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## TO BE APOLITICAL: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

### Abstract

The paper defends a special kind of political philosophy based on the discussions of Kierkegaard, Augustine and New Testaments. A Christian political philosophy is relatively uninterested in questions concerning how human beings can form certain kind of compromise between human wills in their pursuit of self-interests. For Kierkegaard, the confusion of Christianity with Christendom has the danger that by calling itself a Christian nation, society replaces salvation with socialization, For Augustine, true justice, true peace and freedom can only be found in serving God only; a Christian is on pilgrimage in this world in order to achieve the blessings in eternal life in the future. The temporal peace and justice have no merits in themselves if they cannot be made use of in worshiping God. In New Testaments, we find that the political philosophy in Kierkegaard and Augustine is in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Contrary to what modern political philosophy has understood, freedom, in its authentic and true sense, can only be realized through Jesus Christ.

Key words: Kierkegaard; Augustine; Jesus; Christianity; Christendom; City of God; City of Earth; Love of God; Love of Neighbor; Political Philosophy

## APOLITISCH SEIN: EINE CHRISTLICHE PERSPEKTIVE

### Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel verteidigt eine besondere Art politischer Philosophie, basierend auf den Diskussionen von Kierkegaard, Augustinus und dem Neuen Testament. Eine christliche politische Philosophie ist relativ uninteressiert an der Frage, wie Menschen bei der Verfolgung ihrer Eigeninteressen bestimmte Kompromisse zwischen menschlichen Willensbestrebungen eingehen können. Für Kierkegaard birgt die Verwechslung von Christentum und Christenheit die Gefahr, dass die Gesellschaft, indem sie

sich selbst als christliche Nation bezeichnet, die Erlösung durch Sozialisierung ersetzt. Für Augustinus können wahre Gerechtigkeit, wahrer Frieden und Freiheit nur im Dienst an Gott gefunden werden; ein Christ ist auf einer Pilgerreise in dieser Welt, um in der Zukunft die Segnungen des ewigen Lebens zu erlangen. Weltlicher Friede und Gerechtigkeit haben an sich keinen Wert, wenn sie nicht in der Verehrung Gottes genutzt werden können. Im Vergleich zum Neuen Testament sehen wir, dass die politische Philosophie von Kierkegaard und Augustinus mit den Lehren Jesu Christi übereinstimmt. Konträr zu dem, was die moderne politische Philosophie verstanden hat, kann Freiheit in ihrem authentischen und wahren Sinne nur durch Jesus Christus verwirklicht werden.

Schlüsselwörter: Kierkegaard; Augustinus; Jesus; Christentum; Christenheit; Stadt Gottes; Stadt der Erde; Gottesliebe; Nächstenliebe; politische Philosophie

## Introduction

On day in August, 410, the great city Rome was sacked and it was greatly damaged. St. Jerome felt so devastated by the fall of Rome that even two years afterwards, he still complained that he lost the memory of his own name and said that with the fall of Rome human race perished (O'Meara 1984, p. x). At that time, some blamed the christianization of the Rome empire for the sack of Rome. In responding to those charges, Augustine undertook to write a book, the *City of God*, in which he shows that the order of love determines one as a citizen of the City of God or a citizen of the Earthly City (Weithman, 2001, p. 235). My question is: In Christian faith, how should one view the world or political life properly if one has the right relationship to God? In other words, for a Christian, if his or her relation to God is absolute, what is his or her proper attitude towards the political world in which he or she happens to live?

In this paper, I will defend a political position or attitude, that is, to be apolitical from a Christian perspective. The "a" in being apolitical means at least three things: 1, one is uninterested in questions like, for instance, how to justify a political institution from a human point of view, or what is the best government; 2, one is critical of any kind of the identification or confusion of God with the world; 3, one is a stranger in this world, that is, one must be uprooted from this world. I will draw on texts from Kierkegaard, Augustine, and the Bible.

In the first part, I will show that for Kierkegaard, one should be aware of the danger of identifying salvation with sociality, and Christianity with

Christendom. Being a Christian is not defined by being a citizen of a Christian nation in a political sense. In Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel's identification of socialization with salvation, we see that in one's relation to God, one's relation to the political world is suspended. For Kierkegaard, a true Christian is alone in front of God without any involvement of the worldly political affair. Hegel's philosophy represents the mentality of human beings which tries to absolutize the world and the consequence of this is to forget one's only and true aim is the kingdom of God.

In the second part, I will discuss Augustine's view that the distinction between the Earthly City and the City of God is based on the order of love, and the Earthly City has a contempt of God. Being a true Christian, for Augustine, means that one is being on pilgrimage in this life. This does not mean that Augustine is ignorant of the concept of justice. The only and true justice is that God rules man, and man serves God only.

