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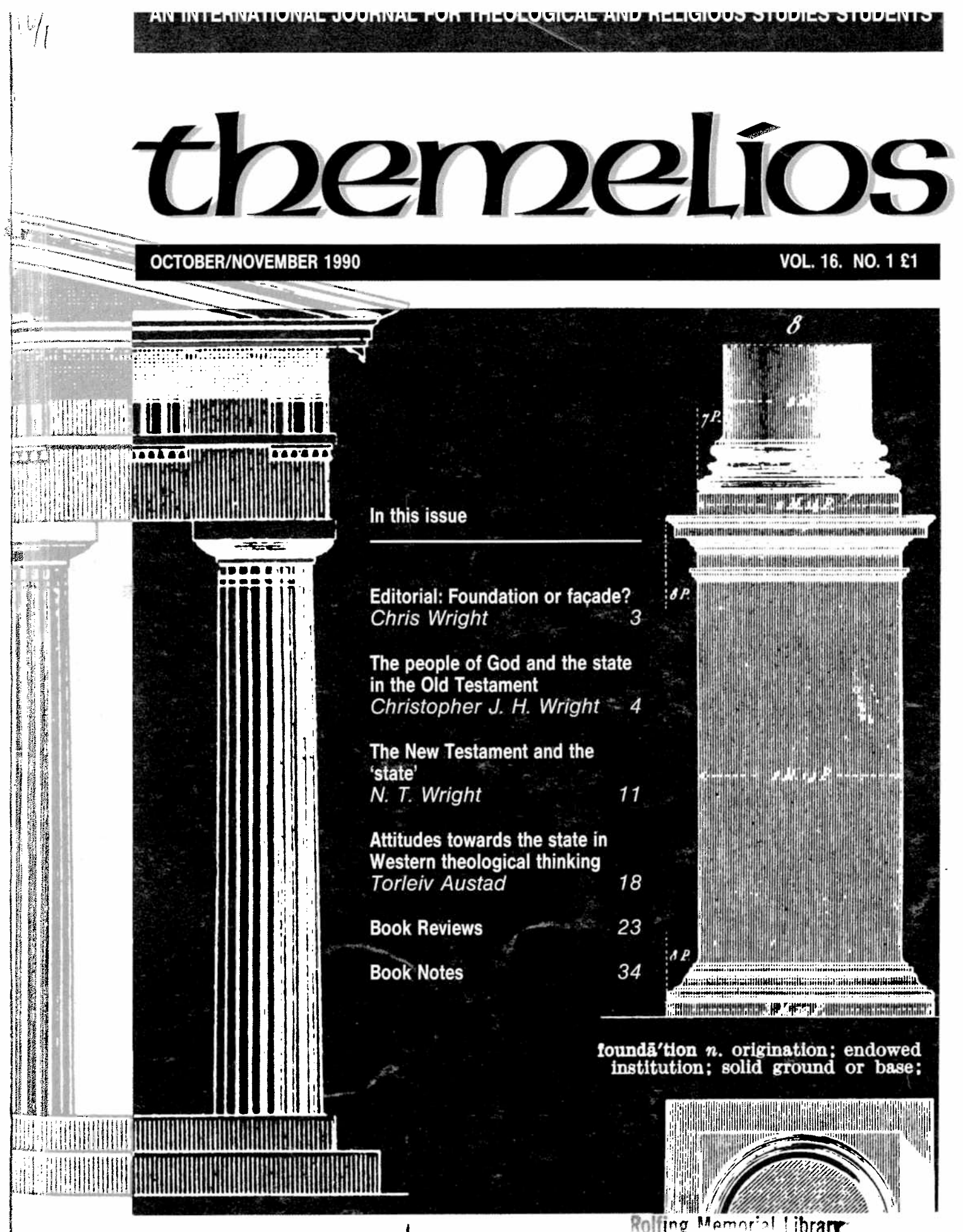

In this issue

foundā'tion *n.* origination; endowed institution; solid ground or base;

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Reviews Books for review should be sent to Mr David Deboys, Tyndale House, 36 Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge CB3 9BA, or (North American books) to Dr Craig Blomberg, Denver Seminary, Box 10,000, University Park Station, Colorado 80210, USA

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Editorial: Foundation or façade?

'Fact is stranger than fiction', was how I began the editorial for the last issue. But fiction has a way of exposing the truth or giving us a sharper perspective on the facts. A well-aimed fiction can entice the evildoer to incriminate himself, as Nathan's parable before David so skilfully proved. And in the hands of a master story-teller like Jesus, brilliantly crafted miniatures of fiction could challenge, teach, warn, illustrate, infuriate, subvert prejudices and invert whole world-views. Sometimes, indeed, it seems that a little fiction expresses a big truth more concisely than a lot of facts. Or that the real life stories are illustrations of a truth conveyed in fiction rather than the other way around. Certainly the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk. 18:9-14) condenses enough truth for several epistles to distil, and is illustrated in the factual stories of the rich ruler and Zacchaeus which closely follow it.

Sometimes secular fiction has a similar effect of exposing the truth and opening our eyes to uncomfortable, even frightening, realities. Recently I read Tom Wolfe's novel set in the raucous world of New York, rent asunder by race, religion and riches. It has some real life echoes in the recent 'Jogger trial' there and the City of London fraud trial. There is something faintly biblical about its title, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (Picador, 1988), a sort of blend of apocalyptic and Ecclesiastes. And there is plenty that is glaringly biblical in the themes it treats, if not in its language which is often, as the current euphemism goes, 'explicit' (not that the prophets were too squeamish for that at times). There are the broad motifs, such as the obscenity of phenomenal wealth and luxury alongside seething poverty, the idolization of self, the destructiveness of promiscuity, the worship of mammon, the perversions of justice, the web of falsehood and deceit. Plenty of echoes from the Torah and the prophets. But there are minor motifs that would draw a nod from the authors of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes too. The tangled net of 'folly', the constant anxiety of the social climber, the way those who have most wealth actually never have enough, and how the most insignificant things, like a wrongly dialled phone number or a missed exit on a freeway, can set in motion unimaginable consequences in ever widening circles. Apart from being a superb read, the book kept on setting off in my mind a stream of reflections, which I suppose one has to call, rather dully in the circumstances, theological and ethical.

Of which the most persistent and most depressing was the omnipresent sense of *façade*. Wolfe skilfully avoids a simplistic 'goody versus baddy' plot. It is not merely that almost every character in the story is a complex mixture of good and evil, irrespective of whether they are on the right or the wrong side of the law technically, but that almost no character is in reality what they try to appear to be. Whether hero or villain or one of the lesser characters that get sucked into the deepening morass, everyone seems to be playing the game of building, polishing or salvaging an image. Almost the only person in the story who is innocent in this regard is the seven-year-old daughter of the central character, and even she in her innocence is dashed into the suffering his folly unleashes – another biblical touch. His parental love for her is about the only genuinely unself-centred emotion he has and even that is built into his public façade. The process of justice itself becomes a façade for those who unscrupulously aim to profit from it, personally, politically, sexually or financially. In the end it seems hard to distinguish good motives from corrupt ones.

The overall effect is a devastatingly truthful exposé of the perversity and deceitfulness of the human heart, biblical in its analysis, but without the biblical hope, for even religion is used in the story as a cynically manipulated façade. The worst of the characters have their redeeming features, but the story as a whole has no redemption. Some façades are exposed and destroyed, but not so as to be replaced by the truth. It is just that a different alliance of façades wins a façade of victory – for the time being.

Theologians (and theological students) have human hearts too. And façade building and image polishing are just as much temptations for them as for anyone else. Perhaps even more so since the very skill of their trade enables them to add a veneer as well – that of biblical scholarship or religious authority. One often wonders how much scholarly writing is a kind of game; how much we are influenced, favourably or otherwise, by image and reputation; how much of eternal value lies behind the façade of some names, schools, series, publications – evangelical or not. And as so often, the suspicion boomerangs uncomfortably on oneself. We all know the verbal tricks by which an essay can try to give the impression of more knowledge on a subject than one actually has, the impressive feel of dense footnotes and swelling bibliographies in a thesis, the boost to sales of a celebrity foreword for a new book. All of us who are called by God to the theological task, at whatever stage, need to remember that the warning, 'Man looks on the outward appearance [the façade], but God looks on the heart', applies not only to candidates for the Israelite monarchy.

We need, then, constantly and prayerfully to check that all our work is done with integrity of motive as well as having biblical truth in substance and foundation. Otherwise it will qualify for nothing more than Ecclesiastes' verdict, 'vanity of vanities', and perish in the Pauline bonfire.

> Each one should be careful how he builds. For no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work (1 Cor. 3:10-13).

Themelios means foundation, and it has been the aim of the journal from its beginning to be true to that foundation which Paul describes above, namely Christ himself, and, as he adds in Ephesians 2:20, the apostles and prophets. That is to say, we aim not to *be* a foundation (however much our articles may have been the basis for many an essay!) but to build on one. That is what foundations are for. Not to be preserved in concrete or in an archaeological museum. But to be the solid undergirding of constructive, imaginative, sound and attractive building. Biblical authority is not static but dynamic. It is authority *for*, authority *to*. The living God, in Christ and through the Scriptures, authorizes us to live and work and think for him. Not to shore up a façade of status or to cultivate an image. For we already have the highest status available to humans, as sons and daughters of God, and we are being fashioned by him into the image of his own Son.

Why then, you may ask, this new 'outward appearance' for *Themelios*? We hope it is not merely a façade! There is a valid kind of concern about image, when it is a matter of commending the truth of the gospel. The old format of the journal had served us well for fifteen years and we felt it was time for something more attractive and readable. The major reason, however, is that the new format has enabled us to increase the size of each issue and thus have more room for articles and especially the book review section which many readers turn to first! The change of image implies no change whatever in our editorial aims or content. I would still echo the words of Dick France in his first editorial for the journal (Vol. 1.2, 1976):

> The more elaborate the building, the more attention we must pay to the foundation. And that foundation, as our back cover will continue to remind us, is not negotiable, the *themelios* of the witness of the apostles and prophets to Jesus Christ, 'in whom the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord'.

Chris Wright

Readers' responses

It is always good to receive letters commenting on articles. The editorial committee wish to invite serious responses to articles which could be printed, at the Editor's discretion. Such letters should be not more than 500 words in length. If you wish to write a fuller response, which presents another side to the case or develops it further, please write first to the Editor with your suggestion for a response article before going ahead with it.

The articles in this special symposium issue on the Christian view of the state may draw some response from readers in the non-Western world. Efforts to include contributions from non-Western authors in the end were not successful, which is much regretted. However, views on the issue from other parts of the world where the issue is often more pressing and costly, would be welcome.

The people of God and the state in the Old Testament

Christopher J. H. Wright

This article is a shortened and revised version of a paper prepared for a consultation on church and state in Hong Kong, October 1988, sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship and Partnership in Mission — Asia. In a slightly longer form it has been published in the series of Grove Ethical Studies, No. 77 (Nottingham, 1990), and is published here by kind permission of Grove Books.

Introduction

My main purpose in this study is to trace the changing concept of the people of God in relation to the state in the period covered by the Hebrew Bible. So I am taking for granted several assumptions that would fall within the range of creation-based theology, since I have briefly discussed them elsewhere,[1] and they are fairly commonplace in discussions of the topic of the Bible and the state. First, I assume that ethnic diversity and the multiplicity of nations is part of God's creative intention for humanity and not in itself the result of sin. This seems to be evident from texts such as Deuteronomy 32:8, echoed in Acts 17:26, and the eschatological vision that the redeemed humanity will include, but not obliterate the distinctions between, every tribe, language and nation. Second, I assume that there is a social dimension to human life which is also part of God's creative intention, so that the proper and harmonious ordering of relationships between individuals and communities, locally and internationally, is part of human accountability to God as creator of all. The political task of maintaining a morally acceptable social order is a human duty under God.[2]

Our procedure will be to look at Israel as the people of God in five different phases of their OT history. In each context we shall discuss the nature of the people of God themselves at that time and the nature of the state as portrayed in that context. This may throw up apparently contradictory viewpoints on the relationship between the two, but it is important that we see the breadth of canonical material on this subject and not focus on a single, narrow band of texts which can lead to a distorted idea of 'the' OT view of the state.[3]

I The pilgrim family: the patriarchal period

The people of God in the patriarchal context is primarily a community called out of the socio-political environment and given a new identity and future by the promise of God. They are a people only by this act of God's election. It was not that he elevated an existing people to a chosen status, but that he called Israel into existence as his people, as an entity distinct from the surrounding nation states, from their very beginning. This went along with a form of life which included maximum independence from the socio-political and economic structures of their day. They did not own land, and regarded themselves as resident aliens, sojourners, in the land of their movements. Not that they were isolated. Genesis records plenty of occasions of social and economic intercourse between the patriarchs and their contemporaries. But they remained a pilgrim people, called out and called onward.

Corresponding to this given status, there was the requirement of faith in the promise of God and obedience to his command. Here again a distinctiveness emerges with the surrounding peoples. The most illuminating text on the ethical character of Israel from the patriarchal tradition is Genesis 18:19.

> 'For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.'

The context of this declaration is God's imminent act of judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, whose wickedness has caused such an outcry that God must intervene. In contrast to that kind of society, the world in which Abraham lived, God requires that the community now emerging from Abraham himself is to be characterized by totally different values. They are to be a people who imitate the character of Yahweh himself ('the way of the LORD') by their commitment to righteousness and justice. These are unquestionably social values, with economic and political implications. It is clear, therefore, that while God's intention for his people is to be called out from the surrounding environment, that does not mean an abdication from the socio-political process itself. Rather, that sphere, as all spheres of their corporate life, is to be governed by justice, because that is precisely God's own way.

So then, the people of God in this context:

- ★ are called into existence by God's act of sovereign election,
- ★ live in the light of his promise, which enables them to
- ★ sit loose to the surrounding socio-political power centres while not losing contact with the communities among which they live,
- ★ are committed to an ethical obedience specifically characterized by God-imitating justice.

Human salvation was not to be found in the state. The ultimate redemptive purpose of God lay elsewhere.

The portrayal of *the state* in the patriarchal context, as it is represented by the various political power centres and cities of the ancient Near Eastern world, varies from neutral to negative. They are not portrayed as excessively oppressive, in anything like the same way as the Egypt of Moses or the Babylon of the exile. Yet when Abraham first appears, in Genesis 12, it is in the context of a society already marked by the story of the tower of Babel in chapter 11. Indeed, it is the land of Babel out of which he is called. As the story indicates, it was a culture of immense self-confidence and pride. At the very least, Abraham's God-required departure relativized it. Human salvation was not to be found in the state. The ultimate redemptive purpose of God lay elsewhere, invested in the typically tenuous human vessel of the ageing husband of a barren wife. The calling of Abraham out of his country and his people (Gn. 12:1) was 'the first Exodus by which the imperial civilizations of the Near East in general receive their stigma as environments of lesser meaning'.[4]

As well as being portrayed in this relativized fashion, however, the external city-state can also be seen as a place of moral rebellion against God and thereby a source of threat to the pilgrim people of God. Sodom and Gomorrah are obvious cases. God was aware of an 'outcry' against them (Gn. 18:20f. — twice). The word is virtually a technical term in the OT for the cries of those who are suffering from oppression, cruelty and injustice. It figures prominently, for example, in the story of Israel's groaning in bondage in Egypt. Genesis 19 catalogues the two cities' violence and perversion. Isaiah 1:9f., seen in the light of the rest of the chapter, links them with innocent bloodshed. Ezekiel 16:49 lists the sins of the cities of the plain as arrogance, surplus affluence, callousness, and failure to help the poor and needy. For these reasons, they stood in the blast path of God's judgment.

The portrayal of God in such a context, therefore, is significantly not merely that he is in sovereign control, as much in

Mesopotamia, as in Canaan, as in Egypt, but also that he is a God of redemptive purpose, whose ultimate goal is the blessing of all nations. In initiating his special relationship with a people of his own creation and possession, God actually has in mind the best interests of the nations. The promise of blessing for the seed of Abraham is a promise of blessing for the nations.

So although we understand from books such as Daniel and Revelation that God's judgment is especially directed at human states in their 'beastly', rebellious condition, nevertheless the very existence of the people of God in the midst of those states is a sign of God's wider and final purpose of redemption of humanity, and the transformation of the kingdoms of the earth into the kingdom of God.

The influence of the patriarchal material on Christian views of church–state relationships has been strong, particularly via the use that is made of it in Hebrews 11. Negatively, it can result in a world-denying attitude, in which believers are discouraged from *any* participation in the affairs of this world, since, like Abraham, we are to be seeking a city not made with hands. If this is now recognized as a mistaken use of the patriarchal texts, we still need to remember that our involvement with society for the purpose of earthing the love–justice of God is to be undertaken as a people called out, looking for the fulfilment of his promise of redemption, but not expecting our hope of salvation to be found in the state itself.

II The liberated nation: the Exodus to Judges period

The people of God begin this period as an oppressed ethnic minority within a very powerful imperial state. The demand of Yahweh confronts Pharaoh: 'Let my people go that they may worship/serve me.' A state which denies freedom to those who wish to worship Yahweh finds itself Yahweh's enemy. The God who, in the patriarchal narratives, had shown himself to be transcendent in the sense that he was neither bound to, nor very impressed by, the greatest of human imperial civilization, upholds the right of his people to freedom of worship in the midst of a state with other gods, including the pharaoh himself.

His demands go much further than the spiritual right of freedom of worship. Egypt was engaged in civil discrimination against Israel as an ethnic minority on the grounds of political expediency, playing on public fears and claiming to act in the public interest. They were engaged in economic exploitation of this pool of captive labour. And they were guilty of gross violation of normal family life through a policy of state-sponsored genocide. On all these fronts Yahweh demanded and then achieved the liberation of his people. In the course of events, the state, which had professed ignorance of who Yahweh is (Ex. 5:2), learns his identity and his power in no uncertain terms. Indeed the process of Egypt's move from ignorance to acknowledgment of Yahweh is undoubtedly one of the sub-plots of the narrative.[5] The claims of Pharaoh and the other gods of the state must bow to the fact that Yahweh is God as much over Egypt as over Israel, his own people. The climax of the song of Moses, after the sea had sealed the reality of Israel's deliverance, celebrated that *Yahweh is king*, for ever; and not, it was implied, Pharaoh (Ex. 15:18).

Moving from the exodus of the people of God out of an imperial state, we come to their arrival in the midst of a city-state culture in Canaan. The arrival or the emergence of Israel in Canaan[6] produced a most remarkable social, political, economic and religious transformation there. Israel, the people of God, not only thought of themselves as different – they *were* different. Gottwald's work, with all its ideological flaws, has demonstrated this at the factual level, I think, beyond doubt.[7]

Theocracy was bound up with a commitment to certain societal objectives embodied in the Sinai covenant and law – objectives that were characterized by equality, justice and community values.

