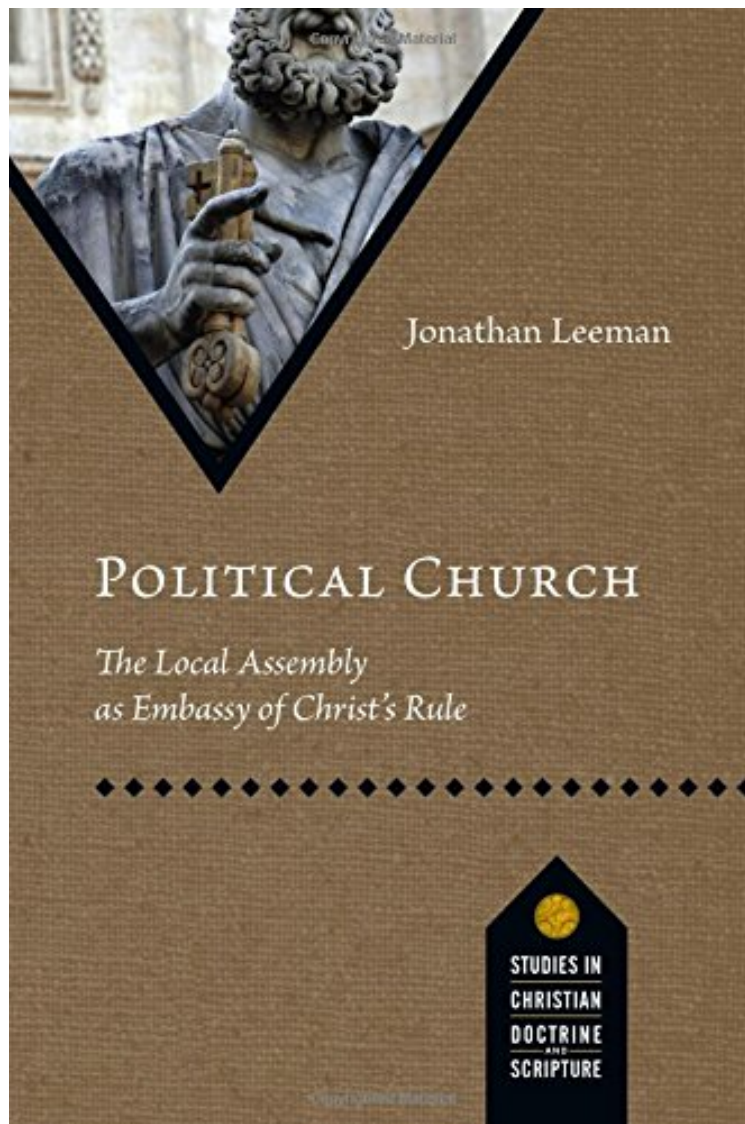


[Download pdf] Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ's Rule (Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture)

Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ's Rule (Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture)