Most importantly, in the third part, I will give an interpretation of Jesus's "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's". The distinctions between the Earthly City and the City of God in Augustine and between Christendom and Christianity in Kierkegaard are only footnotes to Jesus Christ's authoritative teachings on the relation between God and the world. The kingdom of God is not of this world. Jesus came into this world, but he did not intend to topple a government or an emperor, nor did he want to replace any ruler. Jesus Christ came into this world in order to save the human beings for their eternal life or happiness. How should one see the political system in which he lives? "For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution" (Holy Bible, 1995, 1 Peter 2: 13). The only thing one should do is to follow the example of Christ. In the New Testament, the life of Jesus Christ showed clearly that he was not interested in any political life at all.

The viewpoint or position I am defending below is that in relation to God, the political world is neutralized or bracketed, and we should never confuse God with any kind of political institution. This is a form of Christian apolitical philosophy.

## 1. Kierkegaard: Christianity and Christendom

In Mark 7, Jesus denounced the Pharisees and the scribes: "You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition" (Holy Bible, 1995, Mark 7: 8). For the Pharisees and the scribes, observing the tradition

and the elders was much more important than obeying the commandment of God. A Christian, however, should keep in mind that the commandment of God overrules any kind of tradition or customs, whether it is Western culture, Asian culture, or African culture. In one's individual relation to God, it is of necessity to suspend one's relation to his or her own ethical and ritual tradition in obeying the commandment of God. A Christian's sole and only concern is to follow the way of Christ.

Soren Kierkegaard, in his pseudonymous writing *Fear and Trembling*, describes the pain and suffering that Abraham, the father of faith, experienced when he followed the order of God to sacrifice his only beloved son Isaac as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah, "the dearest thing in the world to him" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 21). With this description, he shows that in one's relationship to God which is absolute, one should suspend one's ethical relationship. The central idea expressed in *Fear and Trembling* is that "there is an absolute duty to God, for in this relationship of duty the individual relates himself as the single individual absolutely to the absolute" (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 70). And it means that between the single individual and God nothing worldly, including the ethical relationship, can be the mediation.

The paradox of faith means that as an individual, one is above the universal. "Kierkegaard explicitly identifies the universal he has had in mind as being the nation, the state, the laws, society, a people" (Westphal 1991, p. 76). The universal is Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*. In Hegel's philosophy, "our relation to God is so thoroughly mediated via the social order that faith becomes indistinguishable from socialization, and the individual's relation to God is no longer a personal one" (Westphal 1991, p. 77). Kierkegaard critiques Hegel because Hegel "deifies the established order" (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 87). The logical conclusion of Hegel's philosophy is that "everyone in Christendom is a Christian: we are all as such what people call Christians.... We are all Christians" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 608). For Kierkegaard, this is a mutiny against God.

It is not only in Hegel's philosophy but also in the consciousness of ordinary people of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Christianity is a historical phenomenon, a social reality. A Danish woman would talk just like a Hegelian in plain words to her husband when he doubted if he was truly a Christian: "How can you not be a Christian? You are Danish, aren't you? Doesn't the geography book say that the predominant religion in Denmark is Lutheran-Christian" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 50)? "Don't you tend to your work in

the office as a good civil servant; aren't you a good subject in a Christian nation, in a Lutheran-Christian state? So of course you are a Christian" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 51). Just like a Hegelian philosopher, "the wife of a civil servant argues from the whole, from the state, from the idea of society, from geographic scientificity to the single individual. It follows so automatically that the single individual is Christian, has faith, etc." (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 51).

The question of being a Christian from the speculative-objective point of view is simply an objective question that whether you are a member of a Christian state. Hegel says, "The state is the divine will, in the sense that it is spirit present on earth, unfolding itself to be the actual shape and organization of a world" (Hegel 2008, p. 244). If the state, for Hegel, is the incarnation of God in this world, then, what Christianity as a religion means? "Religion is a relation to the Absolute, a relation that takes the form of *feeling, representation* [Vorstellung], *faith*" (Hegel 2008, p. 244, original italics). "As intuition, feeling, representational knowledge, [religion's] content is with God as the unrestricted principle and cause on which everything hangs" (Hegel, 2008, p. 243). According to Hegel, the content of Christianity is absolute truth, but in a subjective, intuitive, emotional and representational form. The actualization of the subjective Christianity is in the state, a higher form of Christianity. Thus, for Hegel, "the objective and universal element in the state, i.e. the laws" (Hegel 2008, p. 245) overcomes the "subjective ideas and feelings" (Hegel 2008, p. 245), and it is in the state we see "the genuine truth" as the "transfer of the inner into the outer, the building of reason into reality" (Hegel, 2008, p. 245). Christianity in its religious or subjective form, for Hegel, may "give rise to the religious *fanaticism* which, like fanaticism in politics, discards all political institutions, and legal order as barriers cramping the inner life of the heart and incompatible with its infinity" (Hegel 2008, p. 245, original italics). Hegel is worried that faith as a kind of feeling may lead to fanaticism.