The main feature of the people of God at this stage is that they were a theocracy in reality. And the rule of God was bound up with a commitment to certain societal objectives embodied in the Sinai covenant and law – objectives that were characterized by equality, justice, and community values. Being the people of God at this stage was a moral and social task to be worked out. It was an alternative vision, requiring 'detailed obedience in the ethical, social and cultic spheres . . . [which] . . . establishes the notion of the people of God as an ethical principle. In their behaviour the people of God are bound to one another. Yahweh being their overlord, they have no human overlords. Theocracy and socio-political equality (radical theology and radical sociology) go together.'[8]

This point underlines the importance of Sinai. Sinai stands significantly midway between liberation from Egypt and settlement in Canaan. Liberation was not an end in itself. The newly free people constantly fell prey to the disintegrating forces of licence, rebellion, dissent and failure of nerve. Through the Sinai covenant God provided the bonding and moulding institutions and laws by which they were to progress from a mass of freed slaves to an ordered and functioning society. It is there, in the Torah, that we find the bulk of those features of Israel's polity that made them so distinctive: the kinship rationale of land tenure; the jubilee and sabbatical institutions; the ban on interest; the equality of native and 'stranger' before the law; the civil rights of slaves; the diffusion of political leadership and authority among the elders; the limitation on the economic power of cultic officials. Israel at this period, though not a state in our sense of the word, did not lack social institutions with consistent goals and a coherent rationale.

The state at this period is represented by Egypt on the one hand and Canaan on the other. The former was a large empire, exercising its power in blatant oppression of the people of God, in its own interests. The latter was a patchwork of small city-state kingdoms with pyramidical forms of political and economic power, which were oppressive and exploitative of the peasant population. Both are presented in the text also as idolatrous in nature and stand as enemies of Yahweh and a threat to his people. In both cases the stance of the people of God towards the state is one of confrontation, challenge and conflict.

The exit and entry of the people of God respectively spells judgment on both opposing human states, the one primarily because of its oppression, the other primarily because of its idolatry and 'abominable practices', which are catalogued in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The state, then, in this particular context, stands over against the people of God as something to be opposed, defeated, dismantled, and finally replaced by a wholly distinctive kind of human society under the direct rule of God.

The portryal of God in this context is exclusively the portrayal of *Yahweh*, the name which bursts on the scene to herald the exodus itself, and goes on to become the primary identity of the people of Israel. Thereafter, they are the 'tribes of Yahweh'. And Yahweh is a God who sets himself against injustice and oppression, initiating the exodus expressly to put them right. In so doing he enters into history, and specifically political history, in a way not so apparent in the patriarchal narratives. His transcendence injects itself into Pharaoh's empire and blows it open.[9]

Yahweh, the liberating God of justice, is next perceived as king. The essence of theocracy was that Israel initially acknowledged no king but Yahweh. That Israel regarded Yahweh as king from Mosaic times (and not just from the time of her own monarchy) is clear in several very ancient texts (*e.g.* Ex. 15:18; 19:6; Nu. 23:21; Dt. 33:5). Belief in the kingship of a deity is not at all unique to Israel, and existed in the ancient Near Eastern world long before Israel emerged.[10] But if theocracy in the general sense of a nation regarding its god as a king was not unique, Israel's particular manifestation and experience of it certainly was. For in Israel theocracy excluded, for several centuries, a human king. Lind comments,

> While the kingship of Yahweh as such is paralleled . . . in the ancient mythologies of the Near East, this exclusion and polemic against the human institution is unparalleled, and gives to Yahweh's kingship a new dimension . . . the remarkable point is that the kingship of Yahweh excluded human kingship.[11]

The reason why Yahweh's kingship is incompatible at this time with human kingship is that Yahweh took to himself entirely the two major functions and duties of kings in the ancient world, namely the conduct of war and the administration of law and justice. Indeed, in the exercise of these two functions, human kings

in the ancient Near East were at their most sacral — *i.e.* acting on behalf of the god they represented (or embodied). But in Israel, Yahweh himself took over these roles, and human political leadership was thus decisively demoted and relativized. Instead, Israel was a covenant nation, with Yahweh, as lord of the covenant, responsible both for their protection, by war if necessary, and for the just ordering of their social life in every aspect.

So there was, then, in this period of Israel's history, a truly radical and alternative political option being launched on the stage of human history. And this radical political option was effected in the name of Yahweh, in such a way that the religion of Yahweh was inseparable from the social objectives of Israel. For Israel was not just the people of *God* (many nations would claim that in one form or another), but specifically the people of *Yahweh*, and that in itself meant a covenant commitment to a certain kind of society that reflected Yahweh's character, values, priorities and goals.

'Theocracy' in itself is not an ideal aim for the people of God in their political dreams. It all depends on who or what is the *theos*. Only the vision of Yahweh as the God he truly is initiated and sustained Israel's theocracy.

What this amounts to is that 'theocracy' in itself is not an ideal aim for the people of God in their political dreams. It all depends on who or what is the *theos*. Only the vision of Yahweh as the God he truly is initiated and sustained Israel's theocracy. But sadly the state, like humans, tends to make its god in its own image. As Israel itself moved from the radical, alternative, surprising theocracy of Yahweh to the institutional state of the monarchy, it did just that, in spite of being reminded by the prophets of its true identity and calling.

The influence of the exodus paradigm and the story of the conquest on social and political history has been simply incalculable. In Israel itself it became a model and a point of appeal at all times of suffering and oppression in biblical and post-biblical history. Through Christian history it has fired hopes and imagination, sometimes fruitfully, sometimes disastrously. The confrontational stance of the people of God *vis-à-vis* the state, perceived as evil, satanic, godless, *etc.*, has fuelled many varieties of Christian utopianism, millenarianism and radical non-conformity. Such movements often end up in 'unreal expectations, fanatical devotion, irrational behaviour, dictatorial regimes and ruthless repression or elimination of the enemy'.[12] They were usually also fuelled by apocalyptic beliefs which set their whole agenda in a kind of trans-historical mode. By contrast, the exodus itself and the events which followed it were very much within the boundaries of historical reality, and, astounding though they were, they were limited by the possibilities of history. Things were not perfect for Israel after the exodus, either in the wilderness, or in the land of promise. But within the limitations of history, an unparalleled act of justice and liberation *did* take place and a radically different kind of society *was* brought to birth. This reading of the exodus paradigm has been explored by Michael Walzer and lays much greater emphasis on the achievement of attainable goals within history, goals which fit the objectives and values of the exodus paradigm.[13]

It is this latter use of the exodus paradigm which has been so much the backbone of liberation theology, in ways too many to document. It is also a major factor in black and feminist theologies, as well as the less sophisticated biblical encouragement that many groups of suffering believers have clung to in hope.

III The institutional state: the monarchy period

By the time of Samuel, the strain of living as a theocracy was proving more than the people felt able to bear in the face of external pressures. They opted for monarchy, survived Saul, served David, suffered Solomon, split in two and finally sank respectively into oblivion and exile. During this period (from Saul, or at least David, to the exile) the people of Yahweh were unmistakably an institutional state, with central leadership, boundaries, organized military defences, *etc.* Yet the identification of people of God with political state was never wholly comfortable. Within the OT itself there are hints of conscious distinction between the two realities, even while there is formal and apparent identity. So there is the problem of the relationship of people of God and state *internally* to Israel itself. This is further complicated by there being two markedly different evaluations of the monarchy, even within closely related texts: pro and anti. Then, if we see the monarchical states of Judah and Israel as at least notionally the people of God, we should look at their relationship and attitude to the *external* states of their day — especially the dominant empires.

The origins of monarchy in Israel are laid before us in a narrative which subtly and intentionally interweaves two understandings of the process (1 Sa. 8–12). On the one hand the demand for it arises from a retrograde desire of the people to be like the other nations by having a king. Their reasons at first sight seem unexceptionable: leadership against their enemies and the protection of justice (8:3-5, 19f.). Samuel (and Yahweh) interpret the request as a rejection of direct theocracy. But their explicit objection to monarchy is not so much theological as practical, and fundamentally economic. Samuel predicts that if a king is accepted, it will result in the characteristic forms of royal slavery: confiscation, taxation, military and agricultural conscription (8:10-18). The portrayal of Solomon's later reign is an unmistakable 'I told you so'. All very negative. So much so that Brueggemann can speak of the whole spirit, ethos and accomplishment of Solomon as a reversal of the Mosaic alternative, a return to the values and management mentality of the empire, a countering of the counter-culture of Sinai.[14]

On the other hand, it is Yahweh himself who gives Israel a king, choosing, anointing and (for a while) blessing him. It is Yahweh who goes on to exalt David, embarrassing him with the multiplicity of victories, gift of a city, rest from his enemies, and a covenant for his posterity. 'Solomon in all his glory' suffered no embarrassment, but his greatness is still attributed to Yahweh's generosity. In other words, Yahweh takes the human desire and resultant institution and makes them fit in with his own purposes. Indeed, he goes further, and tries to mould the monarchy, for all its origins as *rejection* of theocracy, into a *vehicle* for theocracy by subsuming the reign of the king under his own reign. And so the royal theology of Jerusalem is absorbed into the transcendent rule of Yahweh and given a covenant framework which harks back to Sinai in its call for loyalty and obedience.

If the monarchy thus stands in a position of ambiguous legitimacy before God, neither totally rejected nor unconditionally sanctioned, it likewise had to struggle for legitimacy at a human level. This is how South African scholar Gunther Wittenberg interprets the texts of the Davidic–Solomonic era, seeing in them both attempts at theological legitimizing and also theological resistance to the claimed legitimacy of the Davidic house.[15] The legitimizing texts, of course, are those which related to the Davidic covenant, the temple, Zion, and the relationship of the king to God. Resistance was crystallized in the secession of the northern tribes under the leadership of Jeroboam. The presenting cause of this was the social and economic oppression which had developed during Solomon's reign, and which Rehoboam, though offered the chance of a change of policy, deliberately chose to continue and intensify. But there are hints also of a theological refusal in principle to accept the legitimacy of the glorious Davidic 'new thing'. The prophet Ahijah, who accosted Jeroboam to launch him on his secession from Judah, came from Shiloh. Shiloh was an ancient cultic centre of the pre-monarchic tribal federation, former resting place of the ark of the (Sinai) covenant and all its links with Israel's historical, exodus traditions. Above all it was closely associated with Samuel, whose denunciation of monarchy must have echoed loudly among northern Israelites in the later years of Solomon. Furthermore, there are echoes of the cry of the Israelites in their Egyptian bondage, in the plea of the northerners to have their burdens lifted. Had Solomon become a pharaoh? Noticeably, in setting up the religious foundations of his own state, Jeroboam recalls the exodus liberation: 'Here is your God, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt' (aside, 'not to mention, out of Jerusalem') (1 Ki. 12:28).

The transformation of the people of God into an institutional state generated both approval and rejection, in the heat of the process itself, and also in theological and canonical assessment.

What we have seen, then, is that the transformation of the people of God into an institutional state generated both approval and rejection, in the heat of the process itself, and also in theological and canonical assessment. It seems that the institutional state, like certain other human conditions of life which the law permits but never wholly approves, such as divorce and slavery, is a concession to human 'hardness of heart': permitted but transient.

The prophets reinforce the conditional and qualified nature of God's acceptance of the monarchy as the political form of his people. One could summarize the view of the prophets towards the monarchic state of Israel (in both northern and southern forms) by saying that they accepted its God-givenness, but refused its God-surrogacy. For example, at the point of the secession of the northern tribes away from Judah, one and the same prophet, Ahijah, both acknowledged that Jeroboam's rebellion was divinely willed as judgment on the house of Solomon, and also later severely criticized him for the idolatry into which he had led the Israelites (1 Ki. 11:29-39; 14:1-16).

That idolatry of the northern kingdom was focused on the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. But from 1 Kings 12:26ff. we see that Jeroboam did not apparently intend the worship of false gods as such. The calves represented the presence of Yahweh, who brought Israel up out of Egypt. The real thrust of Jeroboam's idolatry lies in the motives of his action, and the additional cultic action which he initiated. His intention was clearly the political protection of his own nascent kingdom from any hankering after the splendour of Jerusalem (vv. 26f.). To make completely sure, he elaborated an alternative cultic system for the northern kingdom, designed, appointed and run by himself, to serve the interests of his state (vv. 31-33). In effect, 'Yahweh' had become a figurehead for his state. *The state in itself was idolatrous.*

This is clear from the ironic angry words of Amaziah, the high priest at Bethel under Jeroboam II (nearly two centuries later), against Amos: 'Get out, you seer! . . . Don't prophesy any more at Bethel, because *this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom*' (Am. 7:12f., italics mine). Amos, however, refused to be silenced by the usurped divine authority of the political régime. God may have permitted it to come into existence, but that did not bind him to serve its self-interests. The prophets refused to allow the authority of God or his prophetic word to be hijacked to legitimize human political ambitions. Sometimes they paid the cost of that role — as must the church if it chooses to exercise a comparable prophetic stance today.

One prophet who certainly could not be hijacked was Elijah. His ministry took place in the ninth century BC in the northern kingdom during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, when the whole state became virtually apostate. Nevertheless there were a faithful 7,000 who had not capitulated to the palace-imposed worship of Baal (1 Ki. 19:14,18). The origins of the idea of a faithful remnant probably go back as far as this. It was not the *state* of Israel itself that constituted the true people of God, but a minority of 'true believers' within it.

We are then given two opposite responses to this dichotomy. Elijah represents the voice from outside. He denounces the king and queen for their apostasy and their socio-economic vandalism (Naboth, ch. 21), predicts divine judgment, and even arranges the anointing of the avenger, Jehu. But there was a presence on the inside of the state system also — that of Obadiah, who meets Elijah in 18:1-15. He is described as a loyal worshipper of Yahweh (his name means that, and he had managed to preserve it, even under Jezebel) from his youth. Yet he was also the top official in the palace — actually employed in the civil and political service of the apostate king and queen. Not content with surviving in such a dangerous position, he was actually using it for the protection and maintenance of a hundred of the prophets of Yahweh, at a time when Jezebel was exterminating them. The text does not comment on Obadiah's stance (though Christian commentators through the centuries have both condemned and commended it). Probably, in my view, we are invited to regard both stances — Elijah's on the outside, and Obadiah's on the inside — as equally valid. God had room for both and used both.

In the southern kingdom of Judah, in spite of all the theological legitimization of the state and its monarchy, the prophetic voice of Yahweh could still stand out in conflict with it and challenge the moral validity of any given incumbent of the throne of David. And the criterion of assessment was the covenant law. Unequivocally the prophets subordinated Zion to Sinai.

Unequivocally the prophets subordinated Zion to Sinai.

The law in Deuteronomy which permitted (note, not commanded) monarchy laid down strict conditions for it, including the requirement that the king should know, read and obey the law. He was to be, not a super-Israelite, but a model Israelite among his brothers and equals (Dt. 17:14-20). As one entrusted with the law, the king was committed to the maintenance of justice in a spirit of compassion (*e.g.* especially Ps. 72). Jeremiah could proclaim this strong tradition of the legal, covenantal requirement on the king, at the very gates of the palace in Jerusalem. His words are really a statement of the Davidic monarchy. Zion must conform to Sinai, or face ruin.

> 'Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, you who sit on David's throne — you, your officials and your people who come through these gates. This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. For if you are careful to carry out these commands, then kings who sit on David's throne will come through the gates of this palace. . . . But if you do not obey these commands, declares the LORD, I swear by myself that this palace will become a ruin' (Je. 22:2-5).

On this basis, Jeremiah then goes on, on the one hand, to commend with approval the reign of Josiah, who lived by the standards of covenant law, which is what it means to know Yahweh (22:15f.), and on the other, utterly to reject Jehoiakim, whose actions and policies included forced labour without pay, personal aggrandizement, dishonesty, violence and oppression. The legitimacy or illegitimacy of the two kings is evaluated respectively on the grounds of their treatment of the poor and needy, the workers, the 'innocent' — *i.e.* precisely the dominant concerns of the Sinai law.

Thus, even when the socio-political contours of the people of God had changed radically from the early theocracy to the institutional, royal state, the controlling paradigm was still that of the law and the covenant. This meant that royal theocracy could never be rightly regarded as 'the divine right of kings' per se. Being 'the LORD's anointed' was not an unconditional guarantee. The king was subject to and correctable by the covenant law.

The same moral criterion applies in the prophetic perspective on *the authority of external, secular rulers.* For they too rule by Yahweh's authority (19:15). In the eighth century Isaiah regarded Assyria and its tyrannical sovereigns as no more than a stick in the hand of Yahweh (Is. 10:5ff.). Jeremiah could announce, in a seventh-century international diplomatic conference hosted by Zedekiah in Jerusalem, that Yahweh had delegated to Nebuchadnezzar supreme, worldwide authority and power — for the foreseeable future (Je. 27:1-11, especially vv. 5-7).

Now if Israelite kings as Yahweh's anointed were subject to evaluation by the moral standards of Yahweh and his law, so too were the pagan ones. The clearest example of this is Nebuchadnezzar again. Daniel had clearly absorbed the point of Jeremiah's assertion about Nebuchadnezzar, for he repeats it, almost verbatim, to his face (Dn. 2:37f.). Nevertheless, on another occasion Daniel warned Nebuchadnezzar that unless he repented of the injustice on which his boasted city had been built, by lifting the oppression of the poor and needy in his realm, he would face

inevitable judgment. The boldness of Daniel's prophetic word in Daniel 4:27 should not escape us, hidden as it is in the midst of an otherwise somewhat weird story. The one to whom Yahweh had given all authority and power, far beyond what any Israelite king had ever wielded, is here weighed in the balance of God's justice and found wanting (to pinch a metaphor from the following chapter).

This must have some bearing on interpretations of Paul's view of state authority in Romans 13. The Hebrew Bible would wholly endorse the view that all human authorities exist *within the framework of God's will.* It would wholly reject the view that gives them a legitimacy regardless of their *conformity to God's justice,* as revealed in the covenant law.

So then, the historical experience of the people of God in actually *being* a state generated enormous tensions. There was never complete ease with the monarchy, even in Davidic Judah, as the continuing existence of a group like the Rechabites in the late monarchy showed (Je. 35). There was always the feeling that Israel was really meant to be something different. Nevertheless it is from the prophetic critique of the kings and institutions of this period (in both narrative and prophetic books) that we learn most in the OT concerning God's radical demand on political authorities.

The *influence* of the model of Israel as an institutional royal state can probably be seen most comprehensively in the 'Christendom' idea, in the centuries during which Christians seem to have collectively considered that the best way to save the world was to run it. The Constantinian transformation of Christianity and its dubious effects have often been compared to Israel's adoption of monarchy and statehood.[16]

IV The suffering remnant: the exile

In 587 BC the institutional, monarchic state of Judah vanished under the rubble of Jerusalem, devastated by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. The northern kingdom of Israel had long since disappeared, scattered by the Assyrians in 721 BC. The people of God were not only no longer a state; they were scarcely even a nation. As a tiny remnant they learned once again to live like their forefathers, as strangers in a strange land, in the very land indeed from which their forefathers had departed in obedience to God's call. Now they were back there under his judgment.

