever loses his [own] life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:23f.). Subordinate your particularity to this great universal, the love of God and the kingdom of God! But this is not a call to utter self-negation. “Whoever loses his life for my sake will *save it*!” There is the tension in a biblical nutshell. The question is, however, this: does this natural and unavoidable tension legitimately extend into Christian political life, unbearably complicating the prospect of a Christian nation?

## 2. Classical Reflections

The philosophic tradition, as Socrates initiated it, recognizes the same tension. Leo Strauss, a careful student of the ancients who themselves gave careful consideration to this question, summarized this tension as follows: “All human love is subject to the law that it be both love of one’s own and love of the good, and there is necessarily a tension between one’s own and the good, a tension which may well lead to a break, be it only the breaking of a heart.” (Strauss 1959, p. 35f). The philosopher has a particular body for which, in order to live, he must provide. But this entails an arrangement and orientation of the community that is unfriendly toward the contemplative life that joins all truth-driven people in cosmic community. Allan Bloom, reflecting on how our individual embodiment complicates political unity around the common good, writes:

The problem is that the body's demands lead to the establishment of an entire way of life and a set of beliefs contrary to those which would be most conducive to the perfection of a man's soul or the pursuit of truth. The way of life based on the body is directed to acquisition of the means of preserving and gratifying the body. The set of beliefs which protects that way of life concerns private property, the family, the civil order, and even the gods. (Bloom 1968, p. 386)

But though embodied like everyone else, the philosopher, insofar as he is indeed a philosopher, lives not for the needs of the body, which are particular and passing, but for knowledge of universals, and he does this in a community of inquiry that transcends all borders and every lesser allegiance. To enjoy this life in peace, he needs the protection of a particular city (polis), nation, or kingdom, but his real interest is in "the form" of the city, the "best regime," the theoretical understanding of, or wisdom concerning, the city itself. Thus, though living in and depending on a real city, the philosopher as such is devoted ultimately to philosophy, not his city. Any care the philosopher has for anyone apart from himself *as philosopher* and to the enterprise of philosophy is a matter of prudence (520d, 592b). His deepest friendships are with those who share in the investigation of these universals, but these friendships are unavoidably particular: with particular people who share the same dependence on a particular civic community.

Plato features this difficulty in Book I of *The Republic* in which Socrates investigates the character of justice with the aged Cephalus, Cephalus's son Polemarchus, and the sophist Thrasymachus, none of whom is philosophic. Cephalus, despite his hospitality, which may be only a business-savvy friendliness, is thoroughly committed to what Plato calls "one's own," or the things of particular attachment, things which in Cephalus's case we know all too well: selfish advantage in pleasure, property, and power. Cephalus is an aged and successful businessman who has provided for himself in this world through his dealings with other people by commerce. He is now providing for himself in the next world through his dealings with the gods by sacrifices. In his life of acquisition, he has committed enough injustice (cheating and fraud, no doubt) that when we meet him he is occupied with frequent sacrifices to the gods, lest he go off to "that other place frightened because one owes some sacrifices to a god or money to a human being" (331b).<sup>9</sup> Even his ties on his own son he regards in commercial, not moral, terms. When it is again (already) time for his sacrifices, he hands off the defense of his view of justice to his son who says, "Am I not the heir of what belongs to you?" (331d). Cephalus answers, "Certainly!" and laughs. He knows he can depend on his son to defend his old man because the boy knows what side his bread is buttered on, and who controls the butter.

Polemarchus is, however, a good son beyond what his father can appreciate. He is faithful to friend and family and fellow citizen alike. He defends justice as "helping friends and harming enemies" (332d, 334b). That includes everything from standing by your father in an argument to defending your city on the battlefield. Here "one's own" extends from "me" to "us" in a way that one would even sacrifice *me* for the sake of *us*. In that sense it is deeply moral, deeply political. The justice, even heroism, of it is morally obvious, over against cowardice and treachery.

But Socrates opposes the principle of "one's own" to that of "the fitting," a transpolitical standard (332c). Understanding "harm" as diminishing someone in human excellence, the just man would never harm anyone, regardless of borders, as it would make the ones harmed less just, and thus hostile (335b–e). As such, it would make them enemies. Thus, he should want to help or improve his enemies, make them more virtuous, less unjust, more friendly. The just man's friends are other just men, regardless of where in the world he finds them. Socrates' just man is transpolitical, trans-national. Socrates shows how natural ties of affection to persons and place have their limits. And he is correct.<sup>10</sup>

Thrasymachus presents all generous and high-minded notions of "justice" as merely the product of "the stronger" having gained their own advantage by fooling people into serving the advantage of the stronger without realizing it—even to their own disadvantage (338e–339a). The one who can accomplish this perfectly, he says, practices the ruler's art

perfectly. He is the ruler as such, the ruler “insofar as he is a ruler” (340d–341a). In response, Socrates presents the ruler qua ruler as putting himself wholly in the service of the ruled without any regard for himself. Socrates affirms this despite what he knows is the legitimate concern the practitioner of any art has for providing for his own natural, particular needs—for example, his body and bodily comfort, his family, and his descendants.