If the state represents God's will on earth, does it mean that Christianity is fully assimilated into the ethical life, which means that Christianity or religion disappears from this world? For Hegel, if Christianity is of a genuine kind, it must subordinate itself to the state, that is, "to recognize the state and uphold it" (Hegel 2008, p. 246). Christianity, however, does not fully disappear, but "has a *position*, and an *external expression* of its own" (Hegel 2008, 246, original italics). In the relation between the state and the church, even Hegel says "while church and state differ in form, they do not stand

opposed in *content*” (Hegel 2008, p. 250), for him, the church is a means, while the state is the end. Christianity finds its two external expressions in the world, the church and the state. The relation between religion or Christianity and the state is, from the Hegelian point of view, as a matter of fact a relation between church and state, a relation between two social institutions in the world. If the state is the highest expression of Christianity, why do we need the church? Hegel says, “[t]he practice of its worship consists in actions and in doctrinal instruction, and for this purpose possessions and property are required, as well as individuals dedicated to the service of the community” (Hegel 2008, p. 246). To worship, as Hegel understands, is no longer an individual, personal affair, but a social action which is involved possessions of material property. The worshiping of God in an individual internal life is externalized in social organizations. Church is this externalization. “But since the church owns property and otherwise performs acts of worship, and since therefore it must have people in its service, it steps out of the inner realm into worldly life, and so enters the domain of the state and thereby immediately places itself under its laws” (Hegel 2008, p. 247). If church, and all activities related to church, are no different from other social organizations, then, church must be subordinated to the laws and customs of the state. “When individuals, holding religious views in common, form themselves into a community, a corporation, they fall under the general control and oversight of the state” (Hegel 2008, p. 248). One’s religious life is realized or actualized in its socialization.

As a social entity, the church has no difference from other social institutions, such as science communities. Neither religion nor science are independent of the state. Hegel emphasizes that in content Christianity is in accordance with the state:

the doctrine of the church is in turn not purely and simply an inward concern of conscience. As doctrine it is rather the *expression* of something, in fact the expression of a content which is most closely linked, or even immediately concerned, with ethical principles and the laws of the state” (Hegel 2008, p. 248, original italics).

The state is the actualization or truth of the church. Hegel sees the church not only as a social institution which belongs to the state, but also being identical with the state in spirit. It is in the state which we find the ultimate embodiment of the absolute spirit or God. Hegel says, “when the church begins to teach *doctrines*...and when these doctrines touch upon *objective*

*principles*, on thought of the ethical and the rational, then their expression *ie ipso* brings the church into the domain of the state” (Hegel 2008, p. 250, original italics). For Hegel, faith is not enough, it must go further.

In contrast with the church’s faith and authority in matters affecting ethical life, right, laws, institutions, in contrast with the church’s subjective conviction, the state is the one *that knows* [*das Wissende*]. Its principle is such that its content is in essence no longer clothed with the form of feeling and faith but belongs to determinate thought” (Hegel 2008, p. 250, original italics).

Faith as a form of feeling must find its truth in the rational thought whose concrete expression is the state. To be a religious person or a Christian, for Hegel, is no different from being a citizen of a nation, and in this sense the Danish wife is a Hegelian.

When he sees Christianity and state are the same in content but different in form, Hegel already goes against one of his fundamental methodological principles: form and content must agree with each other. Is Hegel’s absolute spirit the same as the Christian God? The quotations from Hegel above show that his central concern is how one’s subjective conviction or opinion can develop into its objective and actual form. Is the church or the state the embodiment of divine spirit or God? God is understood as a social reality or institution or life.

In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard (or Johannes de Silentio) offers a sever critique of Hegel’s confusion of Christianity and the state: If Hegel is right, Abraham is lost (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 55, 56, 70, 113, 120). Kierkegaard says, “In Hegelian philosophy, *das Äussere* (*die Entäusserung*) [the outer (the externalization)] is higher than *das Innere* [the inner]” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 69, original italics), however, “faith is the paradox that interiority is higher than exteriority” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 69). When he “puts faith in the rather commonplace company of feelings, moods, idiosyncrasies” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 69), Hegel confounds the “single individual, sensately and psychically qualified in immediacy” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 54) with the single individual of faith such as Abraham as the father of faith. In the relation between the first interiority and the ethical as the universal, the ethical task of the individual is “to annul his singularity in order to become the universal” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 54). Faith as the second interiority, however, is different in that

the single individual is higher than the universal...after having been in the universal he as the single individual isolate himself as higher than the universal. If

this is not faith, then Abraham is lost, then faith has never existed in the world precisely because it has always existed” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 55).

In relation to the ethical or the universal, faith is not inferior but superior to it. This is not because the single individual qua individual, but because “the single individual as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 56). In other words, in his relation to God, the single individual is higher to the state or church.

Different from a tragic hero, Abraham is “either a murderer or a man of faith” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 57), because he can never justify his action ethically: “It is not to save a nation, not to uphold the idea of the state that Abraham does it” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 59). “Why, then, does Abraham do it? For God’s sake and—the two are wholly identical—for his own sake. He does it for God’s sake because God demands this proof of his faith; he does it for his own sake so that he can prove it” (Kierkegaard 1983, pp. 59-600). The inner confliction or “ordeal” or “temptation” that Abraham experienced, his interiority of faith, cannot be mediated by the ethical precisely because the ethical is the temptation “which would hold him back from doing God’s will” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 60). There is a suspension of the ethical in Christian faith. In Hegel, there is a deification of the established order because for him, the absolute is the “*Sittlichkeit*, the public life of a people, institutionalized in family, civil society, and the state” (Westphal 1991, p. 77).