But Babylon was not just strange. It was also an enormous, hostile and threatening environment, in which the people of God were now a small, uprooted, endangered species — exiles. At this point in their history, then, the people of God constitutes a persecuted remnant, with the state as an ambient, hostile power within which they have to survive and somehow continue to live as the people of God. The danger at such a time was two-fold: to lose their identity by compromise and assimilation into their new environment, and thus cease to be distinctive; or to stand out as so intractably different that they brought destructive fires of persecution on themselves that might finally consume them. The same dilemma has faced the people of God at many times in history when they have been a suffering minority in a hostile environment. And in this case also we have a variety of responses from the Hebrew Bible to such a situation. We shall quickly look at four — two positive and two negative.

First, there was the advice to *pray* for Babylon. This was the astonishing message sent by Jeremiah in a letter to the first group of exiles, recorded in Jeremiah 29. Contrary to those who were predicting a short exile, or a quick rebellion to end their exile, Jeremiah forecasts a long stay of two generations, and therefore counsels a policy of settling down to that. The exiles must realize that Babylon had done what it had done by God's permission, and in that sense, to pray for Babylon would put them in line with the purposes of God again. The *shalom* of the people of God was bound up with the *shalom* of the pagan nation in which they now resided.

Second, there was the response of Daniel and his friends, who went beyond praying for Babylon and were willing to *serve* the young imperial state of Nebuchadnezzar. The book of Daniel is a fascinating analysis of the extreme dangers, as well as the unique opportunities, of such a decision. There are parallels with the story of Joseph. Both were able to witness to the living God in the midst of a pagan and idolatrous state; both were able to influence the state's policies; both were able to benefit the people of God by their 'secular' career positions.

Jeremiah told the exiles to pray for the *shalom* of Babylon with his eyes wide open to the fact that all it stood for was destined to be destroyed in the blast-path of God's judgment.

Third, coming again from the pen of Jeremiah, is the response of wholesale declaration of *judgment* on Babylon. It is this which underlines the astonishing paradox of Jeremiah's advice to the exiles to pray for Babylon. Virtually in the same postbag as that letter, he also sent the massive tirade against Babylon recorded in Jeremiah 50–51. The scroll was to be read, and then dropped with a stone in the Euphrates, there to sink as mighty Babylon was destined to do. This shows clearly that the letter in chapter 29 was not a piece of rosy-eyed quietism based on a naïve faith in Babylon's benevolence. Jeremiah told the exiles to pray for the *shalom* of Babylon with his eyes wide open to the realities of Babylon, and the fact that all it stood for was destined to be destroyed in the blast path of God's judgment. One is reminded of Abraham's intercession for Sodom, much closer to the brink of their annihilation.[17]

Fourth, there was the response of deliberate *mockery* and debunking of Babylon's imperial pantheon and sophisticated, 'scientific' civilization. The importance of Isaiah 46 and 47 can be missed if we fail to see their links with each other and the context. Here is a prophet seeking to energize his depressed people to believe that Yahweh can again do something great; that their present condition is not final; that they can actually get up and get out of Babylon. The people of God must again claim their identity in the world — an identity of servanthood, but now universalized to be of saving significance for all nations. Awe of Babylon stands in the way. So even before the armies of Cyrus dismantle Babylon's empire, the prophet's poetry is already dismantling it psychologically and spiritually in the perception of his fellow exiles. There is therefore a profoundly political significance to the mockery of idolatry and the deflating of cultural arrogance in these chapters. Brueggemann captures this point with his usual pithiness.

> The poet engages in the kind of guerrilla warfare that is always necessary on behalf of oppressed people. First, the hated one must be ridiculed and made reachable, then she may be disobeyed and seen as a nobody who claims no allegiance and keeps no promises. The big house yields no real life, need not be feared, cannot be trusted, and must not be honoured.
>
> When the Babylonian gods have been mocked, when the Babylonian culture has been ridiculed, then history is inverted. Funeral becomes festival, grief becomes doxology, and despair turns to amazement. Perhaps it is no more than a cultic event, but don't sell it short, because cult kept close to historical experience can indeed energize people. For example, witness the black churches and civil rights movements or the liberation resistance in Latin America. The cult may be a staging for the inversion that the kings think is not possible. . . . We ought not to underestimate the power of the poet. Inversions may begin in a change of language, a redefined perceptual field, or an altered consciousness.[18]

Yet, having said all this, the future of the people of God still depends on *Cyrus,* who was as much a pagan king of a pagan empire as Nebuchadnezzar had been. The state that Isaiah 46–47 was mocking was the one that Jeremiah described as God's servant, executing his judgment on Israel (Je. 25:9; 27:6). This prophet avoids the term 'servant' for Cyrus, since it has special significance in his prophecy as applied to Israel and the one who will fulfil Israel's mission. But he does describe Cyrus as Yahweh's 'shepherd' and his 'anointed' (Is. 44:28; 45:1): terms normally applied to Israel's own kings. So, while the prophet certainly declares that the deliverance of Israel from exile will be a triumphant work of Yahweh, he looks to the newly rising external state to accomplish it. The new exodus will have a pagan for its Moses.

Once again we see how fully the OT puts all human political authority and military power under the sovereign will of Yahweh.

The external empire state may be oppressive and enslaving, as an agent of his judgment; or it may be more enlightened and liberating, as an agent of his redemption. Either way it is the arm of the Lord at work.

V The distinctive community: the post-exilic period

After the return from Babylon to Judea, *the people of God* were not an institutional state again. But neither were they a tiny dislocated group of exile slaves. They were scarcely a nation, in any sense of national independence. But they were a community with a clear sense of distinct ethnic and religious identity. As a sub-province within the vast Persian empire, they remained politically insignificant. Yet at the same time they had a much enhanced view of their own significance as the people of God in the world with a continuing role as his servant and a mixture of hopes as to how God's purpose for them and through them would ultimately be accomplished. So they were a restored community, a community of faith and a community of promise.

Goldingay identifies four main features of the post-exilic community. They were a *worshipping* community, going back to the original conception of the Israelite *'edah*, the assembly gathered for worship. Ezra laid the foundations of this, and the Chronicler provided its validation in his narrative history. They were a *waiting* community, looking forward with varieties of apocalyptic expectation to a new future from God. They were an *obeying* community, with a new devotion to the law, fired by the realization that it was neglect of the law which had led to the catastrophe of exile. Thus the law, even more than the covenant of which it had originally been the responsive part, becomes the heart of the new community of faith to be known as Judaism. And they were a *questioning* community. The tensions of faith posed by their own history produced doubts and uncertainties which some strands of the Wisdom literature wrestle with. Not all the questions found answers within the limits of the old faith.

As to the *state* during this period, there were enormous fluctuations in the extent to which it impinged upon the life of God's people. Under Persia, they experienced a comparatively benevolent policy of religious freedom and considerable local autonomy, without independence, of course. But this could be used against them by unscrupulous enemies within the system. The stories of Nehemiah and Ezra repay study from the angle of their availing of state sponsorship, protection and authority both in building up the infra-structure of the community, and in resisting its enemies. In the later years of the Greek control of Palestine, under the Antiochene rulers, however, the community came in for extreme pressures. Some of these threatened to split the community, between those who could accept and accommodate to Greek culture and ways, and those who would preserve the faith and its distinctives at all costs. If it was for these that the book of Daniel was written or preserved, then the response therein was one of patience, fortified by apocalyptic hopes, and the assurance that all was still in God's control. Neither an exodus nor a Cyrus are expected. Only endurance is called for.

Conclusion

Having observed the great range of material available to us for reflection on the relationship between the people of God and the state, what are we to do with it? How can we carefully exploit its diversity?

(a) We need to make careful correlations between the facts of any given situation in which a community of God's people may find itself in relation to a modern secular state on the one hand and the features of specific periods of Israel's history on the other. As we do so, we must avoid blanket assertions which may be more romantic than real. Not all Christians are living under oppression. Nor are all Christians under oppression living in circumstances parallel to the Israelites in Egypt. Babylon may have closer parallels and more important challenges. Some Christians may be living in a time of nation-building or major political changes (such as Eastern Europe and South Africa), in which they have the real potential of affecting the contours of the nascent state according to values drawn from the Sinai and theocracy paradigm and further refracted through NT development. Others may be living as a tiny minority in a moderately benevolent state, but with little chance of any actual influence upon it. Others may be undergoing the intense kind of minority persecution that threatens their very existence as a believing community, and can draw encouragement from the endurance motifs of apocalyptic. So we need to think through the diversity of Israel's experience to see when and where it matches our own and what lessons it has to teach.[19]

(b) We need to avoid making an arbitrary selection which may enable us to have a twisted view of the response of the people of God to the state, by simply conforming to the image of Israel in a given period and falling prey to the same temptations. Even if we find that a particular period has most to say to our situation, we need the corrective and balance of an awareness of the other periods also. For the great thing is that Israel 'found' God in all of them, and learned and coped within them.

> It is a genuine encouragement to find within the scripture itself the people of God coping with different modes of being with the ambiguities that we ourselves experience. God has said yes to each of these. The monarchy was part of God's will, even though it had its earthly origin in an act of human rebellion. The community has to find ways of living with the experience of God's promises not being fulfilled. [But] . . .
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> > The danger is that our choice of a perspective from the various ones the OT offers us may be an arbitrary one. A predetermined understanding of what it means to be God's people may be bolstered exegetically by appeal to biblical warrants which support a stance chosen before coming to the Bible.[20]

If we ask whether any particular period has prime significance as setting a paradigm for the rest, then I think we have to come back to the normative significance of the covenant and law at Sinai, and the attempts of the early theocracy to initiate a community that embodied those social objectives. We have already seen in detail that the prophets exercised a critical function during the monarchy on precisely that basis.

Another good example of the normative stature of the covenant law even in a pagan situation would be Daniel again. Living at a time when his people were an oppressed minority, he had visions of the empire as essentially 'beastly' in character. In other words, like Jeremiah, he was fully aware of the state as ultimately an enemy of God, indeed a kind of God-surrogate, destined for God's final destruction. Nevertheless, he not only chose to serve the state at the civil-political level, but also took the opportunity to challenge that state in the name of the 'God of heaven' to mend its ways in line with a paradigm of justice derived from Sinai (4:27).

The subtlety and mature balance of Daniel's stance is remarkable. Knowing that it was God himself who had given Nebuchadnezzar all authority and dominion, he nevertheless did not feel bound to obey him in every particular but set limits on the extent of his submission to the state. *His understanding of divine appointment of human authority did not make him a passive pawn of the state.* But on the other hand, knowing that Babylon was one of the 'beasts' of his visions, an agent of evil and destruction with spiritual dimensions, he nevertheless continued his daily political duty at the office desk (8:27), maintaining his integrity and his witness at the top level of national life. *His understanding of satanic influence on human powers did not make him an escapist from political involvement.*

[1]C. J. H. Wright, *Living as the People of God (An Eye for an Eye)* (IVP, 1983), ch. 5, 'Politics and the World of Nations', pp. 103-108.

[2]For a helpful discussion of this issue, see Paul Marshall, *Thine is the Kingdom: A Biblical Perspective on the Nature of Government and Politics Today* (Marshalls, 1984), pp. 41f.

[3]I am heavily indebted to John Goldingay's book *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1987), ch. 3, for the structure and some of the inspiration behind this article. He takes precisely the question of the people of God as a case study in his discussion of a historically contextual approach to the diversity of the OT. His book was reviewed in *Themelios* 15.2 (Jan. 1990).

[4]E. Voeglin, *Israel and Revelation* (Louisiana State University, 1956), p. 140; quoted in Goldingay, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

[5]Notice the train of ideas through the following texts: Ex. 5:2; 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:15, 29; 14:18, 25.

[6]The question of how and when Israel established itself in Canaan (by conquest, infiltration, revolt, or a mixture) is still a much debated area among historians of the period. See F. S. Frick, *The Formation of the State in Ancient Israel: A Survey of Models and Theories* (Sheffield, 1985), and J. J. Bimson, 'The origins of Israel in Canaan: an examination of recent theories', *Themelios* 15.1 (1989), pp. 4-15.

[7]N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250-1050 BCE* (Orbis, SCM, 1979).

[8]J. Goldingay, *op. cit.*, p. 66, with references to the work of Mendenhall, Gottwald, and other sociologists of Israel. I have tried to outline the

ethically significant features of Israel's social life and the hermeneutical considerations that enable us to apply them to the people of God today, in C. J. H. Wright, 'The Ethical Relevance of Israel as a Society', *Transformation* I.4 (1984).

[9]Brueggemann comments forcefully on the double significance of the Mosaic 'alternative' to Pharaoh's statism. Moses challenged the mythical claims of Pharaoh's empire with the 'alternative religion of the freedom of God'. At the same time he attacked Pharaoh's oppression with the 'politics of human justice and compassion'. 'Yahweh makes possible an alternative theology and an alternative sociology': W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Fortress, 1978), pp. 16f. This is a most stimulating book on the political and social dimensions of some of the prophets.

[10]'Yahweh was regarded as political leader both of Israel and of the world, a concept which in itself was not unique, however, as the rule of divinity was a belief held by all ancient Near Eastern peoples': Millard C. Lind, 'The Concept of Political Power in Ancient Israel', *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*, 7 (1968-9), pp. 4-24.

[11]Lind, *op. cit.*, pp. 12f. He adduces Gideon's resistance to proffered kingship (Jdg. 8:22f.); Samuel's critique of monarchy as an essentially enslaving burden (1 Sa. 8:10-18); and Jotham's fable (Jdg. 9:7-15) in which monarchy is mocked as 'a socially useless, even harmful institution'.

[12]Gregory Baum, referring to a historical study of such movements in Europe by Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, 1957), in his own article, 'Exodus Politics', in B. van Iersel and A. Weiler (eds.), *Exodus — A Lasting Paradigm, Concilium* 189 (1987), pp. 109-117. This volume includes helpful surveys of the use of the exodus paradigm in various theological traditions.

[13]Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York, 1985). His approach is also summarized in Baum, *op. cit.*

[14]In *The Prophetic Imagination*, ch. 2, Brueggemann lists the characteristic features of the Solomonic era as 'an economics of affluence (1 Ki. 4:20-23), politics of oppression (1 Ki. 5:13-18, 9, 15-22) and a religion of immanence and accessibility (1 Ki. 8:12-13)'.

[15]G. H. Wittenberg, 'King Solomon and the Theologians', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 63 (June 1988) (special issue on church and state and the problem of legitimacy), pp. 16-29. Brueggemann also finds implicit criticism of the golden age of Solomon in the texts themselves which catalogue it, texts which he claims conceal a social criticism designed to lead the reader to enquire exactly what kind of *shalom* it was under Solomon which brought the people such satiety. See 'Vine and Fig Tree — a Case Study in Imagination and Criticism', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981); 'The Bible and Mission', *Missiology* 10.4 (1982), pp. 397-411; 'Trajectories in Old Testament Literature and the Sociology of Ancient Israel', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979), pp. 161-185.

[16]Goldingay has some perceptive comparisons between the various stages of Israel's development and the history of the Christian church, from its familial origins to its present 'post-exilic' (post-Enlightenment) tensions. See *Theological Diversity*, p. 83.

[17]I have discussed these responses to the state further in *Living as the People of God*, pp. 122-130.

[18]Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, p. 75.

[19]G. Baum, 'Exodus Politics', suggests various paradigms as helpful and biblical ways of looking at conflicts in our modern world.

[20]Goldingay, *Theological Diversity*, pp. 91f.

The New Testament and the 'state'[1]

N. T. Wright

Rev Dr Tom Wright, of Worcester College, teaches in the University of Oxford. It is good to have another stimulating contribution from him after several years' absence from the article (but not the review) section of the journal.

Introduction

In September 1974, Archbishop Michael Ramsey visited Chile under its new right-wing régime. While he preached in church, an armed guard waited outside, and asked the *Observer's* correspondent as he left: 'Was there any politics in it? He must stay with things of the soul, because politics is for us' — the last remark accompanied by a pat on the gun under his arm.[2] Ramsey was not afraid to speak out on political issues but among the disturbing features of the soldier's remark is the fact that a large number of practising Christians (including the Anglican Bishop in Chile) agreed with him then, and probably still do. The Western church in general has bought heavily into the Enlightenment belief that 'sacred' and 'secular' are divided by a great and more or less unbridgeable gulf. And when we try to read the NT we are already doing battle with such presuppositions. The working title of this article was 'The New Testament doctrine of the state'; but on reflection I have decided that this simply will not do. Explaining why will serve as an introduction to the subject as a whole.

What is the set of questions that such a working title presents? Traditionally, it suggests that the NT contains 'doctrines', clear statements about things that Christians should believe. The central doctrines concern God, human nature, sin, salvation in Christ, the Holy Spirit; then come church, sacraments, worship; somewhere near the bottom of the list comes ethics; and perhaps in a sub-category of ethics we find the question of the state. The question will be variously put. What political responsibility has the Christian individual? Should he or she bear arms if asked to by the government? Are legitimate rulers agents of God, and if so to what extent? And somewhere in the midst of all of this one may expect to find, in a biblical theology at least, an exegesis of certain passages: 'Render unto Caesar' (Mk. 12:13-17 and parallels), the notorious Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-17, and (if we are lucky) some of the Revelation of St John. The 'doctrine' is then treated as these passages are usually treated: as a footnote to more important things, an aside, almost an irrelevance in a modern democracy where Christians are quite happy with things as they are and are free to preach the gospel and save souls.

The problem should be clear to anyone who knows the world of the first century — or for that matter any century until the eighteenth, and any country outside so-called Western civilization. It is simply this: the implicit split between 'religion' and 'politics' is a rank anachronism, and we read it into the NT only if we wish not to hear anything the NT is saying, not only about what we call 'the state' but about a great many other things as well. No first-century Jew (and no twentieth-century Arab, or Pole, or Sri Lankan) could imagine that the worship of their god and the organization of human society were matters that related only at a tangent. If we are to hear what the NT has to say on what *we* call 'the state', we must be prepared to put our categories back into the melting-pot and have them stirred around a little. We cannot read a few 'timeless truths' about the 'state' off the surface of the NT and hope to escape with our world view unscathed. Hence the revision of the title of this article, and the inverted commas around the suspect word, which belongs precisely in the eighteenth century. What would a first-century Jew or Christian have made of the modern notion of 'state'? Not a lot, I suspect.[3]

We are therefore committed to a more complex task than bringing our comfortably isolated category to the NT and asking what this book has to say about it. We are bound to re-enter the rough-and-tumble world of the Middle East (that phrase is loaded, too, but one cannot guard all flanks at once) in the first century and try to see, in the writings of the early Christians, what categories emerge to handle what we think of as the relation between Christian belief and practice and political allegiance and obligation. And, since this involves unthinking a good deal of our normal ideas on the subject, we must then engage in the complex hermeneutical task: how to get from the first century back into the twentieth. We are not first-century Jews, living under the *pax Romana*. We live in a world where a great deal has already been done for good and ill in the name of Christ, the world of crusades and inquisitions as well as the world of William Wilberforce, Mother Theresa and St Francis. We cannot naïvely pretend that we are innocent of all that, and go back to a 'pure' Christian faith unsullied by social involvement, under the impression that following the NT means living as though the last 2,000 years had not happened. History, then, and hermeneutics: these are the tasks; exegesis must be the tool they use, and theology the air they breathe.