Nonetheless, in the books which follow, Plato’s city in speech—the perfectly just city which Socrates and friends construct in theory from the ground up in order to find what justice is—must defend itself against other cities. The just city, unlike the just man, cannot be universalistic in its outlook. So, they provide their city with an army, one charged with helping friends (one’s own) and harming enemies (threats to one’s own) (374a). Again, Strauss: “Justice thus understood [as helping friends and harming enemies] cannot be entirely dispensed with in any city however just, for even the most just city is a city, a particular or closed or exclusive society.” See (Strauss 1963, pp. 10, 20). But in Plato’s city in speech, the city which the armed guardians are defending is the just city, and thus they are defending justice even as they defend themselves. The universal is thus harmonized with the particular.

Plato shows us the same use of deep attachment to one’s own in the noble lie (414b–415c). According to this device, everyone in Plato’s ideally constituted city is born of the earth. Thus, their mother is the soil beneath their feet, the city-as-place (not the planet). For this reason, they will defend it as they would their mother and not betray it for selfish gain. For the same reason, all fellow citizens here, regardless of class, be it the gold-, silver-, or bronze-souled, are brothers and sisters, and so everyone will defend each other as blood siblings and not tyrannize or betray them to an invader. In each case, the attachment to one’s own family, place, friends—people with whom one shares a common way of life, a common understanding of justice and of the way things ought to be—is presupposed. Socrates and friends introduce this public myth, a kind of civil religion, as being necessary for wedding everyone to the good of the community as though it were their private good, and thus harmonizing the two contrary impulses—the impulse toward one’s private gain at the expense of the community and that toward the community in sacrifice of one’s private interest. This perfectly harmonized city, to remain such, must abolish the natural, private family in favor of the community of women and children (423e–424a) so that the defense of one’s own family and the defense of the city are one and the same. Plato offers this as both a necessity and an absurdity.<sup>11</sup>

The harmonization of their city is, thus, an unhappy one, as it must be, because there is always a tension between the good of the individual and the good of the community. In order to harmonize, that is, to unify most perfectly, their city in speech, Socrates and his interlocutors strive to make it as much as possible like an individual body (462c–d; cf. the church as one body in I Cor. 12:12–27)—literally a body politic, one civic person—which it is not and cannot be. This unavoidably results in monstrosity: among other absurdities, the universalization of the family as noted and which (unhappily) entails incest because no one knows who their biological brother or sister is. Yet, because we have bodies, brothers and sisters there must be. This side of the Lord’s return, it is impossible to harmonize perfectly the common good with the individual good because each of us is oh-so-separately, so *particularly*, embodied.

Practically speaking, the defense of one’s own means the defense of injustice because the world, such as it is, is necessarily a mix of justice and injustice, the just blurred in our hearts and minds with the unjust. You will defend unjust people who are among your people against the inevitably present just people on the other side. In any war, for example, there are just and good people—and scoundrels—on both sides of the conflict.

### 3. Christian Reflections

Like the philosopher, the Christian is concerned with things universal. The Christian has legitimate, local attachments and dependencies, but horizons as broad as the earth and a love higher than the heavens. Consider the relationship between family, nation, and the

international as we see it in the Bible. Family continues to be held in high esteem, such as when the Apostle Paul affirms the priority of natural attachment, writing, “if anyone does not provide for his [own] relatives, and especially for members of his [own] household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (I Tim. 5:8). It is good and right to love your own just because they are your own.<sup>12</sup>

And yet, though service to Yahweh is absolute, natural attachments, such as to family, are not. They explicitly and decidedly take second place. “[T]he proclamation of the kingdom of God makes all existing ties provisional (Luke 14:25; Mark 12:25). . .” (Wannenwetsch 2004, p. 133). But the power of those attachments—moral and emotional—highlights the radical demand that God makes on his image-bearing, human creation. Thus, Jesus says, “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37). Elsewhere, he states himself even more strongly: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). On the same principle, God commanded Abraham, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (Gen. 12:1). He challenges Abraham to forsake these universally held, intimate, and legitimate earthly attachments—country, kindred, and household. The radical prioritization of one’s relationship with God is the starting point of that relationship.