Since he takes the ethical as the highest, Hegel “assumes no justified hiddenness, no justified incommensurability” (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 82). “Faith is not the first immediacy but a later immediacy. The first immediacy is the esthetic, and here the Hegelian philosophy certainly may very well be right. But faith is not the esthetic, or else faith has never existed because it has always existed” (Kierkegaard, 82). Since Hegel takes the ethical as the divine, the consequence of his absolutization of the ethical would make faith become “indistinguishable from socialization” (Westphal 1991, p. 77). According to Kierkegaard, however, faith “understands Jesus to be the unique and decisive presence of God in human history” (Westphal 1991, p. 80). When Hegel identifies the ethical as “the actuality of God himself, without qualification” (Westphal 1991, p. 81), that is, the ethical as God’s incarnation, he contradicts the Christian faith that Jesus of Nazareth is the God-man, the incarnation of God.

Hegel’s view that the state as the divine spirit’s earthly manifestation, for Kierkegaard, would be a sin against God. According to Kierkegaard, Hegel



“deified the established order” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 87), and “this deification of the established order is the perpetual revolt, the continual mutiny against God” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 88). Kierkegaard’s critique of Hegel’s self-deification of the ethical is against any form of self-absolutization in human society. “Judaism at the time of Christ became, through the scribes and Pharisees, a complacent, self-deifying established order” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 89). As Merold Westphal correctly points out, for Kierkegaard, “his purpose is not to deify the individual but to un-deify society” (Westphal 1991, p. 36).

The danger for the Christian faith is to identify salvation with socialization. “By calling itself ‘a Christian nation,’ society seems to be placing itself in the role of mediator between God and the individual” (Westphal 1991, p. 36). Its aim is to “abolish God” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 89). In Kierkegaard’s various writings, there is a sustained polemic against “the deification of the age, the race, the universal, the totality, and the established order” (Westphal, 1991, p. 33). For Kierkegaard, Christendom, in theory or practice, is a revolt against God. Kierkegaard’s critique of the deification of the established order is in order to defend the truth as expressed by Augustine: “As it is, there is one road, and one only...and this road is provided by one who is himself God and man. As God, he is the goal; as man, he is the way” (Augustine 1984, p. 431).

## 2. Augustine: the City of God and the Earthly City

Paul Weithman says,

Augustine is relatively uninterested in a question about government that was of central to both Plato and Aristotle: What form of a government is best?... Augustine is uninterested in the historical and social processes by which one regime—kingship, for example—is typically transformed into another” (Weithman 2001, p. 237).

What concerns Augustine in his political philosophy is the relation of human society to God: Which one is the ultimate truth for human beings to live in this world, God or man?

The two cities in Augustine, the City of God and the Earthly City, are not political concepts. The distinction between the City of God and the Earthly City is not one between church and state; it is not made based on

geography, race, gender, culture, nation, language or social groups, but rather on two kinds of love, one's love to God and self-love. In the *City of God*, Augustine says,

the two cities were created by two kinds of love: the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt for self. In fact, the earthly city glories in itself, the Heavenly City glories in the Lord. The former looks for glory from men, the latter finds its highest glory in God (Augustine 1984, p. 593).

The City of God and the City of Earth are mutually exclusive to each other, and in Kierkegaardian language one is either a member of the City of God, loving God to the point of contempt for one's self, or a member of the Earthly City, whose self-love can be a contempt for God. In the earthly city, to be recognized by other man is the highest and ultimate concern of its members; mutual recognition among human beings, not God, is key to self-identification. Augustine says, "when man lives 'by the standard of man' and not 'by the standard of God', he is like the Devil" (Augustine 1984, p. 552). For Augustine, when man lives according to the human standard, he is a member of the earthly city in which God is hated. The self-deification of the established order results in not just forgetfulness of God, but also "contempt for God." Augustine says, "The fact is that man was created right, on condition that he should live by the standard of his creator, not by his own, carrying out not his own will, but his creator's. Falsehood consists in not living in the way for which he was created" (Augustine 1984, p. 552). God's will, rather than the will of an individual human being or the general public, is what one should follow in this world. Either God's will or human will, you have to choose one. Either / or; there is no middle way.

Politically speaking, in this world, people in the two cities behave differently. In the earthly city, "the lust for domination lords it over its princes as over the nations it subjugates" (Augustine 1984, p. 593), and "its wise men who live by men's standards have pursued the goods of the body or of their own mind, or of both...and their senseless heart was darkened; in asserting their wisdom—that is, in exalting themselves in their wisdom, under the domination of pride—they became foolish" (Augustine 1984, p. 593). Their seeking for self-recognition depends on other human beings; the self-certainty of their own selves is shown in their domination of others. People worship strength and power.