Jews, Greeks and Romans

We must begin with a brief look at the world views within which Christianity was born and nurtured. They, after all, set the agendas, even if the church claimed the responsibility to write up the minutes.

The Romans had inherited the role of superpower (at least as far as Palestine was concerned) from a long line of nations: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Egypt again, Syria. Arguably, Roman government was better for the Jews than many of its predecessors. Taxation was a problem, but things had been worse. Foreign and idolatrous symbols (the two epithets sometimes approached synonymity) were a continual offence, but the Romans were not the first to introduce such things; Greek culture had been a fact of life in Palestine for a couple of centuries at least by the time of Jesus, and many had learnt to live with it, while others, though still resenting it, were nevertheless influenced by it in a variety of ways. There was no invisible checkpoint at the borders of the Holy Land, confiscating 'Hellenistic' ideas or exchanging them for 'Palestinian' ones.[4] The Romans at least, after a puzzled early period, allowed the Jews, uniquely among their subject peoples, to practise their own religion. From an outsider's point of view, then, the Jews were quite well off. They, of course, saw it differently. Their forefathers had been exiled to Babylon because of their own idolatry and wickedness; now that they, the descendants, had sharpened up their observation of the covenant documents, why were they still being ruled by foreign idolaters? From some points of view, the exile was still continuing: as long as the Herods and the Pilates ruled Palestine, the great prophecies of Isaiah or Ezekiel were still awaiting fulfilment. The period which historians call 'post-exilic' was seen at the time as semi-exilic. Not until Israel's God, the God of all the earth, demonstrated that he was both of those things by liberating Israel from this internal exile would Jews be satisfied that the covenant had been kept.

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Israel's theological aspirations thus had an inescapably historical and political referent. If someone had offered a first-century Palestinian Jew the consolation of pie in the sky, it would have been refused, no matter how kosher the pie. One of the great myths of twentieth-century scholarship is that most first-century Jews expected the space–time universe to end immediately. They did not: they expected their God to act dramatically *within* history, with effects that they could only describe with metaphorical end-of-the-world language.[5] We might well describe the fall of the Berlin Wall as an 'earth-shattering event'; 2,000 years hence, no doubt, some pedantic literalist will argue, in the *Martian Journal of Early European Studies*, that the wall fell because of a large earthquake, and we will all turn in our graves at the misreading of our everyday metaphors.

The cultural symbols of Greece, then, and the political and military might of Rome both superimposed themselves on the daily world of the Palestinian Jew, as well as on his or her cousin in Alexandria, Tarsus, or Philippi. And the bulk of the Jewish literature of the period, whether it be the Wisdom writings, the Maccabaean historical hagiographies, the Qumran scrolls, the fierce and Pharisaic Psalms of Solomon, or the apocalyptic visions of the Sibylline Oracles, Jubilees, 1 Enoch or 4 Ezra, proclaims that a time will come when the God of all the earth, who is in covenant with Israel, will call a halt to the present order of the world, reward idolaters as they deserve, and rescue Israel, or at least those who have remained faithful.

The exceptions to this rule are instructive. Philo carves out a mystical compromise between the God of Moses and the god of the philosophers that allows him to articulate his Jewishness in a way less threatening to his Alexandrian culture. The Sadducees hold a precarious but advantageous political position under the Romans, and are not interested in a change that might leave them exposed to the anger of the lower orders; that, arguably, and not a proto-liberalism, was why they rejected that most revolutionary of doctrines, the resurrection. Josephus, by the time he is writing, has decided, for an interestingly mixed set of reasons, that Israel's God is now on the side of the Romans. The first-century proto-Rabbis, whose words we reconstruct with some difficulty from much later written documents, were arguably as fanatical about Israel's socio-political fate as those Pharisees who incited the young hotheads to pull down Herod's blasphemous eagle from the temple gate.[6] Rabbi Akiba, no less, hailed Simeon Ben-Kosiba as Messiah as late as the early second century, and those who disagreed with him did so on the grounds of chronology, not because they had exchanged politics for piety.[7] It is the later documents that reflect the filtering out of dangerous ideas in the light of the events of AD 70 and AD 135. As the focus of Jewish identity moved, inevitably, away from the Holy Land and more towards the Holy Book, so, in a kind of ironic displacement, the idea of the ghetto was born: a safe place where one could worship Israel's God in private while the world went on its own way.

Exceptions apart, then, Jews of the first century looked for their God to act within history to liberate his people. It was into this world that there came Jesus the Galilean teacher, and Paul the fanatical Pharisee. Did they ignore the hope of the people, radically alter it, or reaffirm it — or what?

Jesus and the kingdom of God

Writing about Jesus without a long methodological introduction is risky, even in these days of the 'third quest'.[8] What I have to say can, I think, be justified by rigorous historical argument, though there is no space for it here, and I shall therefore be open to objection from all quarters. It is a situation one learns to live with in NT studies.[9]

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First-century Jews had a slogan which encapsulated their aspiration for a new order in which Israel would be liberated. Their God, already sovereign of the world *de jure*, would become so *de facto*. The rightful King would become King indeed. There would be, in their phrase, 'no King but God'. God's kingship was a key idea in the Zealot philosophy, and Josephus, when less guarded, indicates that the Pharisees' ideology was not far away.[10] When, therefore, a prophetic figure down by the Jordan declared that God's kingdom was at hand (Mt. 3:2), and when this cry was taken up by a contemporary who travelled the villages and lanes of Galilee, the immediate reaction could not have been that an apolitical religious revival was taking place. If that was the impression John and Jesus wanted to make, they chose a disastrous way of going about it. The proclamation and invitation of Jesus must have looked uncommonly like the founding of a political movement. When large crowds followed Jesus up a hillside or to the seashore, they did not leave their homes and jobs for the day in order to be told about pie in the sky, or to be instructed in how to be nice to each other. They went because they sensed that Jesus was inaugurating the new day for which, with double taxation and political turmoil, they had longed. When Jesus called some followers up into the hills, and arranged them into a group of twelve, the analogues pointed, not to a primitive ordination ceremony for a church with minimal ties to socio-political reality, but to the groups of desperate men who went off into the wilderness to prepare for God's action in restoring Israel. The Galilean hills were a favourite haunt of *lestai* — not 'robbers' in the sense of early highwaymen, but holy brigands, living a life of desperate obedience to God as the only King and frantic hope in the coming kingdom as the only way out of the present awful situation.[11] When Jesus took the twelve up north to Caesarea Philippi, the source of the (politically symbolic) Jordan, elicited from them the acknowledgment (however ambiguous) that he was Messiah, and told them that they were going to march on Jerusalem, where the Son of Man would suffer and be vindicated, they are almost bound to have heard him invite them to come with him on a desperate mission, which might involve some of them being hurt or killed, but in which they would be victorious. Peter objected, naturally, to the idea that Jesus himself would die in the process; the disciples as a whole never, before the resurrection, worked out the double meaning, but continued blithely to regard Jesus' words as indicating what as ordinary Palestinian Jews they were conditioned to expect and want: a socio-political revolution, leading to a new world order.

What then was the double meaning? For some interpreters, it is precisely here that Jesus differed radically from the Jewish expectations of the time. They argue that we must do with this political language what Bultmann wanted to do with Jesus' eschatological language, and say that while Jesus accommodated himself to the language of his day, what he *meant* by it was something quite different. In both cases — the Bultmannian demythologization of apocalyptic, and the normal ecclesiastical domestication of Jesus' revolutionary call — the scholar who wants to make such a move has to say that Jesus sailed close to the wind; but that is a small price to pay for the twentieth-century luxury of knowing that he 'really' preached a message about individual 'decision', not about the end of the world, or that he 'really' summoned individuals into a spiritual kingdom, in which politics become irrelevant and the hope of an other-worldly heaven all-important.[12] (As an aside, I think that one of the reasons the latter route has been so easy to take in the modern Western world is because of the astonishing but regular misreading of 'kingdom of heaven' in Matthew as 'a place, called heaven, which is God's special country, to which his people go after death'; this view, because of the place of Matthew at the start of the NT canon, is then read into 'kingdom of God' in Mark and Luke.)

The double meaning, I think, was far more subtle than such reductionisms have allowed. Jesus' message was after all inescapably political. He denounced rulers, real and self-appointed. He spoke of good news for the poor. He led large groups of people off into the wilderness, a sure sign of revolutionary intent. He announced the imminent destruction of the Jerusalem temple. At the start of a festival celebrating Israel's liberation, he organized around himself what could only have looked like a royal procession. And he deliberately and dramatically acted out a parable of the temple's destruction, thus drawing on to himself the anger of the authorities in a way which he could never have done by healing lepers and forgiving prostitutes (though we should not miss the revolutionary note in his offer of forgiveness, whose real offence lay in its bypassing of the temple cult). The temple was, after all, the centre of Judaism in every sense. It was not like a church, even a cathedral, which housed the religious business while politics and economics went on elsewhere. For the first-century Jew, the

temple was the equivalent, for twentieth-century Britain, of the Houses of Parliament, the City, the Butcher's Guild, Buckingham Palace and Westminster Abbey, all rolled into one. And it was against this central and vital institution that Jesus spoke and acted. He died the death of the *lestai*, the political insurrectionists (Barabbas, and the two crucified with Jesus, were *lestai*). How could he not have been 'political'?

The equation, 'non-violent = apolitical', is of course absurd.

This is not to say, of course, that he was actually advocating military violence. The equation 'non-violent = apolitical' is of course absurd, as we who know about Gandhi must realize; but it is frequently made none the less. To a nation bent on violence, anyone who claims to be speaking for God's kingdom and who advocates non-violent means as the way to it is making a very deep and dangerous political statement. He is likely to be caught in crossfire. That, in a sense, is what happened: on the level of historical explanation that deals with the intentions of Herod, Pilate, the chief priests and those who advised them, Jesus' death was a mixture of convenience and political necessity. But what about the level that deals with Jesus' intentionality?

Jesus, I have argued elsewhere, believed two things which gave him an interpretative grid for understanding his own vocation as leading to a violent and untimely death.[13] First, he believed himself called to announce to Israel that her present way of life, whose focal point was resistance against Rome and whose greatest symbol was the temple, was heading in exactly the wrong direction. Down that road lay ruin – the wrath of Rome, the wrath of God. Second, he believed himself called to take Israel's destiny upon himself, to *be* Israel-in-God's-plan. What happens as the story reaches its climax, and Jesus sits on the Mount of Olives looking across at the temple, and beyond it to an ugly hill just outside the city wall to the west, is that the two beliefs fuse into one. He will be Israel – by taking Israel's destiny, her ruin, her destruction, the devastation of the temple, on to himself. He will be the point where the exile reaches its climax, as the pagan authorities execute Israel's rightful King. Only so can the kingdom come on earth (in socio-political reality) as it is in heaven (in the perfect will and plan of the Father). From this perspective, to say that Jesus' death itself was a 'political' act cannot be to divorce it (against the grain of all first-century Judaism) from its 'theological' implications. On the cross politics and religion, as well as love and justice and a host of other abstractions, meet and merge. Only from the perspective of the cross, shattering as it was to Jesus' followers then as it should be now, can any view of politics, and hence of the 'state', claim to be Christian.

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What then might Jesus have meant by those words, 'my kingdom is not of this world' (Jn. 18:36)? And what was the distinction he drew between what belonged to Caesar and what belonged to God? Leaving aside the critical questions once again, both of these passages in their contexts resonate well with the scenario I have sketched. The claim before Pilate is that the kingdom Jesus is inaugurating is not world*ly* in its methods: 'if my kingdom were of this world, my followers would fight to prevent me being handed over'. Kingdoms of the world fight; physical power, strategic, revolutionary or military power is the rule of the game. Jesus' kingdom has a different *modus operandi*. The sentence should not be read as referring to an other-worldly, Platonic, non-physical kingdom. It designates Jesus' kingdom as the breaking into the worldly order of a rule which comes from elsewhere, from Israel's God, the creator God. It does not mean the abandonment of the created order and the escape into a private or 'spiritual' sphere. On to the scene of worldly power – precisely there, or it is meaningless! – has come a new order of sovereignty, which wins its victories by a new method.

So too with the saying about Caesar (Mk. 12:13-17 and parallels). Within the sharp polemical context, and underneath the shrewd epigram that turns the challenge and threat back on its proposers, there lies a fundamental perception of the socio-political reality of the day. Israel has bought into Roman rule; she has accepted her own secularization. And this is how God now intends to keep it. Israel has become a nation like all the others: she has 'no king but Caesar' (Jn. 19:15). The kingdom is therefore taken away from her and given to others (Mk. 12:9, coming just before our passage). From now on, as even Josephus saw, Israel has forfeited her right to be a theocracy, and must take her place among the nations of the world, giving allegiance to Caesar and to God. We cannot press this passage further, as though this were Jesus' considered systematic statement for the benefit of future generations in a church as yet unborn, for details about 'church and state'. What we can suggest is that any analysis of such matters must include this epigram as a fixed point in its hermeneutical line. And with that we are pointed towards Paul.

Paul and the justice of God

(i) *God's covenant faithfulness*

The starting-point of Paul's Christian theological reflection was the realization, on the road to Damascus, that the crucified Jesus was indeed the Messiah.[14] Central to this was the recognition that *God had done for Jesus what Paul had expected him to do for Israel on the last day.* Jesus, as an individual, had been executed by the pagans and raised from the dead; but that was what God was supposed to do for Israel at the end of time; therefore Jesus had indeed enacted Israel's destiny, and his claim to be Israel's Messiah, her anointed representative, was thereby vindicated.

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Paul, as a direct result, believed that all God's promises had now come true in Jesus as Messiah (2 Cor. 1:20). In particular, as he sets out at length in Romans, God's covenant faithfulness, his 'righteousness', has been revealed at last. And, in fulfilling his covenant promises to Abraham, God has thus acted as the righteous, 'just', judge: he has dealt with evil, he has been true to the law, he has acted impartially, and he has rescued the helpless from their plight.[15] But the revelation of God's covenant faithfulness, his justice, cannot be simply a matter of the private experience of Christians. The whole Jewish background out of which Paul writes militates against this, and nothing he says detracts from this thrust: the God of Israel is precisely the creator, the God of the whole world, and when he acts to redeem his people this will be the means of blessing for the whole world.[16] Though I do not agree with Käsemann in his assertion that 'the righteousness of God' *means* his 'victory over the world', Käsemann has, I think, erred in the right direction:[17] because of what the phrase *does* mean, which I take to be 'God's covenant faithfulness', Paul cannot but see the realization of that idea as involving the new world order predicted in the prophets (here is the line that leads to Romans 8). The Jewish particularism is not abandoned in the revelation in Christ; rather, the specificity of the covenant is the means of the creator's intended blessing for the whole world.

But how can the blessing come to a world where idolatry still rules? That question is at the heart of the missionary theology by which Paul articulates his motivation and method in announcing to the world that the crucified Jesus is Lord of the world; and it is in his answers to that question that we may locate properly (and not as a footnote or appendix) his reflections on what we have come to call the 'state'. We may begin away from Romans, in order to work our way back to it, not least to chapter 13, with some hope of exegetical success.

(ii) *Proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord*

Let us first go to Philippi, a proud Roman colony. It is to the young church in precisely that city that Paul emphasizes the call of his Christological monotheism: at the name of Jesus every knee shall

bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is *Kyrios*, to the glory of God the Father (2:10f.). Though modern exegetes may sometimes be more interested in the question of whether this implies universalism, for the original recipients there would be a far more pressing concern. Jesus is 'Lord', therefore Caesar is not. Not surprising, then, that Acts records (against what some think is the 'grain' of the book) that Paul and Silas are charged in nearby Thessalonica with proclaiming Jesus as an alternative king, a rival to Caesar (Acts 17:7). This suggests a new way into that puzzling text, Philippians 1:15-18. There Paul speaks of those who 'proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry', who do it 'not sincerely, but with the intention of stirring up trouble for me in my bonds'. It has been thought often enough that these were Christians with whom Paul disagreed. I suggest that this is a misreading of the phrase *Christon kataggelein*, to 'preach Christ'. The verb is much wider than the English verb 'preach', something done by Christians in a church or at most in an open-air rally. It denotes a royal proclamation, something done by a herald. In the light of 2:11 and Acts 17:7, I suggest that Paul's idea of 'proclaiming Christ' had little to do with offering people a new religious option, a new private experience of the love of God, and far more to do with the announcement to the world at large that the crucified and risen Jesus was its Lord and King, the one before whom every knee must bow. This is fighting talk, the sort of thing that gets you in trouble with the authorities, and that is exactly what we find in Acts and the letters. Who, then, are these strange announcers of Christ? They are, I suggest, people in the local pagan (and quite possibly Jewish) communities who are telling people about this ridiculous fellow, Paul, and his wild claims: he is saying that Jesus of Nazareth, a Galilean preacher, is the Lord of the world! Paul's response is simple: as long as people hear the news that Jesus is Lord of the world, I am content to stay in jail. This is the message which is invested with the power of God, whether, by implication, the announcers know it or not.

(iii) *Confronting the powers*

This idea of the proclamation of Jesus as Lord sends us on, therefore, to the confrontation with the powers (it is scarcely surprising that the prison epistles show a particular awareness of this dimension of the gospel). The powers have long been marginalized within studies of Paul, despite heroic efforts in some quarters, but it is high time that they were put back where they belong, well within the main lines of his world view.[18] Paul's theology is not simply about human sin and how people get saved by Christ. It is about God, the creator, about his covenant and how he has been faithful to it, *thereby* delivering the world from the grip of sin and corruption. Salvation falls within Paul's theology at this point, and his teaching about it can only be fully understood there. He is thus a fully Jewish theologian, focusing attention on the doctrines of monotheism and election and working out, in practice as well as theory, the radical revision of those doctrines necessitated by the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah, and the gift of the Spirit. And from this Jewish basis we can understand his language about the powers.

Paul is a robust monotheist, and there is no suggestion that the powers are really alternative gods. They are only 'so-called' gods and lords (1 Cor. 8:5). They are, rather (and perhaps initially surprisingly), part of the good creation made by the Father through his agent, the pre-existent one who became human and was known as Jesus (Col. 1:15-17). The powers have, nevertheless, rebelled, and have wreaked much havoc in the world by shutting up humans under their own power; it is at this point, perhaps, that we realize what Paul is talking about. The *stoicheia*, which are dealt with in Galatians 4:1-11 and Colossians 2:8-15, include at least the national and/or territorial gods, which insist upon racial, ethnic or geographical loyalty. They include the idols by whose worship humans are reinforced in prejudice about race, gender, class. They include the 'forces', as we would call them, which operate through the Herods and Pilates of this world, so that sometimes it is impossible to tell whether Paul is actually referring to the human agents of power or the powers that work through human agents, or, more likely, both (1 Cor. 2:8). They thus include the 'forces' that put Jesus to death, and that were thereby duped, shown to have overreached themselves, defeated and led away in the divine triumphal procession (Col. 2:14f.).