In the Book of Isaiah, God uses the weakness of even the most powerful natural affections to illustrate his own fidelity to his people. He asks a seemingly rhetorical question, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?” But he unexpectedly adds, “Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Is. 49:15). Natural attachment in some cases can fail, though these situations are rare and monstrous. God, by contrast, would never fail his people.

Nonetheless, despite the priority of the universal, the particular remains, and quite legitimately so. The gospel goes to all nations, which nonetheless remain nations. Bernd Wannenwetsch notes that “The gates of the heavenly city are always open (Rev. 21:25). They no longer stand for the need for security and separation among people and political communities. . .” (Wannenwetsch 2004, p. 140). While this is true, it is also true that natural cities in natural life still require these defenses and distinctions. Though marriage is universalized, with Christ as the bridegroom to his church, particular marriages continue as legitimate and good, even necessary. Christ’s church is presented as a household (*oikos*) and a city (*polis*) but universalized as the universal family of God and universal city of God. Yet there remain legitimate particular households and cities over against, and at times in legitimate competition with, other households and cities.<sup>13</sup> Christians are united worldwide by a common faith and sacraments, yet they divide into particular congregations and regional churches (Ibid, p. 272).

Stephen Wolfe reminds us that the gospel does not displace or destroy natural relationships but completes them, a welcome reminder for those who are tempted to absolutize the universal aspect of Christianity, see (Wolfe 2022, chaps. 3–4). There remains this aspect of the particular. Families become Christian families. They operate (grace permitting) as families ought to operate. Indeed, families in the new covenant are sanctified, set apart as holy, and thus their members are baptized. Children are baptized based on the family relationship which, by virtue of faith and the promises of the gospel, is a covenantal relationship. But interestingly, nations are also in some sense baptized in connection with their discipling as nations. In his Great Commission, Jesus enjoins the disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them [“them” referring back to “nations”] in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

What it means to be baptized as a nation is more ambiguous than it is for a person or family. In the case of families, we have a continuation of the old covenant practice of placing the covenant sign, and with it the covenant promises, on the children of God’s people. The remarkable difference is that, being a better covenant with fuller promises, the new covenant sign is extended to both the male and the female children. This practice concerning



the infant children of believers does not need reiteration in the New Testament because it is an essential feature of a covenant *qua* covenant. So, barring an announcement from God that he had dispensed with covenant arrangements or was altering the fundamental features of the covenant, the practice was assumed to have continued. The covenant sign was administered through families by virtue of one's (divinely given) birth into a covenant family. It was not by virtue of membership in the covenant nation directly, but only through the covenant family. In new covenant revelation, we see no baptizing of nations *qua* nations, such as a converted king having all his people baptized. We see no adoption of nations as holy the way Israel was holy, no multiplying of new Israels nor any expectation of it. Thus, we take "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them" as referring to the people themselves in all nations.<sup>14</sup> How a nation structures its common life after its people are largely baptized and discipled is another question.

God's kingdom on earth began with a family—Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel—followed by a godly but narrow line of families through Seth (Gen. 4:25f.). God reduced his redemptive purposes at the end of that line to one family, that of Noah. After the flood, God allowed Noah's spiritual line to dissipate, recommencing it generations later with Abraham. But it was not the Abrahamic family that he used to continue his redemptive purposes, but that of his grandson, Jacob, who became Israel and whom God made into a nation of twelve tribes. The line from Adam to Noah was too narrow ever to become a nation, so it remained always only a family, a line.

Biblically, the "nations" are extended families, broadening out with each successive generation. How these nations are delineated depends on which father in the line is elevated as the patriarch and the patronym—where the descendants start or restart the line, saying "we are the children of." (The English word "nation" derives from the Latin words related to birth.) When making his covenant promise of land to Abram in Genesis 15, God lists the nations he will displace from it: "the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites" (vv.19–21; see Gen. 10:15–18). The Canaanites, of course, were the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham (Gen. 9:18). But the great Hittite nation, also listed, descended from Heth, the second son of Canaan (Gen. 10:15, I Chron. 1:13).