In the City of God, however, “those put in authority and those subject to them serve one another in love, the ruler by their counsel, the subjects by obedience” (Augustine 1984, p. 593). “In the Heavenly City...man’s only wisdom is the devotion which rightly worships the true God and looks for its reward in the fellowship of the saints” (Augustine 1984, p. 594). In the City of God, both the ruler and the ruled have the same goal in mind, that is, the love of God. Social or political status plays no role in one’s love of God. For those who are in the position of the ruling class, in the City of God, their goal is not to seek domination of the ruled, while for those who are ruled, they do not seek to overthrow the ruling class in order for themselves to be put in authority. Does this mean that for Augustine, a Christian is indifferent to the issue of justice, a question central to modern political philosophy?

Augustine would approve the classical definition of justice: “justice is that virtue which assigns to everyone his due” (Augustine 1984, p. 882). How should a person be treated? What should he receive? Augustine asks, “what kind of justice is it that takes a man away from the true God and subjects him to unclean demons” (Augustine 1984, p. 882)? What is justice, that is, what should a person get his due? This question should not be answered according to human standard. Justice or true justice is that which can confer true happiness to a person, or can make a person achieve the most happiness he can get. In this world, however, we are “prone to seek happiness in the possession of things that cannot confer it, including pleasures of the flesh, transient glory, enduring reputations, and, especially, power over others” (Weithman 2001, p. 236). We do not love things according to their worth. This is called disordered love. In disordered love, we take ourselves or our desires as the most importance, that is, we take ourselves as the standard to make judgments on what is of worth or important to us. In self-love, when we turn away from God, “even the best human lives are beset by inner conflict and conflicts with other people, conflicts evident in even the most intimate human relationships” (Weithman 2001, p. 236). In this situation, does a person get his or her due, true happiness?

According to Augustine, true justice, for human beings, consists in serving God only. In serving God, human beings receive their most happiness, eternal happiness. For an individual human being, “in serving God the soul rightly commands the body, and in the soul itself the reason which is subject to its Lord God rightly commands the lusts and the other perverted elements” (Augustine 1984, p. 883). If a man does not listen to the command

of God, his reason cannot control vicious elements in the soul, and “there can be no sort of doubt that there is no justice in a gathering which consists of such men” (Augustine 1984, p. 883). A just state, for Augustine, is one in which all its members are God-fearing people. Both the individual and the state have the same goal, obeying the commandment of God. Just as Kierkegaard emphasizes, before God, both the I and the We should feel fear and trembling, “fear and trembling signify that there is a God—something every human being and every established order ought not to forget for a moment” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 88).

Justice, in its strictest sense, is divine justice. Augustine says, “God...created all things in supreme wisdom and ordered them in perfect justice; and in establishing the mortal race of mankind as the greatest ornament of earthly things, he has given to mankind certain good things suitable to this life” (Augustine 1984, p. 872). If all things are ordered in perfect justice by God, then, human beings should love objects according to their worth. Basically, we may say that there are three kinds of just relationship for human beings who are mortal: (1) the just relationship with materials things; (2) the just relationship with other human beings; and (3) the just relationship with God. The first two kinds of just relationship result in temporal peace, “the peace that consists in bodily health and soundness, and in fellowship with one’s kind” (Augustine 1984, p. 872). When we say that justice is that which assigns everyone his due, this means that any individual human is entitled to everything necessary to safeguard the temporal peace. For example, he or she should receive “whatever is suitable for the feeding and clothing of the body, for the care of the body and the adornment of the person” (Augustine 1984, p. 872). Any government or society should meet the just requirement for achieving temporal peace of all its members. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help the poor, these are part of divine justice. This is in accordance with the commandment of God that one should love one’s neighbor as one loves himself. Augustine says, “all man’s use of temporal things is related to the enjoyment of earthly peace in the earthly city; whereas in the Heavenly City it is related to the enjoyment of eternal peace” (Augustine 1984, p. 872). Because human beings are created in God’s image, divine justice also grant human beings “the peace of immortality, and the glory and honour appropriate to [them] in a life which is eternal for the enjoyment of God and of one’s neighbor in God” (Augustine 1984, p. 872). Temporal peace is not the end, but a means that serve human beings to arrive their ultimate goal, the eternal happiness. Augustine clearly warns that if one does not use

mortal goods in the right way, he “shall not receive the blessings of eternal life” (Augustine 1984, p. 872). In Kierkegaardian language, if one relates to the relative in an absolute way, if one sees the enjoyment of earthly peace as the final goal, then, one is committed a sin against God.

The relation between temporal peace and immoral peace is, for Augustine, that

so long as he is in this mortal body, he is a pilgrim in a foreign land, away from God; therefore he walks by faith, not by sight. That is why he views all peace, of body or of soul, or of both, in relation to that peace which exists between mortal man and immortal God, so that he may exhibit an ordered obedience in faith in subjection to the everlasting law (Augustine 1984, p. 873).