The result of this débâcle is not, as one might have imagined, the abolition of the 'powers', so that they would have no place in the renewed world order. On the contrary, they are thereby 'reconciled' to the creator, again through Jesus the Messiah (Col. 1:18-20). Apparently, with the reaffirmation of creation in the resurrection of Jesus there goes the reaffirmation of the essential created goodness even of the 'powers' that had rebelled. Only so is dualism avoided. The powers only became demons when they (falsely) became gods; and they only became gods when humans gave them the worship which they did not deserve.[19]

Paul is therefore living, and knows himself to be living, in a situation whose multiple ambiguities would be intellectually fascinating were they not so politically and personally pressing and uncomfortable. The ambiguity is reflected in the contrast of two passages, Ephesians 6:10-20 and Romans 13:1-7.

On the one hand, the battle continues: as humans are still worshipping the principalities and powers, they are still powerful *de facto* even though *de jure* defeated on the cross; the old illustration of the time-lag between D-day and V-day comes again to mind. The power still wielded by the 'powers' is undeniable: Ephesians is written from prison, where the powers seem to have won a temporary victory over the ambassador of the new king, and battle must be maintained unrelentingly by those who, like David's supporters in the reign of Saul, are backing the anointed one against the present establishment. The gospel Paul announced is always going to confront those who have a vested interest in the worship of Athene, Roma, Diana, Aphrodite, Mars, Mammon or any other of the defeated rabble who are dethroned by the cross. And such confrontations, which are bound to be 'political' in that they meet such rebel powers with the news that their time is up, that they must bow before one whose kingdom inaugurates a different order, will inevitably produce trouble for the announcer.

(iv) *Romans 13*

On the other hand, there is Romans 13.[20] We may shake off from the start the voices that tell us that the relevant section (vv. 1-7) is an interpolation.[21] It is far more important to look at the background to such ideas in the Judaism of the period, and to see the flow of thought whereby Paul has reached this point in the letter. History of religions and exegesis together will contribute to theology, and, I hope, to hermeneutics.

For a start, we may note that already in this period there had been voices among Diaspora Jews advocating a quiescent attitude towards the ruling authorities. Since the exile, and the resultant dispersion of Jews in much of the then known world, Jewish communities had had to come to terms with living in countries where the writ of Israel's God did not even run in theory. Though they might still look for the liberation of Palestine as their real homeland, when it came to living in Alexandria or Tarsus, Rome or Athens, Jews would be content if they were allowed to study their ancestral Torah and practise their ancestral taboos. The Wisdom of Solomon declares that the kings and rulers of the earth have their dominion given them by the Lord, and that they are his servants (6:1-4) — even though it then continues at once to declare that the Lord will therefore judge them for abusing their trust, something that Paul does not mention in this passage (however much later interpreters may wish that he had).[22] There is always the old Jewish idea that the nations were assigned tutelary guardians, while Israel was the creator's special preserve;[23] and there is the emerging Diaspora viewpoint according to which the study of Torah can substitute for the temple as the locus of the divine presence (a convenient Diaspora doctrine, this, which did not undercut allegiance to the temple but made the practice of the presence of God more readily possible).[24] All of these combine to give the Pharisee that Paul had been a sense of a range of possible attitudes *vis-à-vis* ruling authorities. Whereas the Sadducees believed in free will, *i.e.* (translating Josephus' euphemistic categories into their more likely political meanings) in God helping those who helped themselves, and the Essenes in determinism, *i.e.* waiting for God to act without human effort involved, the Pharisees, who believed in a mixture of the two, seem to have been ready for action and also ready for God to act independently of human action.[25] This gave them the leeway which they exploited in various ways: sometimes for revolution, as in the case of Akiba, sometimes for quiescence, as in the Diaspora. The Pharisaic attitude to the ruling authorities, therefore — a new position granted the new situation of a Jew living away from the Holy Land — was on a par with the idea of 'spiritual sacrifices', developed precisely when Jews could not get to the temple on a regular basis. Paul picks up both ideas: the latter in Romans 12:1-2, the former in our present passage.

In a sense, then, the question had already been faced and decided to some extent. What should the people of God do when they find themselves off their own turf? Obey the rulers of the place where they happen to be, because the creator has given them for the benefit of all. But, in another sense, the situation that faced Paul in the early church had both sharpened up the need for such advice and given a new edge to the advice itself.

Christians came to believe very early that the promises about sacred turf had been widened to include the whole world as the inheritance of the people of God. The whole world is claimed for the risen Lord.

On the one hand, the church believed itself from very early on to be a distinct community, different from Jews on the one hand and Gentiles on the other. It did not even *look* like an ordinary first-century religious movement, which one would have expected to be either racially-based or a private religious club for the benefit of the 'enlightenment' of its members. It claimed less, and more, than these: an open society, claiming to be the human race in embryo.[26] They were neither Jews nor Greeks, but 'the church of God' (1 Cor. 10:32). In particular, it came to believe very early that the promises about sacred turf had been widened to include the whole world as the inheritance of the people of God: Paul in Romans 4:13 makes this move as if it were already commonplace. No one nation, racially or geographically, is 'special' in that sense any more. The whole world is claimed for the risen Lord. What more natural, then, than that the church should regard itself as above obedience to mere earthly rulers? Already worshipping the one to whom Caesar would bow, why should it bow to Caesar as well? This prospect of holy anarchy, which in its Jewish form was brewing up towards a terrible war as Paul was writing Romans, would not commend itself as serving the gospel. More natural was the line which would occur readily, we may suppose, to a Pharisee now rethinking his world view in the light of Jesus and the Spirit. The major section of Romans (chapters 1–11) is given over to an exposition of the covenant faithfulness of the creator God, as a result of which the motley rabble that made up the church were to be assured that they, no matter what their moral or racial background, were the true covenant people, heirs to the promises made to the patriarchs. They were, in other words, a different version of what Diaspora Pharisaism had held itself to be — the people of God, spread abroad in the world. Learning to live with the 'powers that be' was therefore the appropriate mode of existence for this Israel redivivus.

We should note carefully what is being said, and what is not being said. What is here ruled out is an attitude which would flout magistrates and police; which would speak and act as though it were above or outside all law and social restraint. What is enjoined is not a meek submission to whatever an authority wishes, but a recognition that, by being Christian, one has not thereby ceased to be human, and that, being human, one remains bound in ties of obligation to one's fellow-humans, and beyond that to the God who, as creator, has called his human creatures to live in harmony with each other — and such obligations are, to a lesser or greater extent, enshrined in the laws which governments make from time to time. Paul's point is not the maximalist one that whatever governments do must be right and that whatever they enact must be obeyed, but the solid if minimalist one that God wants human society to be ordered; that being Christian does not release one from the complex obligations of this order; and that one must therefore submit, at least in general, to those entrusted with enforcing this order.

This implies, I think, neither quiescence before, nor acquiescence in, totalitarianism. The history-of-religions background to Paul's thinking is instructive: Jews holding views broadly analogous to his were quite capable of political activity in the Empire, and of reminding governments of their business. What Paul says is clearly anathema to the totalitarian: the point about totalitarianism is that the ruling power has taken the place of God; that is why it is always *de facto*, and frequently *de jure*, atheist. For Paul, the 'state' is not God. God is God, and the state is thus relativized, as are the powers precisely in Colossians 1:15-20, where they are created and reconciled but not divine.

I have indicated hereby the position I currently take, with a fair degree of caution, on the two major issues that face the interpreter of Romans 13:1: (a) are the 'powers' here the double-referent 'powers' that we find elsewhere in Paul, or are they merely the earthly rulers, without their 'spiritual' counterparts? and (b) what sort of 'submission' is required to those 'powers'? By following those who understand 'submission' as considerably less than 'unquestioning obedience', and who see it rather as a matter of humbly understanding one's place within the divinely ordered human world, it becomes easier, I think, to follow also the minority who still hold to the double, or perhaps better bipolar, referent behind the 'powers'.[27] Indeed, it is odd to see the consensus on the matter shifting towards a single, this-worldly, reference at the same time as we are being made aware, by writers like Ellul and Wink in their different ways, of the 'forces' which, as we so readily acknowledge in everyday speech, stand behind, and are greater than the sum total of, the humans involved in the political and economic processes. It is of course true that the advice which follows in Romans 13 refers to one's behaviour *vis-à-vis* the actual office-holders. But Paul's other references to the powers, and the ubiquitous double reference in the ancient world, make it (I think) far more likely that he would not have excluded from his mind the extra or spiritual dimension of the powers, however we may like to refer to it. But this raises the final and perhaps the most important question: what difference does the death and resurrection of Jesus make to the powers to whom one must (in this sense) submit?

(v) *The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ*

At one level, the answer is 'nothing at all'. In Cranfield's image (which may not be altogether to the point, but serves this limited purpose), a warrant can be served for someone's arrest, and until it is acted on the criminal can pursue his course unhindered. Calvary and Easter serve the warrant on the powers, but they still need to be brought into line, and (as Paul knew only too well) can still wreak evil in the world.[28] At another level, all the difference in the world: by the same image, the situation of the powers has radically changed *de jure*, and those who know of this change — *i.e.* Christians — know that the submission they offer to earthly institutions is neither absolute nor final, neither dehumanizing nor constricting to those called to announce the absolute Lordship of the crucified and risen Messiah. Underneath the call for submission in Romans 13 we should, I think, place the astonishing words attributed to Jesus in John 19:11: faced with a false charge, a skewed trial, an ineffective judge, Jesus says 'you could have no power over me if it were not given you from above; therefore he who delivered me to you has the greater sin'. If Jesus and/or John can affirm the God-givenness even of Pilate's power, and even at that precise moment, it is perhaps right to go on looking for the solution to Romans 13 within the multiple ambiguities of reading 'powers' in its full Pauline sense, rather than cutting the knot and making Paul superficially easier.

From Paul's perspective, Calvary and Easter were the occasions when the whole cosmos died and was reborn.

What, then, has happened in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and how has it brought a new state of affairs into being? From Paul's perspective, Calvary and Easter were the occasions when the whole cosmos died and was reborn (Gal. 6:14-16). This dying and rising needed, of course, to be worked out as individuals and groups went through it (Gal. 2:16-21; 4:19); we have here, not unusually in Paul, the tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet'. What we do have 'already', though, is a community of people called and equipped to live by the worship of the crucified and risen Jesus, instead of by the worship of this or that idol, and so to discover, and to announce to the world, a new way of being human, a kingdom 'not of this world' in the sense that it cannot be reduced to the power plays and power struggles of ordinary human society. The narrative of Acts shows Paul quite clearly reminding authorities, both Roman, Hellenistic and Jewish, of just what their God-given responsibilities consist in. What we have, supplementing as always the death of Jesus in Paul's theology, is the gift of the Spirit — the Spirit given to the renewed people of God to enable them to *be* the renewed people of God, and so to bring to human affairs the transcendent and transcending vision and

message of the true God. This does not absolve men and women from social and political responsibilities, any more than it renders unnecessary the acts of eating and drinking (it is interesting that in Romans 14 Paul is concerned with precisely those things, and once again rejects any dualism that would assign part of the created order to a sphere in which the creator's writ does not run). It gives them a new reason for engaging with the world, for announcing in all ways open to them that Jesus is Lord.

Conclusion

I have had no space to discuss the rest of the NT, and I think that to add Luke/Acts and Revelation, at least, would have been illuminating, would have filled out the picture more than a little. But I have said enough, perhaps, to indicate the ways in which I think the historical end of the picture ought to be appreciated. What about the hermeneutical question?

We in the twentieth-century church are neither Galilean villagers nor citizens of the Roman and Mediterranean world of the first century. The specific concerns which Jesus addressed are not ours; the agenda which Paul believed himself called to address is not ours either. We do well to respect our distance from the NT and its world, and should not, in our eagerness to make it relevant and so demonstrate our Protestant orthodoxy, flatten out the territory that separates it from us. We need it to be where it is, at the beginning of that historical movement which we confess in the creed to be under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and which is known rather flatly as Church History. As I have argued elsewhere,[20] I believe that the means by which the Bible, and particularly the NT, can today carry the authority which is so often glibly claimed for it is by the resolute working out of the essential *story* or drama of God's dealings with humankind which we find written up, prophetically, in Scripture. In the Bible we find a drama in several acts. The life and death of Jesus are the penultimate act, the moment when the drama reaches its height. The resurrection, the gift of the Spirit, and the birth of the church are the beginning of the final act, in which the climactic moment of the previous act is worked out. But the drama is not over. The way the NT is written is precisely open-ended — with clues as to how the final scene will look (Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 21-22), no doubt, but with a large blank to be filled in by those who, as the heirs of the first scene in the fifth act, are seeking to advocate the drama, by means of Spirit-led improvisation, towards its appropriate conclusion. The authority of the NT, then, consists not least in this: that it calls us back to this story, this story of Jesus and Paul, as our story, as the non-negotiable point through which our pre-history runs, and which gives our present history its shape and direction.

In particular, the story of Jesus compels us to work out, better than we normally do, the hermeneutical principle by which we get from the penultimate act — his life and death — to the final one, in which we find ourselves still. The whole world view of Israel provides the clue: when Israel's hopes are fulfilled, then the world will be blessed, or at least ruled properly at last. If Jesus is bringing to its climax the destiny of the people of God, then this is bound to have earth-shattering implications for the whole world. The hermeneutical rule of thumb, then, is that Jesus' mission to Israel becomes the basis, and the model, for the church's mission to the world. His call to Israel to repent, his summons to her to join him in a new way of being Israel, is to be translated into the church's call to the world to a new way of being human.

Romans 13 enunciates the minimal position: being a Christian does not mean being an anarchist.

Within that responsibility, there emerge different levels of interaction between the church, *qua* church, and the official rulers. Romans 13 enunciates the minimal position: being a Christian does not mean being an anarchist. The Creator intends his human creatures to live in social relations, which need order, stability and structure; Christians are not exempt from these. But, just as no one would think that Romans 14 had said the last Christian word about what one was allowed to eat or drink, or that Romans 12 had said the last word about behaviour in general, so Romans 13 must not be taken as the sum total of all that Paul might have thought, or could or should have thought, about what we call 'the state'. The minimalist position is basic, corresponding to the equally generalized Romans 12:9 ('hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good'). Beyond that, one is free to develop and explore the implications of Christian theology and ethics, responsibility and vocation, in all sorts of ways.

Among these ways will be, I think, a full outworking of the implications of Philippians 2:10-11. If it is true that the church is called to announce to the world that Jesus Christ is Lord, then there will be times when the world will find this distinctly uncomfortable. The powers that be will need reminding of their responsibility, more often perhaps as the Western world moves more and more into its post-Christian phase, where, even when churchgoing remains strong, it is mixed with a variety of idolatries too large to be noticed by those who hold them, and where human rulers are more likely to acknowledge the rule of this or that 'force' than the rule of the creator. And if the church attempts this task of reminding, of calling the powers to account for their stewardship, it will face the same charges, and perhaps the same fate, as its Lord. It is at that point that decisions have to be made in all earnestness, at that point that idolatry exacts its price. But it is here, I think, that the NT's picture of the gospel and the world of political life finds one at least of its contemporary echoes.

I cannot support from the NT the separation of the gospel and politics. We cannot abandon politics to those who carry guns, or for that matter, to those who carry pocket calculators.

I cannot, in short, support from the NT the separation of the gospel and politics which is still so popular, not least in certain shrill branches of contemporary evangelicalism. We cannot abandon politics to those who carry guns, or for that matter to those who carry pocket calculators. When I pray for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven, I cannot simply be thinking of a condition which will begin to exist for the first time after all human beings have either died or been transformed à la 1 Corinthians 15:51. If I am to be true to the giver of the prayer, and to those in the first Christian generation who prayed it and lived it, I must be envisaging, and working and praying for, a state of affairs in which the world of the 'state', of society and politics, no less than the world of my private 'religious' or 'spiritual' life, is brought under the Lordship of the King.

[1]This article, hastily written though it alas is, would have even more flaws were it not for the kindness of Professor Walter Wink and the Revd Michael Lloyd, who both read the first draft and offered careful criticism. The many remaining faults are entirely my own.

[2]Chadwick 1990, p. 229.

[3]See Wink 1984, p. 46, quoting Günther Dehn: 'no modern or "secular" view of the state was possible for Paul'.

[4]See, on this point, the work of Martin Hengel in particular (*e.g.* 1974), over against the whole drift of scholarship in the first half of the twentieth century.

[5]There is no space to argue this in the detail it deserves. A good statement of the position may be found in Caird 1980, ch. 14. Compare too Rowland 1982.

[6]Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.149-163.

[7]See Schürer 1973, pp. 543f., and Beckwith 1981, pp. 536-539.

[8]See Neill and Wright 1988, pp. 379-403.

[9]In what follows, I am drawing on my own as yet unpublished work on Jesus, in dialogue with such scholars as Sanders, Borg, Harvey, Meyer, Theissen, Freyne and Horsley; but there is no space to show the detailed workings of the necessary discussions.

[10]Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.23; contrast the earlier account of the Zealots in *War* 2.118, 433, where they are sharply distinguished from the Pharisees described in 2.162f. In the earlier work Josephus is desperately concerned to blame the Zealots and exonerate the Pharisees; in the later one the mask slips, and we see how close the two sects may in fact have been.

[11]See Josephus' account (*Antiquities* 14.420-430) of Herod's getting rid of the cave-dwelling Galilean *lestai*.

[12]On the whole debate, see particularly Borg 1984, ch. 1.

[13]See Wright 1985, 1986.

[14]I have argued for this point, and much else in this section, in forthcoming works on Pauline theology.

[15]All this, arguably, is contained within Rom. 1–4, particularly 3:21–26.

[16]Such is the argument of Gal. 3:10-14.

[17]Käsemann 1980, *passim*.

[18]See recently the work of Walter Wink, whose trilogy on the Powers (1984-) is now nearing completion.

[19]This is not to say that demons did not exist, or do not exist, until humans call them into existence; merely that the powers of which Paul speaks are to be thought of in this way.

[20]See the very full bibliographies in Dunn 1988, pp. 757f., Cranfield 1979, pp. 651-673. It is impossible here even to list the relevant items, let alone to interact with them.

[21]See O'Neill 1975, pp. 207-214, and others noted by him and by Dunn 1988, p. 758.

[22]Dunn 1988, pp. 759, 761f. His first reference somewhat misleadingly cites this passage in Wisdom as supporting 'quietism'; it could actually be construed (as Dunn sees on p. 762) as fighting talk, conceding a divine right in order to assert a divine judgment.

[23]So Dt. 32:8, Sirach 17:14, *etc.*: see the discussion in Strack-Billerbeck 3.48ff.

[24]So *Pirke Aboth* 3.2: 'if two sit together and words of the Law [are spoken] between them, the Divine Presence rests between them' (Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 450). The saying is attributed to R. Mananiah ben Teradion, a sage killed in the Bar Kochbah revolt. Interestingly, the same Mishnah passage begins with a different rabbi exhorting: 'pray for the peace of the ruling power, since but for fear of it men would have swallowed up each other alive'. The belief in the providential ordering of governments goes deep within the thinking of Judaism, despite pogroms and persecutions: see Dunn 2.761 for more references.