Though Israel divided into twelve distinct families with twelve separate land allotments, they were not considered twelve nations but tribes within one nation. There were also sub-tribes, as it were, in recognition of notable family lines within each tribe. Israel was a "nation" on account of its common religion and law, and the common culture arising out of that (though at times there was inter-tribal slaughter—Judges 20), but these twelve tribes had distinct identities and associated loyalties. We see this in Judah's loyalty to King David and the abandonment of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, by the ten northern tribes. So, nationhood is at times ambiguous, and thus the good that it provides is delicate.

In the New Testament, God's promises to the nation of Israel become the gospel for all nations. The era begins with a unique Pentecost, a reverse Babel—not a miraculous confusion of tongues (Gen. 11) but a miraculous understanding of them (Acts 2). This anticipates the preaching of Christ to all nations (Matt. 28:19; cf. I Kings 4:34; Psalm 22:27f., 86:9; Isaiah 2:2) and their eventual embrace of him. Their national conversions do not, however, supplant their national identities, but sanctify them.

As the kingdom of God begins to advance under the new covenant, however, we see a focus on cities, not nations: Rome, Corinth, Ephesus. In Revelation 2, we see the risen, reigning Christ addressing the church in seven cities, not nations, across Asia. Beyond this point, "nations" becomes a vague term, as indeed it is. Perhaps in recognition of this, the Great Commission, as Jesus states it at the (disputed) end of Mark's Gospel, parallels "all nations" (Matt. 28:19) with "the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). Christian missionary organizations speak of reaching "people groups," of which there are often many within current so-called "national" borders.

#### 4. Concluding Reflection

The ancients saw that we are particular individuals with individual interests. But we are not just bodies having separate, and at times competing, interests in comfortable self-preservation. Each of us necessarily lives in a greater body for which we must at times sacrifice those individual interests. The reason for this is that we are moral beings whose happiness requires that we participate in justice and in a moral community. But a seriously moral community will desire to be genuinely moral. Such a community, bound together in and oriented toward a transpolitical, transcendent, and thus universal moral reality, will thus be a morally self-critical and aspirational community in universal league with other similarly aspirational communities. The United States of America, perhaps also the confraternity of politically and economically free peoples of the earth, can be seen as such a league of aspirational communities, albeit imperfectly so. But these peoples, these nations, have, nonetheless, competing interests as separate communities. The free market can harmonize many of these conflicts but can also threaten a community's viability.<sup>15</sup> We are confronted, therefore, as human beings, as political animals, with a tension between legitimate, though competing, obligations that pull us between particular and universal goods.

Christians recognize this same complexity in our being human in a world that is both physical and metaphysical. While every Christian has his or her own particular beginning and end, we live together in shared families, communities, and congregations, sacrificing our particular demands for them. These communities, however, conform in differing degrees to the justice and righteousness to which we all have a higher accountability. The heavenly obligation takes precedence over and informs the earthly obligation. It is also on account of the universal, metaphysical reality that these larger bodies can justly make legitimate demands on us and that our loss in sacrificing for them can be an ultimate gain.

Christian nationalism, or what is perhaps more felicitously termed the political theology of a Christian nation, recognizes that friendships, families, and nations are good, see (Hazony 2018; Lowry 2019; Manent 2013). But they can make too much of themselves. They can assert an ultimate moral obligation that cannot be true. "I stand by my friends! Period!" "Don't ever take sides with anyone against the family!" "My country, right or wrong!" Bringing these relationships into the kingdom of God, under the dominion of Christ, checks this tendency or at least supplies the moral and metaphysical framework for checking it. Any intentionally Christian nation should conscientiously guard itself against the creeping tendency toward mere nationalism. There will always be nations, local ethnic and civic affinities. But insofar as these affinities become consciously Christian, the good they serve—which is a real good—is preserved and perfected. Christ comes before nation, elevates it, and draws it toward its most righteous life.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Wallace-Wells, "David French, Sohrab Ahmari, and the Battle for the Future of Conservatism," *The New Yorker* September 12, 2019. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-political-scene/david-french-sohrab-ahmari-and-the-battle-for-the-future-of-conservatism>. Accessed 17 August 2024. David French, senior editor at *The Dispatch*, an online conservative opinion publication, stoked conservative ire by saying, "And, by the way, the fact that a person can get a room in a library and hold a Drag Queen Story Hour and get people to come? That's one of the blessings of liberty."

<sup>2</sup> See (Hall 2018, pp. xviii, xxvii).