It is in faith, in one’s relation to God that one finds oneself as “a pilgrim in a foreign land.” That is, in this world, one does not identify oneself with any nation, race, culture, language, or political party. When one, being a Christian, is on pilgrimage in this world, what one should do? “God, our master, teaches two chief precepts, love of God and love of neighbor, and in them man finds three objects for his love: God, himself, and his neighbor” (Augustine 1984, p. 873). For Augustine, if a man loves God, he is not wrong in loving himself and others. In his relation to his wife, his children, the members of his household, and all other human beings, there is an “ordered harmony about giving and obeying orders” (Augustine 1984, p. 874). The one who gives orders is not out of lust for domination of others, because “orders are given by those who are concerned for the interests of others...with compassion in taking care of others” (Augustine 1984, p. 874).

Is it necessarily true that “it was unjust that men should be servants to other men as their masters” (Augustine 1984, p. 882)? Augustine argues that if servitude is in the interest of those who obey orders from others, and “when unprincipled men are deprived of the freedom to do wrong with impunity,” “the subjugated will be better off, because they were worse off before subjugation” (Augustine 1984, pp. 882-883). Slavery is closely related to the issue of justice in human history. For a modern mind, slavery can never be justified for any reason. What is Augustine’s understanding of slavery? First, slavery is a form of punishment caused by sin. Since all men are created equally before God and by God, “no man is the slave either of man or of sin” (Augustine 1984, p. 875). “The first cause of slavery...is sin, whereby man was subjected to man in the condition of bondage; and this can only happen by the judgement of God, with whom there is no injustice”

(Augustine 1984, p. 875). According to Augustine, one could be a slave to a human being, and one could also be a slave to his own lust. In the relation between slave and master, “humility is as salutary for the servants as pride is harmful to the masters” (Augustine 1984, p. 875). If one understands slavery as a punishment by God, then what is important is not to free oneself from the bondage of another human being; the cultivation of humility is more important than being physically free. The real domination, “the most pitiless domination that devastates the hearts of men, is that exercised by this very lust for domination” (Augustine 1984, p. 875). Understood this way, unrighteous masters are real slaves: “though many devout men are slaves to unrighteous masters, yet the masters they serve are not themselves free men” (Augustine 1984, p. 875). We may say that there are two kinds of slavery for Augustine, political slavery and spiritual slavery. Political slavery can be a pilgrimage for Christians: “if they cannot be set free by their masters, they themselves thus make their slavery, in a sense, free, by serving not with the slyness of fear, but with the fidelity of affection, until all injustice disappears and all human lordship and power is annihilated, and God is all in all” (Augustine 1984, p. 875). Political slavery has no impact on one’s relation to God.

Second, slavery can be useful in the matter of worship of God. According to Augustine, righteous masters “are concerned for the welfare of all in their households in respect of the worship and service of God” and it is in God “we must place our hope of everlasting goods” (Augustine 1984, p. 876). Righteous masters may treat their own children and slaves differently in terms of material goods, but they “have an obligation to exercise the authority of masters greater than the duty of slaves to put up with their condition as servants” (Augustine 1984, p. 876). Righteous masters have a duty to restrain a slave from sin or punish his sin, “longing and praying that [he] may come to the heavenly home” (Augustine 1984, p. 876). It seems that for Augustine, there is only one equality in the relation of master and slave: true freedom can be obtained only in the immortal state.

Augustine does not simply discuss whether slavery is just or unjust; all human social institutions and systems must be judged according to God’s standard, not human standard. The government and management of human affairs, no matter in what form, is just if it is useful for human beings to worship and serve God. The unjust social system is harmful to one’s worship of God.

From what we have said above, we can say that for Augustine the distinction between the City of God and the City of Earth is not one between church and state. One is in the City of God because one loves God only and in the right way. And all the members of the City of God form a true “commonwealth” in which they are unified by their love of God. In their love of God, members of the City of God merely use the world while they are in it; their relation to this world is relative according to the nature of things in this world. For those who live in the Earthly City, their disordered love seeks true happiness in this world, that is, to love something which is not according its nature. Augustine says, “the earthly city is generally divided against itself by litigation, by wars, by battles, by the pursuit of victories that bring death with them or at best are doomed to death” (Augustine 1984, p. 599). The members of the Earthly City are slaves of their own passions. Whether in the mind of an individual or among its members, peace is always temporal because nothing can give them a unification. Augustine says, “the present life on earth, however full it may be of the greatest possible blessings of soul and body and of external circumstances, is, in comparison, most miserable” (Augustine 1984, p. 881).

What is the goal of people who live in the Earthly City? When Augustine says, “the earthly city, whose life is not based on faith, aims at an earthly peace, and it limits the harmonious agreement of citizens concerning the giving and obeying of orders to the establishment of a kind of compromise between human wills about the things relevant to mortal life” (Augustine 1984, p. 877), is this not the central question and concern of modern political philosophy? In contrast to people in the Earthly City, for those human beings “whose life is based on faith”, they look forward to “the blessings which are promised as eternal in the future making use of earthly and temporal things like a pilgrim in a foreign land” (Augustine 1984, p. 877).

Being a Christian, the only correct attitude one should have to this world is that one must not let anything in this world become a hindrance to worship of the true God. The earthly peace can be made use of “without detriment true religion and piety” (Augustine 1984, p. 878).