[25]*Cf.* Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.171-173. Josephus gives these as the views of the schools *periton anthropinon pragmaton, i.e.* concerning human affairs; this would scarcely exclude political actions.

[26]I owe this point, and much more besides, to Professor Rowan Williams.

[27]With Cranfield 2.660f. on 'submission', against him, and Dunn 2.760, on the double referent. Instead, I follow Wink 1984, pp. 45-47 (Wink is more cautious than one would realize from Dunn's summary of the issue), and, with modifications, Cullmann: other references in Dunn, *ad loc.*

[28]Cranfield 2.655.

[29]See my article, 'How Can the Bible be Authoritative?', forthcoming in *Vox Evangelica*.

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Attitudes towards the state in Western theological thinking

Torleiv Austad

Dr Austad teaches at the Free Faculty of Theology, Oslo, Norway.

A theological approach

What does a theological approach to the understanding of the state in Western thinking mean? Looking into the history of theology, we do not find any precise and clear answer. Since the beginning of Christianity there have been within the church and its theology various concepts of the state. The theological approach has changed from time to time. The main reason for this seems obvious: theological reflection on the state is dependent not only upon the Bible and its interpretation, but also upon the changing social, political and economic situation in which people live. The theology of the state is therefore to some extent contextual.

From Western theological thinking we ought to learn to re-examine our theological approach to the understanding of the state. That does not mean giving up trying to find a new platform or a new perspective in the Holy Scriptures. Otherwise it would not be Christian theology. But we need all the time to purify the biblical criteria we are using in order to diminish our own ideological and political prejudices. In addition, developing a theology of the state is scarcely possible without taking into account the state and the society in which we live. Christian ethical thinking has to be aware of the difference between our situation and that in which the NT developed.

In the theological approach to the state we ask for scriptural principles and guidelines which can be used theoretically and practically in dealing with political issues. The main question is: What is the purpose of the state within God's will and plan for the world and for the salvation of mankind?

It is not possible to find a unified, specific concept of the state as a political structure. In the Holy Scriptures, which cover a span of at least 1,000 years of history, there are different types of organized political life. The political structure of the common social life in Palestine at the time of Jesus is not the same as the organization established during the reign of the great kings of Israel. And when the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome about their civil responsibilities and duties in society, he had in mind the Roman state, which differs from the Greek concept of the *polis* or city-state. The Roman state was not only expanding into a universal empire but was also based on law as the constituent element of its existence.[1] From an ethical point of view it is quite clear that there is no reason for monopolizing one of the concepts of the state or of political structures within the Scriptures. Nor can we speak of a convergence towards a biblical or even a Christian model of the state. 'Nowhere in the Bible does God put forward an ideal of monarchy or republicanism or some other political system as the unchanging truth for our aspiration', J. W. Skillen claims incisively in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*.[2]

The notion of the state

The term 'state' can be defined in various ways. In this article it is used in the sense of the supreme organization and authority of the common political life within a territory or country. The term can also refer to an independent political community as such, *i.e.* a body of people permanently occupying a definite area under the leadership of a sovereign government. Here we face primarily the political association of a society, the governing authorities, not so much the community itself. That means we are not dealing especially with the community aspect in the close relationship of state and nation, state and society, or state and family. By concentrating on the supreme governing authorities we focus on such ethical challenges as the mandate and the limits of the state, the obedience of the citizen, the development from monarchy to democracy, the secularization of the state, the problem of legitimacy, and relations between church and state.

Originally the term 'state' was derived from the Roman legal concept of the *status rei Romanae, i.e.* the public law of the Roman Republic. At the beginning of the fifteenth century it replaced such former terms as *polis* (Greek) and *civitas, regnum* and *respublica*.[3] Since the age of the Reformation the national state has been dominant in many Western countries. In the twentieth century a network of international structures has been built up, especially on the economic level. In some respects, therefore, we can speak of a supranational state which has to be considered together with the national state.

Historical aspects

One of the most frequently used and misused texts concerning the state is Romans 13:1-7. Besides the more detailed exegetical debate among scholars, two main questions have been raised with regard to the ethical application of the text in actual situations. The first question – or cluster of questions – is about the institution of the state. What does it mean that 'the authorities that exist have been established by God' (v. 1)? Is every actual state, regardless of how it came into being and exercised power, 'God's servant' (v. 4)? To what extent is the authority of the state absolute and indispensable? Does the text provide an adequate basis for a Christian concept of the state?

The second main question arises from the specifically exhortative character of the text. What are the meaning and the consequences of submission to the governing authorities? Do they include a demand to obey oppressive rulers? Is it against the will of God to oppose or resist a state which may hold 'terror for those who do right'?

In the Western theological tradition, and especially in the Lutheran wing of it, there has been a marked tendency to take Romans 13 as a Christian obligation to submit to and obey every actual governing authority. The argument generally used is that the existing state is considered to be instituted by God and given divine authority. Christians are therefore not allowed to oppose and revolt if the state happens to be tyrannic. In the Reformed tradition stemming from John Knox and the Huguenots there is a stronger ethos of resistance to injustice caused by the state. From the outset Reformed churches have usually been more active in socio-political matters than have their Lutheran counterparts, including criticizing governing authorities whom they have perceived to be bad.

The reasons for the generally uncritical Lutheran attitude toward the state are to be found in the close relationship between state and church, *e.g.* the state church, and in the theological concept of the orders of creation. In this concept the state is considered to be an instrument or order of preservation instituted by God to uphold the world, keep sin under control and prevent general destruction.[4] The possibility that the state itself could degenerate and become demonic was for centuries rarely considered.

Two historical phenomena in Europe and North America have called into question the traditional use of Romans 13. The first was the advent of *democracy* in Western political and theological reflection. The second, with consequences for our understanding of the modern state, is the experience with *totalitarianism* during the Third Reich and in strongly Communist countries.

Democratic thinking and policy in the generations immediately after the French Revolution and the American Declaration of Independence led to a new debate on the authority of the state. Does it come 'from above' or 'from below'? Can

Christians, according to Romans 13, accept a state which derives its authority from the people by election? Does not the democratic idea contradict the concept of the state appointed by God and endowed with divine authority? Some Christians resisted democracy because they thought the people, *i.e.* the masses, would usurp the authority of the state and dethrone God. What they did not see at once was that they in fact used Romans 13 to defend and preserve the old monarchy and oligarchy. After years of discussion it became clearer that the state as God's servant in the world is a theological perspective which is independent of the origin and the structure of the state. Governing authorities who have their power through birth and familial connections are not necessarily more in accordance with God's will than those who have their power from the people and are responsible to them. The great confessional families have adapted themselves to democracy and, having made the adjustment, 'they have released spiritual influences which have been favourable to democratic life, though the relationship between Roman Catholicism and democracy even in such cases remains problematic'.[5]

The state as God's servant in the world is a theological perspective which is independent of the origin and the structure of the state.

The pendulum, however, has swung towards the other side in the ethical thinking of some Western theologians. They claim that there is a special affinity between Christian faith and democracy. Karl Barth admits that the notion of democracy is powerless to describe even approximately the kind of state which most nearly corresponds to the divine ordinance. He continues:

> There is no reason, however, why it should be overlooked or denied that Christian choices and purposes in politics tend on the whole toward the form of State, which, if it is not actually realized in the so-called 'democracies', is at any rate more or less clearly intended and desired. Taking everything into account, it must be said that the Christian view shows a stronger trend in this direction than in any other. There certainly is an affinity between the Christian community and the civil community of free peoples.[6]

The institutions of political democracy have a better foundation in Christian realism about human nature than in the optimism of the Enlightenment. That is shown by Reinhold Niebuhr, who makes clear the dangers of utopian democracy. He summarizes his concept in a sentence which is very often quoted in ethical thinking: 'Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary'.[7]

The modern totalitarian state shaped by National Socialism under Hitler and Communism in the USSR has been a strong challenge to the churches, to theological thinking, and to the Christian conscience. Its entry on the stage of European history was a shocking experience. But the churches are also aware of a tendency towards totalitarianism within democratic welfare states, especially when trying to regulate and control all sectors of social life, including religious and moral decisions and activities.[8] Nevertheless, it was the rise and fall of the Third Reich which caused a new revision of the Christian ethics of the state. The two most burning issues during its twelve-year life and in theological reflection immediately thereafter concerned the limitation of the state and the right and duty to resist when the state claims to be totalitarian and asserts injustice and restraint of conscience.

From his Christological point of view, Karl Barth very strongly criticized the Lutheran doctrine of the two realms based on the distinction between creation and redemption. His alternative was to draw analogies for the life of the state from the kingdom of God. The gospel, justification by faith and even the church should be patterns for state and society.[9] Barth's concept of the state played an important role in the Confessing Church in Germany during the Third Reich. After the Second World War Christological ethics dominated the ecumenical debate on church and society until the middle of the 1960s.

Romans 13 today

Facing Romans 13:1-7 in theological ethics today, it is important to keep in mind the difference between the perspective of the apostle Paul and our own questions. Among theological ethicists there is now a consensus about the impossibility of seeing Romans 13 as an entire doctrine of the state which can be used for almost all occasions concerning the state of our time. Without any hermeneutical reflection the Pauline text can easily be misinterpreted and misused in ethical situations vastly different from that of the Roman Empire in the middle of the first century. It seems obvious that Paul's purpose is exhortative. He wished to remind Christians in Rome that God expects them to do their duties even in civil affairs like paying taxes and customs. Even though the Christians already belong to the eschatological kingdom of God, they should not overlook and feel free from the ordinary obligations of all citizens. N. A. Dahl puts it this way: 'Paul speaks only of the ordinary, elemental duties'.[10]

What we usually understand by democracy lies outside Paul's horizon in Romans 13. Therefore it is neither acceptable to 'canonize' democracy nor to reject it as incompatible with biblical thought.

Seen from our world of politics, many questions and challenges are not taken into account in Romans 13. Some examples can be mentioned: Paul does not take into consideration various forms of the state or give arguments for what he may have thought was the best. The text cannot therefore answer the general question whether monarchy, oligarchy or democracy is most preferable. What we usually understand by democracy lies outside Paul's horizon in Romans 13. Therefore it is neither acceptable to 'canonize' democracy nor to reject it as incompatible with biblical thought. The possibility that Christians some day would participate actively in political life and exercise power is not even considered.[11] The text does not give any concrete help in dealing with the tension between the majority and the minority within a democracy. Paul presupposes that the governing authorities are paying respect to elementary justice and that the Christians in Rome are living in an ordered society. He does not raise the question what the Christians should do if the authorities become criminals. There is no commandment obligating Christians to stay away from every kind of resistance if good behaviour should cause trouble and fear and the doers of good be punished instead of the evildoers (*cf.* v. 3).

On the other hand, Paul instructs Christians to obey the governing authorities because they are appointed by God and given responsibility for justice and order in society. Not only the Christian life, but also civil life, is attached to God, who has dominion over the whole universe and requires our submission to his will. The Christians are not granted any immunity from fulfilling ordinary obligations in the civil affairs of society. The condition, however, is that 'the authorities are there to serve God: they carry out God's revenge by punishing wrongdoers' (v. 4).

The mandate and the limits of the state

Theological thinking about the mandate and the limits of the state is based upon God's all-embracing dominion of his creation. He has the whole world in his hands, not only the churches and Christians. For that reason it is possible to speak meaningfully about the state from a theological point of view without purporting to present any political theory or programme for the political organization of public life in society. On the other hand, we cannot and shall not exclude political 'designers' from taking notice of the theological understanding of the mandate and the limits of the governing authorities.

During the Reformation the theological question of the state's mandate and limits arose from the fact that the church, *i.e.* the Roman Catholic bishops, had made total claims upon people not

only in spiritual but also in worldly affairs. In the twentieth century we have experienced that the modern state can make total claims not only in worldly but also in spiritual affairs. There are totalitarian ideologies, such as National Socialism, which do not allow the governing authorities to limit their demands in any area of life.

Struggling with the totalitarian state in our century, some churches have drawn attention to the concept of the two realms or governances. In trying to limit the worldly power of the church, Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession asserts that the spiritual and the temporal authorities 'are not to be mingled or confused, for the spiritual power has its commission to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments'.[12] The church should not interfere at all with government or temporal authority: 'Temporal authority is concerned with matters altogether different from the Gospel'. Temporal power 'does not protect the soul, but with the sword and physical penalties it protects body and goods from the power of others', the Augsburg Confession declares.[13] This particular description of the limited task of the governing authorities has been used as an argument against the interference of the modern state in religious convictions, the inner life of the church, *e.g.* the preaching of the gospel, and matters of conscience. The point is that the state is not allowed to put pressure on people in areas relating to God and sensitive ethical obligations. In fact, there is sometimes a combination of arguments taken from both the Christian faith and general human rights.

Regardless of whether it accepts the concept of the two realms, theological thinking has to make a distinction between church and state, gospel and politics. How to draw this line in concrete situations is constantly being debated. It is noteworthy, however, that no church affords total affiliation with the state. That means that theology is required to reflect not only on the peculiarity of the church but also on the mandate and limits of the state.

From an exegetical point of view, Oscar Cullmann emphasizes the 'provisional' character of the state. It is not a final institution. In the question of paying taxes to Caesar, Jesus recognized that within its sphere the state could demand what belongs to it: money or taxes (Mk. 12:13-17 and parallels). Giving mammon back to Caesar is not, however, placed on the same level as serving God. Give God what is his! That is our life, our entire person. Cullman says: 'On the one hand, the State is nothing final. On the other, it has the right to demand what is necessary to its existence — but no more. Every totalitarian claim of the State is thereby disallowed'.[14] According to the commandment of Jesus, the Christians are not allowed to give to the state what belongs to God. If the state demands more than what is necessary for its existence, it transgresses its limits. Christians are relieved of all obligations to such a requirement from a totalitarian state. Cullmann interprets Romans 13:1-7 in the same way. The Christians shall give the state, even Nero's state, what is due to it, but no more. They are not asked to give to the state what is God's. If the state remains within its limits, it will be described as God's servant. If the state transgresses its mandate, however, the Christians will consider it as 'the instrument of the Devil'.[15]

The state is an instrument which God uses in order to uphold the world until its end. It has neither divine nature nor a specific appearance. It does not have the eschatological quality of the kingdom of God and the gospel.

The state is an instrument which God uses in order to uphold the world until its end. It has neither divine nature nor a specific appearance. Belonging to this world, the state does not have the eschatological quality of the Kingdom of God and the gospel. The mandate and the limits of the state are to be seen within the worldly household of God and in relation to the genuine state of the Christians, the *politeuma* in heaven (*cf.* Phil. 3:20).[16]

From the NT texts which speak of the life of the Christian in the world, we may draw the following conclusions for understanding the mandate and limits of the state: First, the mandate of the state is to deal with and regulate the common social, political and economic life of society. Secondly, the state has the right to require taxes from the citizens to be able to take care of some of the common needs, such as food and clothing, work and social welfare, law and justice. Thirdly, the state has to take care of and reward those who are doing right and to punish those who are doing wrong. Thus the state is on the way to fulfilling its mandate of administering justice. If the state pretends to give itself divine attributes and becomes involved in people's relationship with God, it goes beyond its limits. It is also a transgression of those limits when a state offends elementary civil rights, especially when it restrains freedom of conscience. In addition, a just state, *i.e.* a state which functions in accordance with its mandate, may not be totalitarian in terms of claiming sovereignty in all areas of life without crossing the line and entering into injustice and demonic power.

The task of the church over against the state is threefold: First, the church has to remind the state of its mandate and limits. Secondly, the church should encourage the citizens, Christians included, to co-operate with the actual state as far as it is true to its calling. Thirdly, because the state is constantly tempted to become totalitarian and degenerate, the church and Christians are called to be critical of every state and evaluate its functions on the basis of ethical premises.

Disobedience and resistance

In the ethical debate after World War Two about attitudes toward totalitarian states, a new trend began to emerge. Now it is a much more widespread and accepted standard of ethics that the people, Christians included, have the right and even the duty to resist an unjust, demonic state. For centuries it had been hammered in, especially in the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches, that it is Christian to obey every governing authority, without regard to possibly unethical decisions and claims. The obligation to submit to even a bad, evil and unjust state was considered to be part of God's hidden governance and upbringing of his people. Disobedience and resistance could lead to anarchy, which was contrary to God's will — according to the common understanding. This traditional attitude was adjusted through the terrible experiences of the Third Reich. The attempt to kill Hitler on 20 July 1944 has to a great extent been justified since the war in theological thinking.[17]

The change in this respect can be illustrated by an example from the struggle of the Church of Norway against Nazism during the German occupation of 1940-45.[18] The bishop of Oslo, Eivind Berggrav, made a sharp distinction between a just and an unjust state — a distinction which was appropriate at that time. The just state, the bishop reasoned, is based on a theological interpretation of natural law. The law, a constituent part of the state, is considered holy, in keeping with Rudolf Otto's understanding. Berggrav claimed that this holy law corresponds to God's will for creation *(lex creationis)*. His criteria for a just state seemed to be the following:

(1) The just state acts in accordance with law and justice, which are anchored in God.
(2) The just state is limited to temporal matters; it is not allowed to influence questions of faith and conscience.
(3) The just state has to keep brutal and crude power under control by upholding the law and administering justice.
(4) The just state is able to distinguish between good and evil deeds, and it does not hinder the former.

Bishop Berggrav was convinced that according to Paul in Romans 13 the law is interposed between the citizen and the sovereign authority. If the state respects the sovereignty of God's law, then every citizen is obligated to obey. Without God's law, there can be no proper authority and no obligation to obey. Whenever the state rules without law, in a completely arbitrary matter, it becomes unjust. In such a case, it usually reveals itself as a police state which tries to become absolute. In the presence of such a case, the Christian not only has the right but also the duty to disobey. Where there is no law and order, the Norwegian bishop did not hesitate to speak of a fundamental right to revolt. In this connection he questioned the traditional Lutheran attitude and fell back on Reformed models.[19]

This conditional understanding of the state, which was Berggrav's great theological contribution to the international debate about political ethics, is built on the democratic tradition according to which the people have the duty to judge the legitimacy of the state.

People have the duty to judge the legitimacy of the state.

Turning to contemporary Roman Catholic moral theologians, it is interesting to see how strongly they emphasize that the church and Christians should be critical of the state and not only when the state threatens specifically ecclesiastical concerns. The state is the servant of the common good, not its master, and it needs to be 'demythologized'. 'Christians must do their utmost to see that the deification of the state which now threatens us anew shall not take root throughout the world', Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler assert in the *Dictionary of Theology*.[20] They claim that the laws of the state do not need to be obeyed 'if they call on one to do the common good considerable harm; and if they require anything immoral, then to obey (saying that "orders are orders") is unlawful and sin before God'.[21] It may be a moral obligation to change the concrete form of the state. 'An emergency or the need for self-defence may even justify revolutionary action outside the law', these two Roman Catholic theologians reason.[22]

State and church

The understanding of the state in the history of Western theology cannot be understood without taking into account its relation to the church. Until the beginning of the fourth century the church consisted of local congregations scattered around the Roman Empire. It did not have any strong central organization. From time to time Christians and their communities were under pressure and persecuted by the governing authorities. When the Roman emperors became Christians, the church was given a central and protected place in the empire. Constantine and most of his successors thereby began to 'Christianize' the ancient Roman world. Rather quickly Christianity moved from being a religion recognized by the state to a state religion and later the exclusive state religion.

