

Whereas, for Augustine, "the church was the historic *locus* where the contradiction between the historical and the divine was overcome in fact," for Niebuhr, the church is "that *locus* where the judgment and the mercy of God upon the historical are mediated, and where, therefore, the contradiction of the historical and the holy is overcome in principle" (*NDM*, 2: 139; cf. 137).

"This conviction," Niebuhr argues, "governs Augustine's whole philosophy of history. The historical conflict between self-love and the love of God is essentially a conflict between the church and the world [*sc.* the world and the church!]; and the commingling of church and world never means that the church might, as an historic institution, become the vehicle of evil. The church does not, in other words, really stand under the judgment of God. Rather it reigns with Christ. 'Even now,' he declares, 'the church is the Kingdom of Christ, and the Kingdom of heaven. That is to say even now his saints reign with him, not indeed in the same way as they will reign then. Nor yet do the tares reign with him, although in the church they are growing with the wheat' [*De civ. Dei*, Bk xx, Ch. 9]" (139).

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