It is one’s spiritual relationship that determines whether one is in the City of God or in the Earthly City. As Paul Weithman points out, “no visible society or institution can be identified with either the City of God or the Earthly City. The distinction between the two cities is an eschatological rather than a political one. It is a distinction between those who are and are not destined for eternal life with God” (Weithman 2001, p. 237).

For Augustine, true justice can only be found in those who “serve God as God himself has commanded that he should be served” (Augustine 1984, p. 891), and the “peace of God’s servants, a perfect tranquility” cannot be “experienced in this life” (Augustine 1984, p. 892). Christians are on pilgrimage in this world.

### **3. Jesus Christ: “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s and to God the things that are God”**

When Kierkegaard critiques the self-deification of the established order, and when Augustine affirms that Christians are on pilgrimage in this world, are their views in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ? How one should act in this world? The ultimate authority is God himself. “Of the knowledge of God,” it is “attainable only through the one Mediator” (Augustine 1984, p. 430). Jesus is the Incarnation of God. God speaks to human beings through Jesus Christ. On the pilgrimage in this world,

the mind had to be trained and purified by faith; and in order to give man’s mind greater confidence in its journey towards the truth along the way of faith, God the Son of God, who is himself the Truth, took manhood without abandoning his godhead, and thus established and founded this faith, so that man might have a path to man’s God through the man who was God....As man he is our Mediator; as man he is our way (Augustine 1984, pp. 430-431).

In this world, the only manifestation of God is Jesus of Nazareth; he is the Truth himself. Through his teachings and actions, Jesus had shown human beings the way to God.

In the New Testaments, it is seen that Jesus lived a very simple life, he was not married, did not have a job, did not join in any religious or political groups or institutions. He did not tell human beings about the knowledge of this world, nor did he teach human beings how to obtain basic skills for surviving in this world. In his short life in this world, “Jesus teaches and heals” (Holy Bible 1995, Luke 6:17). Jesus taught the good news of the kingdom of God, healed the sick and disabled people, resurrected some people’s lives, cast out demons, and denounced the Pharisees, the scribes, the lawyers, and the priests. He did not come into this world to change it or make it a better place. He did not try to eliminate poverty or injustice in this world. He had no intention to be the ruler of this world. Does this



mean that Jesus is not concern about this world? It is obviously not the case. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Holy Bible 1995, John 3: 16). “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (Holy Bible 1995, John 3: 17). The concern of Jesus is about true justice, about how one should live a life which leads him to eternal happiness. True justice is achieved in the death of Jesus Christ; true justice is the salvation of human beings whose life is based in faith. “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (Holy Bible 1995, John 8:36). Contrary to what modern political philosophy has understood, freedom, in its authentic and true sense, can only be realized through Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus Christ we can see what should be the central concern of political philosophy.

In Matthew 22, Mark 12, and Luke 20, Jesus told people about the parable of the wicked tenants against the Pharisees, and the Pharisees asked Jesus the question about paying taxes in order to trap him by what he said, and then to arrest and kill him. When the Pharisees asked, “Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not” (Holy Bible 1995, Luke 20: 22)? Jesus answered, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Holy Bible 1995, Luke 20: 25). We may say that this is Jesus’s political philosophy in a nutshell.

Why is the question about paying the taxes a trap for Jesus? It is concerned with two authorities, human authority and divine authority. Before they asked the question, the Pharisees said to Jesus, “you show deference to no one, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth” (Holy Bible 1995, Luke 20: 21). If one serves and obeys only God, should he or she show no respect to human authority in this world? The Pharisees knew clearly that in the world the most powerful person was the king of a nation, and the king had the power to kill anyone he disliked. Their questions showed that the Pharisees feared more about the king than about God. Between God and the king, there is an either / or question. Either you obey God only, and then be contemptuous to the king, or you obey the king, and then be contemptuous to God. “No slave can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Holy Bible 1995, Luke 16: 13). For the same reason, we may say that you cannot serve both God and the king. Is this contradictory to Jesus’s saying that “give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s and to God the things that are God’s”?

How should we understand Jesus's teaching? First of all, we should say that nothing in this world, be it a state or church, is God's manifestation. One's relation to God is not mediated by the Hegelian ethical life. Being a Christian, one serves and loves God only, but this does not mean that one has no relation to the emperor (or human authority).

Here we first consider the relation between Jesus Christ and the human authority. The authority of Jesus comes from God, and it is above all human authorities. Human authorities rely on their power to make others obey them. Jesus came into this world for the salvation of human beings, for their eternal life and eternal happiness. He did not come into the world in order to compete with human authorities for power. It is not necessary for divine authority to prove that it is higher than human authority because divine authority is eternal, while human authority is temporal and its destiny is death. In the social and historical processes, no regime is everlasting, and it has been always the case that a regime is replaced by another, and this transformation has never ceased. Human authority is relative. In the strictest sense, only divine authority is authority because it is eternal, absolute, without any qualification. Jesus Christ came into this world not in order to topple a government or human kingdom, nor was he to appoint somebody to be a human king. Nothing in New Testaments indicates that Jesus Christ wanted to place himself on the throne. He "never contended in an external sense for a place in the world" (Kierkegaard 1995, p. 135). Jesus did not tell human beings what kind of king or kingdom is a good king or kingdom. We may say that for Jesus what kind of government is the best one is not an important issue. This might explain that Augustine is relatively uninterested in questions central to Plato and Aristotle. From the point of view of divine authority, it makes no difference for one to live under a dictatorship or a democratic government if neither of them is useful for one to worship God. If Jesus's sole mission was to tell human beings the good news of the kingdom of God, and to save those who have faith in God for their eternal happiness, it wasn't necessary for him to cause conflicts between him and the world.