In the Middle Ages the already existing difference between Western and Eastern Christianity became more apparent in relations between church and state. In the West there developed a pattern of ecclesiastical sovereignty over feudal estates, while the Eastern way followed the older Roman tradition of imperial sovereignty shepherding the church.[23]

Against the background of the dominating role of the church in the West during the Middle Ages, the question has been raised whether there really was a state. The famous thesis of J. N. Figgi is that the state in the Middle Ages was 'a dream, or even a prophecy'. He claimed that 'the real State of the Middle Ages in the modern sense — if the word is not a paradox — is the Church. . . . The State or rather the civil authority was merely the police department of the Church'.[24] This is undoubtedly a too one-sided judgment. The state existed throughout the Middle Ages. But the terminology used then and now needs to be taken into account and examined.

> Thus, in medieval political language *civitas* usually referred to the city-state which flourished in various parts of Europe, and more particularly in Italy. *Regnum* was used to describe the territorial monarchies in process of formation from the close of the high Middle Ages onwards. *Respublica* was reserved in most cases for describing a wider community, the *respublica christiana*, which united all believers in one sheepfold. The angle of vision determined whether that community was the Empire or the Church.[25]

The church claimed to have supreme jurisdiction in society and was accepted by the people as the highest spiritual rule and the source of all law. But, apart from a few cases, the church did not exercise a particularly broad range of worldly powers. The idea of the universal lordship of the church over the whole world did not become a comprehensive political reality, although the ambitious Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) made an unsuccessful attempt. In spite of the dominant position of the church during the Middle Ages, the state remained in the form of *civitas*, *regnum* or *respublica*. It is not correct to say that the church became a state or even *the* state.

At the time of the Reformation Luther protested against the medieval idea of the superiority of the church over all worldly powers. He insisted that the church's only power was that of the gospel, *i.e.* Word and Sacrament. The church did not have lordship over the worldly realm. In such matters the state, according to Luther, had its specific mandate and function under God's governance, but not under the church and the bishops. The purpose of the distinction between state and church was to purify the gospel and avoid the medieval blending of spiritual and worldly power, especially by the clergy.

The problem of legitimation

In Aristotle's concept the *polis* was the bearer of the highest values. The city-state therefore had no need of further legitimation. The Roman state sought its basic values in the supreme law or natural law. This law was considered to be eternal and unchangeable, and it expressed the supreme values of justice from which the positive laws emanate. Thus the law became the constituent element of the state. The Christianized state, the *respublica christiana*, took over the Roman structure of law, justice and state. The supreme or natural law was not identified with God's law and interpreted in accordance with the Christian tradition. God's will became the ultimate norm according to which the positive laws of the state had to be measured, renewed and refined. What we call the legitimation of the state was involved in the entire structure of the Christianized state.

When some Western states at various times after the Enlightenment proclaimed themselves to be secular and non-religious, the legitimation problem turned up in a new setting. In the European state and national churches there were — and still are — close ties between state and church which have made a great impact on the self-understanding of the state. On the other hand, the entire process of secularization gradually untied the ideology and politics of the state from the Christian tradition. In fact, many states are now to be seen as secular bodies. Nevertheless, the need for legitimation seems to emerge again and create a challenge to philosophical, theological and political thinking. Modern secular states look for an anchor in transcendent values, including religious or even Christian values. In the USA there has grown up around the Presidency a kind of civil religion, one independent of the individual presidents' religious convictions and efforts to get support from various religious groups. Civil religion is a phenomenon which can also be observed in other countries. It demonstrates a search for a religious legitimation of the state which can give strength to its authority.[26]

This is not the place to go into greater detail in describing the need of the secular state to legitimize its existence and authority through the use of ultimate, religious values. Instead of further description, something which requires *inter alia* sociological methods, we would raise a theological question: What does it really mean that the governing authority is God's servant? When Paul spoke about the governing authority as instituted by God, he did not have the Christianized state in mind but the heathen Roman state. The theological consequence of this is that even a secular state of the modern type is instituted by God and intended to be God's servant. Should the secular state recognize its divine origin and task? And, in that case, how is it to be done? Or is the Pauline concept only a theological point of view without any significance for the actual state and political life? If we presuppose that there is a linkage between God and the governing authorities in secular matters, one could ask if the tendency in history to seek religious legitimation for the state is a reminiscence or a vague reminder of its divine purpose. There seems to be a basic law for social life that is valid not only for individuals but also for the state and its functions. We may call this God's law, *lex creationis* or *lex naturae*.

Prayer for governing authorities

'But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare', writes the prophet Jeremiah to the people of Israel sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon (Je. 29:7). The people should pray for the foreign city in which they are held captive. The apostle Paul follows up, urging 'that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way' (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Prayers for sovereigns and all in high office are not limited to political friends. We are called upon to pray for political enemies as well. Behind the prophetic and apostolic insistence on praying for all governing authorities lies the conviction that God is the Lord of the whole world, and that the worldly authorities are his servants (*cf.* Rom. 13:4). To bring them all before God in prayer means to open up to his grace also in such worldly matters as peace, justice and welfare.

The ancient church prayed to God for all governing authorities. In Luther's Small Catechism the prayer for 'godly and

faithful rulers' is taken as a part of 'our daily bread', which is a petition in the Lord's Prayer. Today there is no doubt: to pray for kings and presidents, governments and other political organizations is common among Christians and is one expression of the political responsibility of the church.

We should not dictate to God certain political solutions.

So far prayer for governing authorities usually seems to be uncontroversial in many Western countries. It is simply a question of doing it. But in some cases regarding specific prayers ethical problems arise. Is it right or wrong to pray that one's own political party will win the next election? Does one go beyond the scriptural passages on prayer by asking God to remove a bad president or a paralysed government from office? What do we say to a military chaplain who prays that the troops he serves may emerge from battle victorious? A general answer to these questions is that we should not dictate to God certain political solutions. We are invited to make our requests in everything known to God (Phil. 4:6) but not to use our supplications to hurt others.

Eschatological perspective

In Christ the end is already fulfilled. But the consummation is not yet realized; it still lies in the future. The kingdom of God has arrived but is not yet fully accomplished. This 'already/not yet' perspective constitutes the entire understanding of Christianity at the time of the apostles and in the ancient church. The attitude of the first Christian generation to the world is characterized through eschatological conviction and expectation. They are aware of their situation and responsibility in the world, despite having their 'commonwealth in heaven' (Phil. 3:20). The dialectic between being in the world but not of the world (*cf.* Jn. 17:11-19) points to the future in terms of both time and quality.

Now, the understanding of the governing authorities is to be seen in this eschatological framework. As already mentioned, Cullmann makes clear that the state appears as something 'provisional'. 'For this reason we do not find anywhere in the New Testament a renunciation of the State as such as a matter of principle; but neither do we find an uncritical acceptance — as if the State itself were something final, definitive'.[27] The 'provisional' character of the state is the reason why the first Christians behaved so differently toward the governing authorities. The apparently contradictory attitude can be illustrated by comparing Romans 13 and Revelation 13. In both cases Christians are confronted with the Roman state. While the governing authorities according to Romans 13 respect elementary civil rights, the same state in Revelation 13 — about forty years later — is seen as the beast from the abyss. Therefore the attitude of Christians has changed from obedience to disobedience. Within the eschatological horizon of the NT the relationship between Christians and the governing authorities is never fixed; it is complex, sensitive and changing.

Within the eschatological horizon of the New Testament the relationship between Christians and the governing authorities is never fixed; it is complex, sensitive and changing.

When conflicts with the civil authorities developed, the apostles demonstrated their primary loyalty to God as expressed by the words of Peter: 'We must obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29). This clause has been used in many cases in church history when Christians are blamed, persecuted, forced to sin and thrown into prison by the authorities.[28] On the other hand, there are countless examples of how the church and its members have co-operated with unjust states and thereby given them legitimacy as God's servants. To obey every state uncritically, including those which are demonic, is not in accordance with the dramatic tension between Christians and the governing authorities. Cullmann puts it this way: 'The earthly State is God's servant so long as it remains in the order which is willed by God.'[29] Heathen states and the gospel are compatible; totalitarian states and the gospel are in principle incompatible.

[1] *Cf.* A. P. D'Entreves in *Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas* Vol. IV (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), pp. 312-318, here p. 313.

[2] J. W. Skillen in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 479.

[3] *Cf.* H. A. Rommen in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. XIII (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p. 664.

[4] Concerning this concept, see theologians like W. Elert, P. Althaus, E. Brunner, W. Künneth and (in a modest way) H. Thielicke.

[5] J. C. Bennett, *Christians and the State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 127.

[6] K. Barth, *Against the Stream* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), p. 44.

[7] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. xi.

[8] *Cf.* E. Berggrav, 'State and Church Today', *Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, Hannover, Germany 1952* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1952), pp. 76-85.

[9] See especially K. Barth, *Rechtfertigung und Recht* (Zollikon-Zürich: Theologische Studien 1, 1938); *Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde* (Zollikon-Zürich: Theologische Studien 20, 1946) and *Community, State and Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1960).

[10] N. A. Dahl, 'Is there a New Testament basis for the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms?', *Lutheran World* XII, no. 4 (1965), pp. 337-354, here p. 347.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Quoted from *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 83.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[14] O. Cullman, *The State in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 37.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[16] *Cf.* O. Dibelius, *Grenzen des Staates* (Berlin-Spandau: Wichern Verlag, 1949).

[17] Even by W. Künneth, *Politik zwischen Dämon und Gott* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1954).

[18] *Cf.* T. Austad, 'Eivind Berggrav and the Church of Norway's Resistance Against Nazism, 1940-1945', *Mid-Stream* XXVI, no. 1 (1987), pp. 51-61.

[19] *Cf.* E. Berggrav, *Man and State* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1951), especially pp. 247-284 and 300-319.

[20] K. Rahner and H. Vorgrimler, *Dictionary of Theology*, rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1981), p. 487.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 486.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 487.

[23] *Cf.* Skillen, *art. cit.*, p. 478.

[24] Quoted in D'Entreves, *art. cit.*, p. 314.

[25] D'Entreves, *art. cit.*, p. 314.

[26] *Cf.* R. N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief. Essays on Religion in a Post-traditional World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); M. W. Hughly, *Civil Religion and Moral Order: Theoretical and Historical Dimensions* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983).

[27] *Cf.* Cullmann, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[28] Today Acts 5:29 is often quoted in the South African struggle against apartheid. See *The Kairos Document. Challenge to the Church*, rev. ed. (Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers, 1987), p. 6.

[29] Cullmann, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

BOOK

REVIEWS

The Faith of Israel. Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament
W. Dumbrell
Leicester: Apollos, 1989, 286 pp., £9.95.

This book offers an introduction to the OT different from many others available. The author is William Dumbrell, formerly of Regent College in Canada, now dean of graduate studies at Moore Theological College in Australia. Some readers may be familiar with his *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenantal Theology* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984). Like any introduction, this book moves book-by-book through the Hebrew canon, providing helpful background and interpretation. The startling omission of a discussion of pentateuchal origins, however, quickly signals that this is no ordinary introduction. Its exclusive focus is on the theological purpose of each book (p. 9). It aims to expound the theology, not of the Bible's antecedent oral or written sources, but of its canonical parts. Indeed, the author apparently aligns himself with the programme of B. S. Childs by concentrating on the 'final canonical redaction' (p. 11).

In general, I deem his attempt to be a moderate success. The author pursues his purpose through an attractive format. Each OT book — even little Obadiah! (pp. 166-167) — receives treatment in a separate chapter. Each chapter provides an outline of the book's contents and discusses its theology under the outline's subdivisions. For example, the discussion of Exodus (pp. 28-39) treats in succession the birth and call of Moses (chs. 1-4), the plagues (7:8–11:10), the passover and exodus (12:1–15:21), and the covenant and tabernacle building (15:22–40:38). With Deuteronomy (pp. 53-61), however, the author follows a thematic approach (*i.e.* land, holy war, rest, and 'deuteronomic humanitarianism'). In addition, the book gives helpful introductory remarks about the nature of prophecy (pp. 97-98, before Isaiah), wisdom literature (pp. 215-216, before Job), and apocalyptic (pp. 256-257, before Daniel). Except for brief comment on the structure of Deuteronomy (pp. 53-54), however, there is no literary treatment of biblical legal forms. The lawsuit background of Hosea 4 and Micah 6 receives mention but no amplification (pp. 145, 176).

Also noticeably absent is any introduction to OT narrative literature. The author discusses whether Jonah is a parable or an allegory (p. 168) but bypasses comment on the influence of Deuteronomy (or at least a 'deuteronomic theology') on 1–2 Kings. The reason may be that Dumbrell considers the books of Kings to be 'prophetic works' (p. 88) in which 'the prophetic editor' (p. 87) interprets history from 'a prophetic perspective' (p. 92). He may be right, of course. Scholars continue to debate whether their editor was a prophet, priest, or wisdom teacher. But what Dumbrell omits is an extensive exposition of the unique theological perspective of those books.

The volume has several commendable features. First, the book teems with literary and theological insight. Particularly pleasing are instances of what some would call 'intertextuality' — that is, when a later text echoes strains from earlier ones. For example, in Jonah 3:4 Dumbrell claims the words 'forty days' and 'overthrow' recall the flood and fall of Sodom and Gomorrah respectively (p. 171). Similarly, in Daniel 1 he hears echoes from episodes in Genesis 1–11, especially the Tower of Babel incident (p. 259). Of course, some readers will question many of the alleged allusions. Nevertheless, all will find the author's attempts intriguing enough to pause for additional reflection. Further, the reader will profit from brief word studies and expositions of key passages which the author includes, *e.g.* 'image' (pp. 17-18 on Genesis), 'messiah' (p. 79 on 1 Samuel), and *hesed* (pp. 145-146 on Hosea). The author's exposition of key texts — for example, Exodus 19:5-6 (pp. 34-35) and the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (pp. 121-125) — are excellent.

Second, the volume gives the general reader a kind of one-volume commentary on the OT. Students will appreciate the quick overview of each biblical book which Dumbrell provides. Again, not everyone will agree with the theological purpose claimed for each book. But Dumbrell at least offers well-informed suggestions to be compared with those of others. Third, the exposition of biblical books as finished, canonical wholes strikes this reviewer as refreshing. Granted, such an approach need not invalidate the continuing discussion of the prehistory, whether oral or written, of biblical materials in other contexts. Such discussion may, indeed, cast further illumination on the present, final text. Nevertheless, it is a joy to hear each book — a final, literary entity — address the reader through Dumbrell's clear, reverent analysis.

On the other hand, at times the author tends to summarize major scholarly interpretive options too tersely. For example, he discusses the literary form of Job in one paragraph of 15 lines, quickly running through the many alternatives — epic, drama, comedy, *etc.* (pp. 216-217). His haste will not trouble the informed reader who understands the options and knows the scholars promoting them. Such 'data dumping', however, will likely frustrate the uninformed reader who lacks background and perspective. The failure to cite either authors promoting various views or works to be consulted for further study only exacerbates the frustration. Further, one must question the author's judgment at some points. The reader will wonder why the theology of the Psalms, customarily thought to be so rich, receives only three paragraphs (pp. 211-212) while the book's structure, titles and literary types get extended discussion (pp. 208-209, 212-214). Further, if Obadiah is worth two pages, surely Joshua deserves more than four (pp. 65-68). In addition, the reader is startled to read that the prophets 'do not in the main add to Israel's theological understanding' (p. 11)! Surely those ancient preachers contributed more than a reapplication of Israel's foundational traditions to a new situation.

The key question to pose, however, concerns whether the OT contains one unified theology or several theologies. Dumbrell denies the latter option, yet he also eschews an attempt to find a theological centre for the OT (p. 11). Apparently, he believes that the ideas of covenant and salvation history hold the OT together. He claims that the prophets, psalms, and even wisdom literature merely apply and interpret 'the basis of Israel's faith, particularly her covenantal understanding of her relationship with Yahweh' articulated in the Pentateuch and Former Prophets (p. 10; *cf.* p. 98). Hence, he understands the message of Daniel to explain what course 'the history of salvation' will take in the exile and beyond (p. 257) and makes much of the allusions to salvation history within Esther (pp. 254-255).

OT wisdom literature, however, always offers the acid test of such a framework, and Dumbrell is fully aware of the problem. Hence, he concedes that wisdom's roots lie in the 'wider framework' of creation theology (pp. 215, 247). He then seeks to integrate wisdom and redemption under 'the broad horizons of creation theology' (p. 216). Both, he claims, presuppose creation — wisdom in its assumption of an orderly universe, salvation history in its narration of creatures inhabiting God's world. Such a solution is familiar and to a certain extent satisfactory. In this book, however, the thesis raises a twofold problem: it seems to conflict with the prominence which Dumbrell gives to the idea of covenant in the OT; and it fails to explain fully how the ideas of covenant and creation relate. In sum, the author's attempt to interrelate the OT's canonical parts needs further amplification.

Nevertheless, this reviewer highly commends the author for tackling an enormous task — the exposition of the theology of individual OT books. He has produced a delightful, useful outline of the entire OT. At the same time, I hope that the author will someday flesh out that outline into a fully fledged OT theology. He has made a good beginning on that task, and such a book is sorely needed.

Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. Denver Seminary, Colorado.

The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges
Lilian R. Klein
JSOTS 68; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988, 264 pp., £25.00 (subscribers £19.50).

This is a provocative book. Unfortunately, it is not as accessible as it might be, since its style is sometimes condensed to the extent that it is not always easy to grasp the author's meaning. Further, an understanding of current theory about the workings of irony is assumed; the subject is outlined in a technical way in Appendix One, in a manner which did not leave me much the wiser (pp. 195-199).

Having said that, most of the book consists of a chapter-by-chapter study of Judges, and the bulk of the author's individual insights are easily grasped. One of the author's most helpful suggestions is that paying careful attention to the proper names in the book frequently assists our understanding of the stories. Klein demonstrates that a character's name and actions often comment on one another. Another valuable emphasis is that the book of Judges is not merely a loose collection of stories; rather, there are interlocking motifs, which allow one part of the book to relate to another. It is in this area that

much of the irony perceived by Klein lies. Later events, when viewed in the light of earlier events, take on an extra significance, in a manner which is often ironical. In both of these areas – personal names and the presence of theme in the book – Klein reaches somewhat similar conclusions to B. G. Webb (*The Book of the Judges*, JSOT, 1987). These books were written independently – Webb's work was not available to Klein. With regard to attempting to tease out the possible significance of individual stories in Judges, the two books may be helpfully compared and contrasted.