Jonathan Leeman

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Jonathan Leeman : Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ's Rule (Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ's Rule (Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This book is excellent. While it certainly gets technical in parts (which ...By Paul RThis book is excellent. While it certainly gets technical in parts (which are not for the faint of heart), it is excellently written, researched, and historically informed.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Deep Reflection on a Complex TopicBy J.W. WartickJonathan Leemans Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christs Rule is a detailed study of the interaction between Christianity and the public sphere. Leemans central thesis is that the church, as the local assembly, acts as an embassya political place in which Christs rule on earth is present.The book is broken up into 6 lengthy chapters, each building on the last, as Leeman argues for his thesis. The first two chapters address the questions What is politics? and What is an Institution? From there, Leeman builds on politics of creation, the Fall, the New Covenant, and the Kingdom.One of the most critical areas of the book is that there is no such thing as a totally neutral ground from which to build a political system. There is no religiously neutral political philosophy. To make the case for this central point, Leeman draws extensively from people like William Cavanaugh and Stanely Hauerwas. Essentially, the point is that because ones religious beliefs (or alleged lack thereof) govern, effectively, all areas of ones thought, one cannot excise them without effectively abandoning those beliefs, thus going against them. There is much more to this argument, but it is one of the many fascinating areas Leeman highlights.Exactly how does the church act as an embassy for Christ? The sixth chapter, The Politics of the Kingdom, presents a number of fascinating insights into this question. Leeman takes a deep look at the notion of the Keys of the Kingdom, drawn from Matthew 16 (334ff). This discussion draws from multiple commentaries and spans questions from what is the church? to how ought we perform church discipline? to whether the church ought to function as a kind of civil magistrate. These kind of deep questions permeate the pages of Political Church such that readers will want to spend a great deal of time poring over the text and reflecting on the points therein.There are a few areas worth critiquing in the book. First, much discussion time is spent on the notion of how exactly Gods covenant went from old to new covenant, but this all plays out on a kind of amorphous theological backdrop such that it is difficult to determine exactly what Leeman is saying. Is he pushing a kind of dispensational theology? At points it seems so, but other times it does not. Because the theological point here is not central to his book, Leeman doesnt give readers enough to see where hes coming from, particularly in chapter fours (The Politics of the Fall) discussion of different covenants.Another difficulty is, admittedly, drawn from a minor point in the book. Leeman states explicitly that, if membership in the new covenant requires both the activity of the Spirit and the assent of the individual to God then membership in the church should be restricted to those who give their assent. To place infants born into a Christian nation onto church roles misidentifies Gods presence, reputation, righteousness and justice (272). On the one hand, his notion that membership in the church requires both the Spirit and assent is explicitly tied to his understanding of the body of the church as a political one. On the other hand, although he stresses that exact point, it is never clear exactly what that means in terms of justification. This takes us away from the purpose of his book, but given statements like these it seems clear that justification is at least some part of what he is referring to. Justification is the work of the spirit, saving people who are dead slaves to sin who cannot free themselves. But if thats the case, then his objection to infants being placed on church rolls seems to fall apart, for although infants cannot express consent, that does not seem to be required for the doctrine of justification. As a Lutheran particularly, I affirm that infants may have faith, because faith is a gift of the Spirit rather than an act of humans. Yet even here, Leeman might object noting that he is speaking in political terms rather than in the terms I am using.A final difficulty is with Leemans reading of Luthers Two Kingdoms model. Although he does avoid the most egregious misinterpretations of Luther on this point, Leeman argues that Luthers model turns Gods people/not-Gods-people into church/state or Word/state. Then, he argues that the Bible and the church have words for those who are not Gods people as well and the state rules over Gods people (274-275, for example). But this is not what Luthers model entails. Its not that church/state on Luthers model never interact; indeed, Leemans own conception seems to be extremely close to the core of what Luther was getting at in his doctrine of Two Kingdoms. He constructs it around the idea that there are two ages rather than two kingdoms, and that there are two kinds of life- secular and eternal (275). Yet even this speaking of two ages ultimately comes back to noting that there is present simultaneity of the ages, leading one to wonder how far from two kingdoms that exist simultaneously Leemans own argument truly is. This does go beyond Luther, but I think its the direction Luthers own teaching was aiming towards, and it is interesting that Luther draws frequent mention as being close, but mistaken (29-31; 177; 275; etc.).These minor points, though I have labored over them, do little to take away from the monumental importance of this work. Leeman has done a tremendous service to those interested in delving deeply into a theological vision of church and state. Each chapter brings together exegesis, philosophy, and sociology in informative, often surprising ways.Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christs Rule is an important work that is sure to influence all who read it, whether they agree with the contents or not. It is essential reading for those curious about the interplay between Christianity and politics. I highly recomend it.The Good+Engages with multiple voices throughout church history+Generally offers balanced, ecumenical perspective+Blends exegesis, systematics, sociology, and more+Extensive interaction with experts in related fieldsThe Bad-Wrongfully excludes children and infants from Christs Kingdom-Somewhat vague on some theological pointsSourceJonathan Leeman, Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christs Rule (Downers Grove,

IL: InterVarsity, 2016). 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not an introductory volume, but a very helpful one. By Spencer

The thesis of Leeman's book is that the church is a kind of embassy, only it represents a kingdom of even greater political consequence to the nations and their governors. And this embassy represents a kingdom not from across geographical space but from across eschatological time. This would be a dangerous theory if Leeman were arguing that the church has the same political purpose as a parliament or congress. There is a difference between the church and the state; they have overlapping magisteria but different means of influence. Leeman's vision of the church and the state is not of two kingdoms, but of a single kingdom with state and church reflecting the authorities of the current kingdom and the future kingdom, respectively. Leeman stands well within the Augustinian tradition via a deep interest, though not uniformity, with Oliver O'Donovan. This is not an introductory volume on political theology. Leeman's discussion is a distinct approach to the place of the church in contemporary politics, but understanding this volume requires a fair understanding of the various political theologies that he is critiquing and is building upon. At the same time, Leeman's volume begins a step before many others do by addressing some of the basic questions that one must understand before attempting a political theology. The first two chapters of the volume address the important questions, (1) What is politics? and (2) What is an institution? The various meanings of these terms are discussed in some depth before moving on. Though Leeman leaves some flexibility in the terms for his own use, his discussions of historic definitions provide context for the remainder of the book. The next four chapters outline a positive political theology using a biblical theology as a foundation. The chapters run along the progression of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. The chapter on creation places God at the center of all politics. He made this world and is the just and righteous judge of all things. It is his authority that is represented through the work of both the government and the church. The nature of politics is shaped by the nature of the creator God. In dealing with the fall, Leeman goes beyond the actual original sin of the primal couple to discuss how fallenness has influenced all human interactions since that time. Leeman walks through the biblical storyline to show how sin has influenced government and increased the need for its justice. The chapter on the politics of the new covenant focuses on the ongoing need for the work of the cross to be done in public. This means repentance, forgiveness, and good natured striving for the common good. Leeman is careful to distance his view from theonomy. In fact, he notes that attempts to bring about the eschatological kingdom on earth now never end well. Instead, Christians should work to apply the gospel as much as possible to earthly situations as one would expect of citizens on the new covenant kingdom. The last chapter deals with the politics of the kingdom. However, this does not refer to the eschatological kingdom, but is an especial focus on the polity of the local congregation. Leeman exercises his Baptist muscles in talking about the importance of church membership, credo baptism, and right practice of the Lord's Supper. These are elements of the church that prefigure the coming kingdom. By being faithful to justly administer its own borders, the church stands as witness to the kingdom that is to come. The church is a political body because its policies and ministry influence the world, though it begins at a very local, individual level. Leeman's book is a helpful approach to political theology because it begins with the narrative of Scripture and asks what the text says about the church's political engagement. By beginning with the ideas of Scripture and working out, he formulates a much more distinctively Christian political theology. I'd give this 4.5 stars if I could. The content is excellent, but the prose drags at some points. I'm rounding up because of the high value I place on Leeman's original contribution to the field. Note: I received a gratis copy of this volume from the publisher with no expectation of a positive review. This is an edited version of a review at Ethics and Culture.

