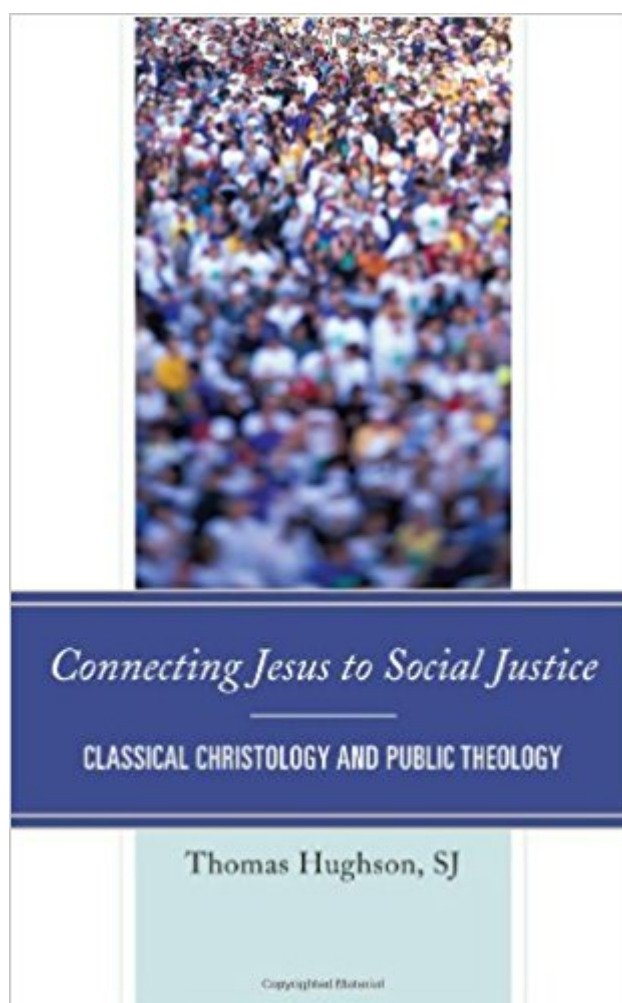


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# Connecting Jesus To Social Justice: Classical Christology And Public Theology



## Synopsis

Many Christians see the societal dimension of their faith as a matter of biblical and social ethics. Returning to classical Christology, *Connecting Jesus to Social Justice* explores messianic potential in the Council of Chalcedon on the divine identity of Christ. Who Jesus is makes all the difference to Christian entrance into the public sphere on behalf of a just society. The Messiah's divinity bears on social mission directed toward a just social order. Theological appropriation of Chalcedon overcomes a gap between the professing the Creed and interpreting social existence in light of a just social order. *Connecting Jesus to Social Justice* argues a doctrinally traditional, orthodox basis for Christian participation in the public sphere on behalf of social justice. The book addresses a situation internal to churches in the U.S. from a Catholic perspective yet not without analogies in other churches and Christian movements. Applying traditional Christology to contemporary social mission solidifies an answer to adversarial queries on the appropriateness of a social agenda. Implications in the classical Christology also confirm churches and discipleship in commitment to social justice promoted through a subaltern counter-public and then by word and deed in the public sphere.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The relation of theology to society, or rather theological exploration to lived human experiences, is one that many Christians and theologians widely appreciate.... Thomas Hughson, a Jesuit scholar and associate emeritus professor of theology at Marquette University, joins this debate and addresses the above mentioned question in a refreshingly classical theological way.... [A]ny

well-meaning Christian, theologian, and person of goodwill, deeply concerned with the search for a just social order and why Christianity ought to be involved in that search, must take seriously the full measure of Hughson's carefully researched, perspicaciously presented, and easily readable book. He not only provides us with brilliant historical, and now contextual and properly situated scholarship, but also demonstrates the enduring pertinence of the Chalcedonian Christological doctrine, which is too often relegated to the past. In fact, this work is another splendid example of authentic *ressourcement*. (Louvain Studies)

Hughson's . . . theoretical argument is compelling. Affirmations of Christ's divinity such as the Chalcedonian Definition can provide an important impetus for Christians to seek social justice. (The Ecumenist)

There are high and low Christologies, but it is clear in Hughson's book that the essential test of orthodoxy is to see Jesus and true Christians as "good news for the poor" and natural allies for all who seek social and ecological justice on this battered and imperiled earth. (Daniel C. Maguire, Marquette University; author of *A Moral Creed for All Christians*)

This is an outstanding book in public theology. It is theologically astute, scripturally oriented, philosophically nimble, and takes secular social sciences seriously as a valid input into theological-ethical analysis. The breadth and brilliance of the book derive from Thomas Hughson's dogged determination to ground public theology in classical Christology. The book forges a dynamic link between Christology and social justice in an original and inspiring scholarship. This is the kind of scholarship that powerfully speaks to multiple publics at the same time, even as it gently nudges them to link faith and social charity with concern for social justice. I eminently recommend this book to every student interested in social ethics or vested in the future of public theology. (Nimi Wariboko, PhD, Walter G. Muelder Professor of Social Ethics, School of Theology & Graduate Division of Religious Studies, Boston University, Massachusetts)