This does not mean that Jesus has no relation with the world. As Jesus told his disciples, "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you" (Holy Bible 1995, John 15: 18-19). Human authority, in whatever form, naturally hates Jesus. In relation

to God, one either hates God or loves God. Jesus says, “my kingdom is not from this world” (John 18: 36). No human society or history can find justification in divine providence. Humans do not naturally love God and Jesus; they love the idols they created according to the human standard. Jesus’s words clearly show that Hegel’s ethical life is not the God of the Bible. God is not a speculative concept, nor is he a social creation. Jesus says, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God’s wrath” (John 3: 35). This is why Kierkegaard says, “Fear and trembling signify that there is a God—something every human being and every established order ought not to forget for a moment” (Kierkegaard 1991, p. 88).

In one’s relationships with God and with the world, what one can learn from the life and sayings of Jesus? Jesus is the way: “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14: 6). Being a Christian, one should imitate Christ. How should one, being a Christian, understand Jesus’s saying about paying taxes? Since the only concern and the most important question for a Christian is his or her relationship to God, a Christian’s whole life should be oriented to the purification of his soul, to serve God and obey all the commandments of God. Social and political justice is not the end in itself, but a means for worshiping God. As Augustine correctly points out, a slave in his relationship with his master might use his situation to cultivate the virtue of humility, while the master may harm himself in gratifying his pride. True slavery is being bound to one’s passion and desires. From a Christian point of view, power, wealth, race, culture, language, political system, economics, gender, color, knowledge and technology, etc. none of different social elements play any role in determining one’s relationship with God. In Augustine’s language, the life in this world is a pilgrimage to the Heavenly City. A Christian lives under certain political system, and paying taxes is part of the earthly game. One bows to the king because one lives an earthly life. One’s relationship to the state has meanings only for this life, however, what defines the life of a Christian is the eternal relationship to God.

In Luke 18, we read that Jesus healed a blind beggar near Jericho. We all know that a beggar is one of the most marginalized people in the world. A beggar even has no social identity. For a blind beggar, what would it mean to live in this world? He cannot see things around him; the world is darkness for him. Ordinarily a blind beggar is regarded to be one of the most miserable living beings. The blind beggar healed by Jesus near Jericho, however, is not miserable at all because in his heart he had faith in Jesus of Nazareth.

His faith in Jesus made him one of the happiest persons in the world. When he asked Jesus to let him see again, Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has saved you” (Luke 18: 42). The blind beggar was physically blind, but there are people who are spiritually blind; the blind beggar is among “those who do not see may see”, but the Pharisees are those “who do see may become blind” (John 9: 39). The center and the gravity of one’s life is outside of this world. If one has faith in God, one should live like the birds and lilies: “do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of this world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well” (Luke 12: 29-31). Believing in God, and in having faith in God, you should also believe that God will give you the necessities for living in this world. If you really believe in God, you would have no worries about your life in this world.

One may wonder if Christians concern themselves with what is happening in this world. A Christian’s concern with this world is his love of neighbor. God commands that one shall love others in the way as one loves oneself, and the others include enemies. Following Jesus, one should not “regard people with partiality” (Mark 12: 14). Love, in its truest sense, is without boundary. Love all human beings as one loves oneself, this is beyond all moralities and politics from the human point of view. It even offends human wisdom. “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you, and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again” (Luke 6: 27-30). Self-love or human wisdom would see the teaching of love for enemies as foolish because it makes no sense if we always take love to be reciprocal, as something like “if I scratch your back, you scratch mine.” The self-denial in Christian love is squarely contradictory to the pursuit of self-interests of individuals and social groups.

## Concluding Remarks

In the paper I have shown that Kierkegaard and Augustine are in accordance with the New Testament in political philosophy. For Kierkegaard, the self-deification of the established order is a sin against God. No human

beings, no social institutions can ask for absolute allegiance from a human being. The relation between a human being and God is so intimate that only God-man, Jesus, is the Mediator. For Augustine, members of the City of God are on a pilgrimage in this world. It is in the relation with God that human beings can enjoy perfect justice, absolute peace or tranquility, and true freedom. Earthly and temporal things are made use of in order to look forward for blessings of eternal life in the future. Jesus is the way for human beings to live this earthly life. It is in Jesus Christ that a Christian is saved. Universal love, rather than the calculation of interests, is the central concern of Christian political philosophy. In relation to God, one's relation to the world is relativized and suspended. From the point of view of modern secular political philosophy, we can say that in Christianity there is a form of apolitical philosophy.

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