

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background Problem

A survey conducted in late 2018 found that the majority of Singapore residents felt that religious leaders should stay away from politics. Approximately half of the Christian respondents were opposed to religious leaders speaking out against policies that contradicted their religious beliefs.<sup>1</sup> However, in fact, many pastors and theologians in church history, such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Samuel Rutherford, Abraham Kuyper, and others, were concerned about politics and developed their political theology. Some of their principles continue to influence the world to this day.

“Political” etymologically comes from the word *politic* or its source, the Latin *politicus*, which means “*of civil government*”.<sup>2</sup> It is widely defined as the use of structural power to the organization of a society or community.<sup>3</sup> “Theology” is the study of God and of God’s relation to the world.<sup>4</sup> It is normally defined as a discourse of God, as well as the relationship between human beings and other creatures with God.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Matthews, Leonard Lim, and Shanthini Selvarajan, “Religion in Singapore: The Private and Public Spheres,” *Institute of Policy Studies Working Papers*, No.33 (March 2019):7.

<sup>2</sup> *Political*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/political> (accessed Jan 2022).

<sup>3</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, Peter Manley Scott, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2019), 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Theology*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/theology> (accessed Jan 2022).

<sup>5</sup> William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Manley Scott, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2019), 3.

Craig Hovey and Elizabeth Phillips in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian*

*Political Theology* define political theology as:

- an inquiry carried out by Christian theologians in relation to the political, where the political is defined broadly to include the various ways in which humans order common life.<sup>6</sup>

Political theology is important because it helps us to understand the relationship between church and state, the nature of governments, the responsibility of resistance, the view of laws, and so on in the light of God's revelation. Understanding human political relationships in light of God's interactions with His world is the goal of political theology. This is also the reason why I am interested in political theology. As Christians, we should understand the theological connection between politics and Christianity.

The term “political theology” discussed in this thesis differs from the definition of Catholic fundamental theologian Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann. Metz formulated theology as the public consciousness of church and theology in modern times, rather than as a specific theological specialty in ethics or social teaching. He explained that first and foremost, political theology is a critical corrective of modern religion's privatization (“Religion is a private affair”) and of modern theology as transcendental, existential, or personalistic theology. Second, his political theology is a formulation of the eschatological Christian message in light of modern society, arguing that the church must become a “social-critical institution” and that theology must be a liberating explanation of faith and hope.<sup>7</sup> Jürgen Moltmann who was influenced by Metz, sees political theology as a sort of thought that emerges when one recognizes that the church has frequently cooperated with institutions of

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<sup>6</sup> Craig Hovey, Elizabeth Phillips, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Political Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), xi-xii.

<sup>7</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, ‘European Political Theology’ in Craig Hovey and Elizabeth Phillips (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Political Theology*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 9.

society that privilege the rich, white, or male (or, as in Europe, all three), and hence requires radical critique and restoration.<sup>8</sup>

John Calvin is chosen as the research subject of this thesis because I had read from an article by Stanford Reid that he considered Calvin as one of the founding fathers of modern democracy.<sup>9</sup> Calvin's political ideas not only had a significant impact on democracy in his day, but they also influenced later political thought in the Western world.<sup>10</sup> While addressing Calvin's importance as a socio-theologian today, Joel Beeke summarizes:

Calvin models for us the wide-ranging impact of his theology on Western European and North American civilization, whether it be the rise of the Western democracies; ... personal freedom, social justice, and the rule of law.<sup>11</sup>

John Calvin, although primarily a scholar, theologian, preacher, and ecclesiastical leader, showed a strong political concern throughout his entire life.<sup>12</sup> Ralph C. Hancock argues that Calvin's pervasive desire to profoundly separate and strongly integrate the human and divine spheres is founded in his concept of the unity of self-knowledge with knowledge of God.<sup>13</sup> Calvin distinguished radically between secular and religious concerns but precisely to join them fast together.<sup>14</sup> Ford Lewis Battles has described the final chapter of *Institutes of*

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<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Adams, 'Jürge Moltmann' in William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Manley Scott, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2019) 222.

<sup>9</sup> W. Stanford Reid, "John Calvin: One of the Fathers of Modern Democracy," *Christian History*, no. 12 (1986).

<sup>10</sup> W. Stanford Reid, "John Calvin: One of the Fathers of Modern Democracy," *Christian History*, no. 12 (1986).

<sup>11</sup> Joel R. Beeke, 'Twelve Reasons Calvin is Important Today' in Joel R. Beeke (ed.), *Calvin For Today* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009) 276.

<sup>12</sup> Douglas F Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World: The Influence of Calvin on Five Governments from the 16th Through 18th Centuries* (Philipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1992), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ralph C. Hancock, *Calvin and the Foundations of Modern Politics* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2011), 21.

<sup>14</sup> Ralph C. Hancock, *Calvin and the Foundations of Modern Politics* (South Bend, Indiana: St.

