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

By William T. Cavanaugh



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By William T. Cavanaugh

Whether one thinks that "religion" continues to fade or has made a comeback in the contemporary world, there is a common notion that "religion" went away somewhere, at least in the West. But William Cavanaugh argues that religious fervor never left -- it has only migrated toward a new object of worship. In *Migrations of the Holy* he examines the disconcerting modern transfer of sacred devotion from the church to the nation-state.

In these chapters Cavanaugh cautions readers to be wary of a rigid separation of religion and politics that boxes in the church and sends citizens instead to the state for hope, comfort, and salvation as they navigate the risks and pains of mortal life. When nationality becomes the primary source of identity and belonging, he warns, the state becomes the god and idol of its own religion, the language of nationalism becomes a liturgy, and devotees willingly sacrifice their lives to serve and defend their country.

Cavanaugh urges Christians to resist this form of idolatry, to unthink the inevitability of the nation-state and its dreary party politics, to embrace radical forms of political pluralism that privilege local communities -- and to cling to an incarnational theology that weaves itself seamlessly and tangibly into all aspects of daily life and culture.

Read more about the book in a blog post by Cavanaugh on EerdWord.



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Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church By William T. Cavanaugh Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #463926 in Books
- Published on: 2011-02-10
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .53" w x 6.00" l, .65 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 208 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Luke Bretherton

— King's College London

"In these essays William Cavanaugh continues to provide leadership and vision in the field of political theology. He addresses essential questions about the religious status of the nation-state, the political character of the church, and how the tradition of Christian political thought might be brought to bear upon contemporary politics. In doing so Cavanaugh unfolds a theological response to present political conditions and a political response to our theological condition."

Robert Benne

— Center for Religion and Society, Roanoke College

"Another vigorous — but distinct — voice in the burgeoning conversation about the role of religion generally and the church specifically in political life. . . Worth a careful read."

About the Author

William T. Cavanaugh is senior research professor at the Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology and professor of Catholic studies at DePaul University.

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