Connecting Jesus to Social Justice offers a much needed analysis of how Christological arguments might relate to Christian public witness in the twenty-first century. A Must Read. (Keri Day, Brite Divinity School)

In light of the continued salience of religion in the modern world -- contrary to many sociological predictions -- critical social theorists from Benjamin to Habermas have felt compelled to address the role of religious discourse in democratic societies. This has been variously conceptualized in terms of religious-secular dialogue based on reciprocal efforts at communication. Viewed in this context, Thomas Hughson's book is a major contribution to the facilitation of such communication within and between the multifarious publics and counter-publics of the political public sphere. Though written from a Catholic perspective, and aimed at countering the conservative Catholic tendency to occlude structural issues of social justice with an overemphasis on individual charity, its central argument, which grounds the Christian

concern with social justice in the classical core of Christology, speaks to all Christians; and its insightful use of political and social theory to construct a critical hermeneutics of religious symbols and traditions opens its "public theology" to broader audiences. Anyone theoretically interested in the collaboration of politics and religion in reforming the deep social injustices that disfigure democratic societies such as ours has much to learn from Hughson's well-informed and dialectically acute study. (Thomas McCarthy, Northwestern University) As awareness of the plight of the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized is growing, classical theological traditions speak with new urgency. That mainline Christian theologians in the United States are rediscovering the profound links between the divine and justice is a sign of hope. (Joerg Rieger, Perkins School of Theology, SMU; author of *Christ And Empire*) Thomas Hughson's *Connecting Jesus to Social Justice: Classical Christology and Public Theology* is a quite original treatment of public theology and the public church. He shows how the church's concern for social justice is rooted in the Logos-Christ's creative activity and links social charity (essential to the institution of the church) with demands for attention to social justice (which flows from the charismatic character of the church). It deserves a wide audience among those interested in either public theology or Christology. (John A. Coleman S.J., University of San Francisco) In the debates about the relationship between Jesus, the poor and public life, this book explores the challenges between Christian faith and social engagement by seeking to answer why churches, individuals, and theology commit themselves to social justice. This theologically rich, philosophically engaging and sociologically informed work provides wise guidance to the Christian community and suggests faith witness is withered to the extent the poor, marginalized, vulnerable and excluded are distanced from the concerns of Christian love and the social order not moved in the direction of justice. This book will be an indispensable guide for Christians—Catholic and Protestant—concerned to understand how Jesus guides them into social justice and an option for the poor. Professor Thomas Hughson points to findings from social science research that reveal a disconnect between social charity and social justice in the attitudes of American Catholics today. Using sociological theory to explore the disconnect and Christology to explain their inherent unity in the person of Jesus Christ, Hughson challenges public theology to reforge the link between the two in the minds and hearts of Catholics. This book is a masterful blend of sociology and theology in service to the cause of promoting social justice in American society. (Mary L. Gautier, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) With a book that may well be the most significant contribution to public theology in decades, Thomas Hughson advances the conversation in content as well as in method. His conceptual map of the development of public theology thus far is

singularly helpful, with astute analyses of its achievements and lacunae. Hughson's original and compelling argument for a Christological focus clarifies that the tasks of public theology are at the heart of Christian faith, while also demonstrating that public theology can engage other religious and non-religious perspectives while remaining firmly rooted in Christian faith. (Mary Doak, University of San Diego) *Connecting Jesus to Social Justice* provocatively claims that Jesus and Justice are inseparable. Christ's totality as affirmed in the Chalcedonian definition, fully divine and fully human, is significant for the work of justice that resists death-dealing social structures in the world. Hughson has made a bold statement about the identity of God that urges the church to embrace a social vision that corresponds with who God really is, not just who we want God to be for the sake of our own comfort. God is on the side of the oppressed, and this book is a must-read for all who seek to live on the side of justice. (Eboni Marshall Turman, Director, Office of Black Church Studies; Duke Divinity School) Thomas Hughson's *Connecting Jesus to Social Justice* makes an important contribution to two distinctive realms of discourse in contemporary theology -- that is, to Christology and to Public Theology. And it does so by way of the suggestion that Chalcedonian Christology has prophetic potential for Christian discipleship in the public sphere. This is certainly a worthwhile book and read. (Benjamin Valentin, Andover Newton Theological School)

Thomas Hughson, SJ, PhD, is associate professor emeritus of theology at Marquette University. He is the author of *The Believer as Citizen: John Courtney Murray in a New Context*. Hughson has published many articles in such journals as the *Journal of Church and State*, *Anglican Theological Review*, *Theological Studies*, *Ecclesiology*, and *One in Christ*. He had a role in the launching of a society for the study of Anglicanism in the AAR.

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