*the Christian Religion*, “Civil Government” as one of the most impressive parts of the work and it shows the vital contact between Calvin’s political thought and his political action just like the “Prefatory Address to Francis I”.<sup>15</sup> This closing sections of *Institutes of the Christian Religion* stand unchanged from the 1536 edition except for a reinforcing insertion which can be understood as a sort of political treatise.<sup>16</sup>

Calvin established a complete political theology while simultaneously cultivating international ties, resulting in his political theology having long-reaching consequences well beyond Geneva.<sup>17</sup> In an article, David Hall remarks that followers’ eventual elaboration and imitation of Calvin’s ideas, essentially generated a new trajectory of political dialogue. Many political principles were considered radical before Calvin but became universally accepted after his death.<sup>18</sup>

Among all the theologians, Samuel Rutherford is chosen as the research subject because he had written *Lex, Rex* which has been called “the most influential Scottish work on political theory”, “the classic statement” of Covenanter political thought<sup>19</sup> and still considered as one of the most comprehensive expressions of Calvinistic political theory<sup>20</sup>. The religious right in the United States was even citing *Lex, Rex* as a major impact on the US Constitution

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Augustine's Press, 2011), xii.

<sup>15</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated and indexed by Ford Lewis Battles. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), lxv.

<sup>16</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated and indexed by Ford Lewis Battles. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), lxvii.

<sup>17</sup> Donald Macleod, “The influence of Calvinism on politics,” *Theology in Scotland* 16.2 (2009): 5.

<sup>18</sup> David W. Hall, “Calvin on Principles of Government.” in David W. Hall, Michael A. G. Haykin, and Joel R. Beeke (ed.), *Theology Made Practical: New Studies on John Calvin and His Legacy* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017) 183.

<sup>19</sup> John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapter 1, Kindle.

<sup>20</sup> Joel Beeke, *Meet the Puritans* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006). Kindle.

and a potent argument for civil disobedience against liberal abortion laws.<sup>21</sup> According to Coffey, it may have influenced John Milton and John Lilburne.<sup>22</sup>

Samuel Rutherford is one of the famous Scottish theologians who uphold Calvinism. Donald Macleod states that Scottish Calvinism based its political theology on Calvin's but took it on a far more extreme path.<sup>23</sup> Rutherford continued Calvin's discussion of natural law, the foundation and basis of government, civil disobedience, and the application of law while presenting his political views. There is continuity between these two theologians.

In John Coffey's book, he noticed that Rutherford appealed to Calvin fourteen times in *Lex, Rex*. Rutherford admired Calvin and described him as "a man endued with the Spirit of God above any Papist".<sup>24</sup> Besides that, Rutherford's letters are significant political records because these letters show his conversation with the covenanting movement leaders in the years leading up to the revolution. The national vision that drove the Scottish revolution is also shown in his letters.<sup>25</sup> In the book *A Christian Manifesto*, which Francis A. Schaeffer dedicated to Rutherford, he sees Rutherford's *Lex, Rex* as an important milestone of our day.<sup>26</sup>

Although Calvin and Rutherford did not live at the same time, Calvin's influence seems to be enormous in Rutherford's thoughts, which is shown in his *Lex, Rex* and letters.

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<sup>21</sup> John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapter 1, Kindle.

<sup>22</sup> John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapter 1, Kindle.

<sup>23</sup> Donald Macleod, "The influence of Calvinism on politics," *Theology in Scotland* 16.2 (2009): 7.

<sup>24</sup> John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapter 3, Kindle.

<sup>25</sup> John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapter 2, Kindle.

<sup>26</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 6.

Therefore, this thesis will examine how Calvin influenced Rutherford in political theology, which then impact the understanding of the nature of good government, the duty of resistance, the view of the law, etc. These influences are still applicable today as important teaching for Reformed theology passed down through the lines of the political theology of John Calvin and Samuel Rutherford.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

The main research question from this thesis is: How did John Calvin influence Samuel Rutherford in political theology and the implication and application according to the influence above?

Sub questions:

- What is John Calvin's political theology?
- What is Samuel Rutherford's political theology?
- How did John Calvin influence Samuel Rutherford in his political theology?
- What is the implication of this influence in political theology from John Calvin to Samuel Rutherford?
- What is the application of this passed down through the lines of the political theology of John Calvin and Samuel Rutherford for today's world?

## **1.3 Thesis Statement**

While Samuel Rutherford built his political theology on John Calvin's foundation, he developed it in a much more radical direction that produces implications and applications for today's world.

## **1.4 Research Method**

This thesis is a historical theological approach because it examines the developments and influence of the political thought of John Calvin to Samuel Rutherford. While this thesis examines the implication and application of political theology, it is also an ethical approach.

This thesis is a critical analysis of the influence of John Calvin on Samuel Rutherford in political theology. Firstly, I will look into political theology according to both John Calvin and Samuel Rutherford. Then, I will analyze the influence of John Calvin's thinking on Samuel Rutherford's political theology and its implication and application to today's world.

This thesis is literature research. The primary resource of John Calvin that had been used are *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, *Letters of John Calvin*, *Tracts Relating to the reformation*, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, *Calvin's Commentaries 22 volumes*, *John Calvin's Sermons on 2 Samuel: Chapter 1–13*. The primary resource for Samuel Rutherford that had been used are *Lex, Rex or The Law And The Prince*, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, *Free disputation against pretended liberty of conscience* and *Ane Catachisme Containing The Soume of Christian Religion*.

### **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of five chapters. The structure of this thesis starts with chapter one, the introduction which consists of the background problem, research questions, thesis statement, research method, and structure of the thesis. After that, followed by chapter two which discuss John Calvin's political theology. Then, chapter three discusses Samuel Rutherford's political theology. In chapter four, we will then enter an analysis of the influence of Calvin on Rutherford in political theology, as well as the implications and applications of that influence. Chapter five as the final chapter of this thesis consists of the conclusion of this thesis.