<sup>3</sup> This Christian nationalism takes different forms. Yoram Hazony gave us conservative nationalism, which of course would take a Christian stamp, and which, as a conservative Jew, he gladly accepts (Hazony 2018). Brad Littlejohn offers a characteristically Anglican or Hookerian form of it: "Christian Nationalism or Christian Commonwealth? A Call for Clarity," *Ad Fontes*, 7 December 2022. Stephen Wolfe offers his uniquely "Reformed two kingdom" version with its complete civil dependence on "natural law reasoning." (Wolfe 2022). Douglas Wilson argues for a "mere Christendom," meaning "a network of nations bound together

by a formal, public, civic acknowledgement of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the fundamental truth of the Apostles' Creed." (Wilson 2023, p. 69).

- 4 Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1253a3 (I.2.9). Daniel J. Mahoney, reflecting upon the hostility of humanitarianism to the Christianity it attempts to subvert and replace, writes, "Christians, too, are political animals, and not first and foremost 'citizens of the world.'" Summarizing Pierre Manent, he adds, "'Humanity' never has, and never will, exist as a real community. The Church is the only real universal community (if a spiritual one) . . . In this world under the visible moon, the universal (human nature) is always mediated by the particular." (Mahoney 2018, pp. 14, 16).
- 5 According to the ancient thinkers, "The human capacity for familiarity and attachment is by nature restricted; the natural restrictions set boundaries within which the size of a society ought to be confined. A healthy society can extend only to the size of a small city, a polis. . . . Moreover, citizens need to live similar lives, so that they may sympathize with and understand one another's concerns. . . . All this entails the direct as well as an indirect cultivation of a sense of distance or even alienation from the rest of the world." (Pangle and Ahrendorf 1999, pp. 4, 36f).
- 6 Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1252b29 (I.2.8); 1280b33 (III.9.12). Leo Strauss introduces his study of this text, writing, "political society remains what it always has been: a partial or particular society whose most urgent and primary task is its self-preservation and whose highest task is its self-improvement." (Strauss 1964, p. 6).
- 7 Bernd Wannenwetsch sees Luke's Gospel suggesting that the new Christian city-household departs from this antagonistic relationship of the "counter-orders of being – the private and the public, the domestic and the political. . ." (Wannenwetsch 2004, p. 145).
- 8 All quotations from the Bible are taken from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.
- 9 See (Plato 1991). Further references to this edition of *The Republic* will be cited in-text by Stephanus number. For a contrary view of Cephalus as "not an unscrupulous businessman who has got rich by not being squeamish about his methods," see (Annas 1981, p. 20).
- 10 "[T]he love of one's own work is, Socrates suggests, a source of deluding and unjust attachments. This foreshadows a grand theme of the rest of the dialogue, and a leitmotif of classical republican thought: A maximally just society would have to minimize love of one's own. . ." (Pangle and Burns 2015, p. 40).
- 11 Oliver O'Donovan observes that, "It is commonly enough said that the ancient world separated *polis* and *oikos*, city and household, the sphere of the public and the sphere of the private. . . . It is commonly enough said, too, that Christianity allowed the two spheres to mingle in a single type of community that married the political authority of the city with the mutual affection of the household." (O'Donovan 2005, p. 267f). Indeed, Bernd Wannenwetsch reminds us that the New Testament presents Christ's church as simultaneously the family of God and citizens of heaven, citing Paul's seemingly mixed metaphor in his Letter to the Ephesians, "'So you are now no longer strangers without citizens' right. You are *fellow citizens* with the saints and members of the household of God' (*sympolitai ton hagion kai oikeioi tou theou*, Eph. 2:19)." (Wannenwetsch 2004, p. 143f) (emphasis in the original).
- 12 "Tensions between the claims of family and gospel could not be ruled out; but for all that, it may be said that in the apostolic tradition as a whole, natural ties are not something to be fearfully avoided or disparaged for the sake of ties with the new community. They are fully acknowledged and are to be cherished." (Wannenwetsch 2004, p. 133).
- 13 "Moreover, from the perspective of Christian ethics, we must also say that *polis* and *oikos* are fundamental forms of human living, which cannot in principle be superseded," or, one may add, fully transcended in a universal Christian life. "After all, even the attempts to live without family ties and without political allegiance feed parasitically on these fundamental forms of life, without which they would not be possible at all." (O'Donovan 2005, p. 158f).
- 14 In Mark's account of the Lord's Great Commission, Jesus says, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned," (Mark 16:16). It is each believer in the nations who is baptized, not nations as such.
- 15 In Canada, the high tariffs of Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald's National Policy in 1879 were designed to make plausible an otherwise economically implausible country, spread thinly as it was over the top of the great American union. It "did express the desire of Canadians to build a vigorous and independent national economy as the bone and sinew of political unity. . ." (McInnis 1969, p. 388).

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