The church is political. Theologians have been debating this claim for years. Liberationists, Anabaptists, Augustinians, neo-Calvinists, Radical Orthodox and others continue to discuss the matter. What do we mean by politics and the political? What are the limits of the church's political reach? What is the nature of the church as an institution? How do we establish these claims theologically? Jonathan Leeman sets out to address these questions in this significant work. Drawing on covenant theology and the "new institutionalism" in political science, Leeman critiques political liberalism and explores how the biblical canon informs an account of the local church as an embassy of Christ's kingdom. Political Church heralds a new era in political theology.

"Leeman's well-argued book is a welcome reminder that the full reality of the church is to be found in the local congregation. I cannot imagine that his book will not become a standard work in this area of theological inquiry." (Stanley Hauerwas, Gilbert T. Rowe Professor Emeritus of Divinity and Law, Duke University) "This is a very important book. Impressive in the depth and breadth of its sources, Political Church offers a fresh, cogent and well-informed model that deserves wide attention. Situating his arguments in past and present debates, Leeman formulates a unique paradigm for understanding simultaneously the nature of the church and its relation to the kingdoms of this age. Political Church is an example of a new level of evangelical reflection and serious engagement." (Michael Horton, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California) "Difficult issues related to church, state and religious freedom arise on a daily basis and fill our newspapers and inboxes. In Political Church, Jonathan Leeman offers a way forward that we would do well to read and consider.

The virtues of this book are considerable, ranging from its institutional reading of Scripture and the larger society to its trenchant critique of liberalism, with the latter's exaltation of the expansive self and its wants." (David T. Koyzis, Redeemer University College)"Jonathan Leeman is one of the most careful, intelligent and skilled theological minds of our day, particularly in matters of ecclesiology. This new volume is a courageous defense of the centrality and indispensability of the local church. Political Church is a model for sound exegetical, biblical and systematic theology that makes a powerful argument. For anyone thinking seriously about ecclesiology, local church ministry, the relationship between church and state, or even religious liberty, this volume is a brilliant resource." (R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary)"The church, we are sometimes told, is a fellowship, not an institution. Jonathan Leeman makes us think again. Broad-ranging, deeply biblical, widely informed both theologically and politically, Political Church is a fine and statesmanlike contribution that deserves our careful attention. We need to capture the vision of the local church as an embassy of Christ's rule. This is just what the author enables us to do." (Stephen N. Williams, Union Theological College)"An incisive and distinctly evangelical contribution to political theology, Leeman's Political Church supplants the tired dichotomies of classical liberalism by recapturing the church's unique political ontology as a community with a message that is also at the same time an institution with keys to the kingdom. To bear witness to the rule of Christ is also to represent him publicly to the world. Leeman's account is impressively well-judged and advances a conception of church as embassy that those who take the rule of Christ seriously cannot afford to overlook. Essential (and edifying!) reading." (Matthew Arbo, Oklahoma Baptist University)"Jonathan Leeman in this profound and important work argues that Christ is Lord of all, that he rules both in the church and in the public square. At the same time, Leeman unpacks for us the differences between the political sphere and the realm of the church. The implications for our ecclesiology are spelled out in a noteworthy way. Here we find robust biblical and systematic theology deftly applied to our role as citizens and church members." (Thomas R. Schreiner, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary)About the AuthorJonathan Leeman (PhD, University of Wales) is the editorial director for 9Marks, an organization that produces church leadership resources in Washington, DC. He is the author of *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love and Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*, as well as the editor of *The Underestimated Gospel*. He is also an occasional lecturer at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and an adjunct teacher for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. After earning undergraduate and graduate degrees in political science, Leeman began his career in journalism working as an editor for an international economics magazine. Since his call to ministry, he has earned an MDiv and a PhD in theology and worked as an interim pastor. He currently serves as an elder at Capitol Hill Baptist Church and lives with his wife and four daughters in a suburb of Washington, D.C.