The book is less helpful, however, in its main theme. The book of Judges, we are told, is a *tour de force* of irony (p. 20). Irony is detected with unerring frequency. Klein's chosen title even elevates irony to something approaching personality. However, there is little justification advanced for the view that irony is so pervasive and so important. This seems a dubious procedure. Irony is an elusive concept, not always as readily detectable as Klein suggests. This might not matter if her style were not so dogmatic; however, opinions are usually stated strongly, as if they had the status of facts. Some pronouncements at least seem capable of other explanations, such as the assertion that God is the 'master-ironist' (pp. 191, 196). One wonders whether this means any more than the fact that God knows everything, which seems to be true by definition; if so, it is hardly surprising that the presence of irony is considered so widespread. There is perhaps a danger that the concept of irony becomes so diluted, when treated in this way, as to mean very little. Another statement which seemed to require more support was that the Abimelech story marks the ironic climax of the book (p. 78). Here and elsewhere I found myself unconvinced, if only because of the brevity of the argument.

This is unfortunate, since the book contains much valuable material. Scholarship in Judges has tended to ignore the possibility of overall theme. Frequently, the kind of proposal being made breaks new ground in an exciting way, and it would be a great mistake to consider apparent excesses of the book as grounds for rejecting the argument altogether. To my mind, it will prove useful if used as a source book alongside existing commentaries, providing its contributions are carefully sifted.

David F. Pennant, Woking.

From Chaos to Restoration. An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24–27
Dan G. Johnson
JSOTSS 61; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988, 150 pp., £25.00/$46.50.

Isaiah 24–27 has long been known as 'The Isaiah Apocalypse'. By those who do not attribute the whole of the book of Isaiah to a single author, it has been ascribed to the post-exilic period with many dates between the sixth and second centuries BC being suggested. In recent years, the earlier part of this period has been most widely favoured.

These chapters pose many problems of interpretation on any view. Their unity is by no means assured; there are a number of references to an unnamed city whose identification has evoked numerous proposals (including the suggestion that no specific city is in view but rather that it is a kind of 'Vanity Fair', a representation of city life in general); and it is not always clear whether the writing is predictive of future expectation or descriptive of some past event. Finally, these chapters have featured prominently in recent discussion of the origins of apocalyptic, a number of scholars seeing here adumbrations of that style of literature and, in a few cases, of the tensions within the Jewish community which are thought to have given rise to it.

In this, his doctoral dissertation, Johnson approaches these chapters with a novel and interesting hypothesis. With full attention to and discussion of alternative views, he proposes that the composition comprises three main sections. The first, 24:1-20, is a prediction of the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC written just before the event. In this section, then, the city is Jerusalem, whose destruction is presented as the fulfilment of several of the eighth-century prophet Isaiah's predictions. Moreover, its downfall is depicted in terms of a return to 'chaos', and this accounts for some of the apparently universal language which has misled so many scholars into linking it with proto-apocalyptic. In reality, the events foretold are quite localized, though with broader implications.

The second section, 24:21–27:1 (except 25:10b-12, stated, though not argued, to be a later, polemical, intrusion), builds on this chaos motif, for in Israelite beliefs of the time such chaos could never be God's final word; eventually, he would return in victory and restoration. This section, then, is full of trust and expectation as the prophet looks for this future victory, but since the victory is conceived of as imminent, it must have been written during the exile with the oppressive city as Babylon. Because many have thought that the overthrow of the city is described as already past, they have dated this section much later; after all, Babylon was not in fact destroyed by Cyrus in 538 BC. Johnson, however, argues carefully for his 'predictive' view, and maintains in consequence that it is not so important if some of the details turned out to be historically imprecise. A further consequence of his view is that 26:19 speaks of national rather than individual resurrection – a view which fits well, of course, with the nearly contemporary Ezekiel 37.

The final section, 27:2-13, looks for the reunification of Israel and Judah as part of the consequence of Yahweh's victory, a further link with the exilic prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. This chapter contains some of the most difficult material from a textual point of view, and in my opinion Johnson's arguments are not quite so persuasive at this point. But no commentator can be fully confident here, and in any event the issue is not crucial to the overall case being presented.

Two matters of importance appear to be missing from this thesis. There is no indication whether Johnson locates the writer in Judah or Babylon, and more seriously there is no discussion of the role of these chapters at this point of the book of Isaiah as a whole, something of much interest in current scholarly debate. Their 'logical' setting, on Johnson's view, is between chapters 39 and 40. There must be some reason for their present location, and this may have a bearing on their interpretation. Most commentators observe that they immediately follow the 'oracles against the nations' and so suggest that they tend to emphasize the universal aspects of God's victory and reign. Since Johnson rejects this interpretation, it would have strengthened his case if he had presented an alternative explanation for the chapters' present setting.

Readers of *Themelios* will tend to judge this book on the basis of their overall understanding of Isaiah. Defenders of unitary composition will naturally not accept Johnson's main proposals, though they should welcome his stress on the predictive nature of these chapters. For the rest (including this reviewer), the issue has to be judged by the normal criteria of the historical-critical method. This will require particularly close attention to the allusions to other parts of Isaiah in these chapters and their potential implications for dating. It is too early to say what the outcome of such research might be, but certainly Johnson has made a well-argued and attractive case for his position.

H. G. M. Williamson, Cambridge.

Ascribe to the Lord. Biblical and other studies in memory of Peter C. Craigie
Lyle Eslinger and Glen Taylor (eds.)
Sheffield: JSOT Supplement 67, 1988, xvi + 633 pp., £30.

This large *Festschrift* contains articles in English, French and German, in the proportions indicated, in the fields of: Ancient Near Eastern Studies (4+2+0); 'Ugaritic and Biblical Studies' (6+1+1); and 'Biblical and Theological Studies' (19+1+0); together with an academic biography of P. C. Craigie, a brief tribute to him, and a list of his writings.

The essays vary greatly in subject matter, theological position, and plausibility. Kenneth Kitchen describes the 'hibernation' (non-occurrence for long periods of time) of the word for 'bedspread'. Alan Millard writes about 'Og's bed [a bed adorned with iron, dating from a time when iron was highly prized] and other ancient ironmongery'. Johannes De Moor argues that the 'sting' of death is derived from a Canaanite concept, and that to understand this gives new point to 1 Corinthians 15: the sinister helper of Death has now been put out of commission. W. G. E. Watson lists some word pairs found in two or more ancient Semitic languages (*e.g.* Ugaritic and Hebrew). Walter Aufrecht examines linear genealogies and finds them to be based on 'an oral pattern similar to that . . . in contemporary pre-literate societies'. Graeme Auld contributes a stimulating and personal essay which tackles questions of authorship, canon and authority. Michael DeRoche gives us a useful discussion of the meaning of the 'spirit (not wind) of God' in Genesis 1:2c, which expresses 'his control over the cosmos, and his ability to impose his will upon it'.

Eugene Coombs gives a 'close reading' of Genesis 1–5 (which seems to me to attribute a spurious significance to all sorts of incidental details) and concludes that there is a discrepancy between events and their interpretation throughout these chapters, and that Lamech was wrong in thinking that Yahweh had cursed the ground. C. M. Foley provides a literary reading of Psalm 23, which seems to be entirely subjective, and largely fanciful. Lyle Eslinger makes some astonishing comments about various matters, including Yahweh's deceitfulness, in 1 Samuel. John C. L. Gibson has an interesting (but, to me, unconvincing) article about Job 40–41: behemoth and leviathan are mythical beasts, and these chapters *do* offer a reason for Job's suffering. Robert Polzin wades into the difficulties of 1 Samuel 11:1-15, observes some interesting features, and comes out with the conviction that this chapter is uncomplimentary towards Samuel and 'actually implicates him in the people's royal sin'.

The volume is a worthy tribute to Peter Craigie, whose teaching and writing has been so much appreciated. There is something here for everyone. Evangelicals will find plenty to benefit from, and plenty to disagree with.

Mike Butterworth, Oak Hill College.

The History of the Qumran Community: An Investigation
Phillip R. Callaway
Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 3; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988, 270 pp., £30/$45.

Over the years a consensus has developed on the history of the Qumran community, as attested by the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This consensus follows the lines laid down in the 1950s by Geza Vermes, who saw in the community's rise and withdrawal to the wilderness a protest against Jonathan's assumption of the Jewish high priesthood in 152 BC. It is a soundly based consensus: the reviewer adheres to it and so, perhaps, does the author of this monograph; but it rests on one out of several conflicting interpretations of the evidence, and should not be regarded as an 'assured result', taught by the documents themselves. To regard it as such may lead to the unfair treatment of scholars (like Dr Barbara Thiering of Sydney) whose reading of the same evidence leads to conclusions quite at odds with the consensus.

Dr Callaway sets himself the task of presenting the firm evidence on which any attempt to reconstruct the history of the community must be based – the archaeology, the palaeography, ancient accounts of the Essenes, the relevant contents of the Zadokite work (or Damascus document), the *pesharim*, the *testimonia* and the *hodayot* (hymns of thanksgiving).

The archaeology of the community buildings (Khirbet Qumran) and the palaeography of the documents should provide reasonably objective evidence, although even there it is sometimes suggested that archaeologists and palaeographers, being but human, may reach conclusions which are influenced by unconscious presuppositions. Is it not a mere assumption that Khirbet Qumran had anything to do with the manuscripts in the neighbouring caves? The master-archaeologist himself, Roland de Vaux, did not originally think that it had anything to do with them or with the community whose existence they attested; it was the evidence unearthed by his excavations on the site that made him change his mind. The correlation of that evidence with the contents of the manuscripts and with our general knowledge of the history of Judaea in the last 250 years of the Second Temple leads to conclusions which, while not incontrovertible, commend themselves to many as highly probable. The building complex brought to light does appear to have been occupied by a community during the two centuries preceding *c.* AD 70, with a possible interruption of occupation for some 30 years of Herod's reign.

While the Qumran manuscripts themselves have substantially promoted the study of Hebrew palaeography, their absolute dating is helped by the evidence of dated documents from other sites, especially those from Murabba'at which belong to the time of the Bar-kokhba war (AD 132-5). We have long ago reached a stage at which it is futile to assign a date in the Jewish revolt of AD 66-73 to documents whose extant copies must be palaeographically dated at least a century earlier.

Contemporary accounts of the Essenes present marked discrepancies as well as points of resemblance with the facts about the Qumran community derived from the manuscripts. They should not be identified too hastily. The Qumran community *may* have been one Essene group (an atypical group at that); more than this cannot be safely said.

The most coherent account of the community's inception is found in the preamble to the Zadokite work. Due regard must be had to the probable composite nature of this work, but its preamble clearly dates the rise of the community in the second century BC and places the emergence of the Teacher of Righteousness in the earliest period of the community's existence. It affords no help, however, towards the identification of the Teacher with any known figure of Jewish history, and neither do the references to him in several *pesharim*. The 'Man of Lies', the Teacher's religious rival in the Zadokite work and the *pesharim*, is also impossible to identify with any known person; as for the Wicked Priest, the Teacher's active enemy in the *pesharim*, he may have been a non-Zadokite high priest of the second century BC. The 'lion of wrath' in the Nahum commentary is fairly certainly Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BC); if so, the 'seekers after smooth things' who suffered at his hands would be the Pharisees, and the Antiochus and Demetrius mentioned in the same context can be identified with confidence. But the Nahum *pesher* does not mention the Teacher of Righteousness or the Wicked Priest. The theory that the Teacher of Righteousness is the speaker in the *Hodayot* is too speculative to allow these compositions to be used as a source for reconstructing his career, and the identification of the 'accursed man' in 4QTestimonia is not so certain as some scholars think.

Callaway deserves our thanks for reminding us so clearly of the frontiers between hard fact and intelligent speculation in the interpretation of the Scrolls; to bear in mind the distinction between the two will effectively promote their study.

F. F. Bruce, Manchester.

We regret that in view of his recent death this will be our last review from Professor Bruce. We extend our sympathies to his family.

Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: from Sirach to 2 Baruch
John R. Levison
Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha, Supplement Series 1; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988, 255 pp., £30.

The enterprising addition of a *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* to the existing *JSOT* and *JSNT* is much to be welcomed, and hardly has it appeared before its Supplement Series begins as well with the appearance of this volume. 'Pseudepigrapha' is apparently used to cover the Intertestamental literature in general, which is all to the good: of the eight writings studied in this volume, three (Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom and 2 Esdras) belong to the Apocrypha rather than the Pseudepigrapha, and two more (Philo and Josephus) belong to neither. Only Jubilees, 2 Baruch and the Life of Adam and Eve are works normally reckoned among the Pseudepigrapha. The last-named work could hardly be ignored, in view of its subject matter, but because of its relatively late date it is put in an appendix (the year AD 135, when the second Jewish revolt took place, being the author's normal limit). However, having made this exception, one cannot help regretting that he did not make an exception of the rabbinical literature also, especially as it is designedly the writing down of earlier oral tradition and not simply an expression of the writers' own ideas.

The main purpose of the book is to show the variety of interpretations of the story of Adam which existed in early Judaism. A subsidiary purpose is to show how NT scholars tend to copy each other in their accounts of Judaism, instead of consulting the Jewish sources for themselves. By doing this they have perpetuated for well over 100 years the idea that there was a single standard Jewish 'myth of Adam' which underlies Pauline theology. The only real myth is that there was such a myth. Evangelical NT scholars are among those criticized on this score.

In emphasizing the different interpretations of the story of Adam, the author sometimes stretches the evidence a little. Wisdom 10:1 does not actually exonerate Adam (p. 150), and if Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus do describe physical death as natural (pp. 156f.), they are probably doing no more than following Genesis, where what is made from dust returns to dust unless it has access to the tree of life (Gn. 3:19, 22-24). Similarly, the idea that Wisdom 2:24 refers to Cain's murder of Abel rather than Satan's temptation of Eve (pp. 51f.), though not new, is surely very improbable. The reference to Cain in Wisdom 10:3f. gives this interpretation no support.

All in all, however, this is a worthwhile study, and one only regrets that it could not be published at a price within the reach of others than librarians. Surely a way must be found of breaking the vicious circle whereby small circulation causes high prices and high prices cause small circulation?

Roger Beckwith, Latimer House, Oxford.

The Relevance of John's Apocalypse
Donald Guthrie
Exeter: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987, 121 pp., £3.95.

The contents of this book were originally delivered as the Didsbury Lecture for 1985 at the British Isles Nazarene College in Didsbury, Manchester. The title of the book unfortunately is misleading (as are the comments on the book cover), since it sounds as though there will be an emphasis on the practical application of John's Apocalypse to the modern world. However, there is little attempt to carry out this goal.

Nevertheless, Guthrie's book is an adequate, though brief, introductory overview to some of the central issues of debate about the Apocalypse today. Although his discussions are terse, they are as fair and balanced as can be expected. A good example of this is the first chapter, where Guthrie summarizes the various interpretive approaches to the book. In a short amount of space he gives an overview of the history of interpretation, the problem of sources, the debate about the structure and the alternative frameworks within which to interpret the book. Of course, much is omitted because of the goal of brevity, but the uninitiated reader is left with an introduction to this difficult book which can be built on with further study. The author aligns himself with no particular interpretive approach, believing them all to contribute in one way or another to an overall understanding of the book.

The second chapter is a helpful, though again brief, overview of John's Christology, its relation to the rest of the NT and to contemporary Christological discussion.

The third chapter is a summary of the content and relevant historical background of the

seven letters in Revelation 2–3, as well as of the various explanations for the worship scenes in the visionary segment.

The last chapter analyses segments of the Apocalypse concerning the topics of persecution and battle between the forces of good and evil. The spiritual dimension of this conflict is highlighted and shown to have parallels elsewhere in the NT and even in the OT. The discussion concludes with a focus on John's theology of judgment, which Guthrie believes (rightly) needs emphatic reiteration in the modern theological climate. This is the most relevant section of the book in relation to the practical concerns of the twentieth-century church.

Professor Guthrie's book will serve as a general, brief introduction to some of the central problems of John's Apocalypse. This would be a good book for those preparing to study the Apocalypse in the environment of a local church or in an academic setting.

G. K. Beale, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA, USA.

Christian Anarchy: Jesus' Primacy over the Powers

Vernard Eller

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, 267 pp., £10.95.

This book has one major theme, a fairly specific context and an overriding thesis. The theme is the Christian's responsibility in the face of political power. The context is the alleged claim by most Christians who become involved in political action (whether from a right-wing or left-wing perspective, but mainly the latter) that they could operate power in society more righteously than those who currently do so. The thesis is that Christians ought to shun the exercise of political power, thereby avoiding the temptation to cast themselves in the role of messianic liberators.

The thesis is argued with all the fervour of a recent convert – he claims to have found for the first time his true Christian identity. As witnesses for his position he calls to the box Jacques Ellul, Karl Barth, Kierkegaard, the Blumhards (father and son) and, to a lesser extent, Bonhoeffer. He believes that from the Bible one may conclude that Jeremiah, Jesus and Paul were perfect examples of 'Christian' anarchy (though such a phrase applied to them might be thought an anachronism).

First, Eller spells out what he means by Christian anarchy. It is a consistent refusal to play the game of power-politics, in however righteous a cause it may be thought necessary. He cites, from the NT, Jesus' and Paul's studied refusal to condone the non-payment of taxes. From the sphere of contemporary (US) politics he takes the issue of civil disobedience in support of an anti-nuclear political strategy. He maintains that all attempts to oppose particular manifestations of power take on the nature and strategies of the powers to be defeated. Thus, to be involved in the call to change political programmes and ideologies for different ones (deemed to be more effective in bringing nearer God's kingdom of shalom) means to accept the rules of the game as defined by the world that refuses to acknowledge God. This way there can be no experience of a truly new human society, for that can only arise out of God's wholly free acts of grace bringing about resurrection from the dead.

It is impossible to do full justice to the arguments and evidence which are marshalled in support of the thesis. Pride of place is given to a long and detailed examination (more than one fifth of the book) of Barth's theological pilgrimage which, Eller believes, in all its phases except one champions the cause of Christian anarchy. The final two chapters, including a moving account of the trial of his son for refusing conscription, give some indication of what might happen in human societies if grace prevailed over (self-) righteousness.

Vernard Eller intends a serious theological contribution to the ancient, controversial and long-debated issue of how Christians should relate their double citizenship. However, his arguments are greatly weakened, in my judgment, by three unfortunate factors. First, perhaps not the most important, but highly irritating nevertheless, is the question of language and style. Again and again he employs unnecessary jargon and uses words invented by himself, which either do not communicate or else have to be explained. On one page, for example, I came across 'arkydom', 'unaddable' and 'glom'. Moreover, the discussion is tediously long. The book could probably be reduced by at least one half.

Secondly, Eller tends to caricature positions he needs to discover, in order that he may make the maximum contrast possible between them and his own. Thus, he assumes that all liberation theology (for he unashamedly generalizes) is guilty of promoting class consciousness with the expectation that class struggle, when instructed by a revolutionary faith, will issue in a class-free utopia. He might be interested to know that most liberation theologians take the evil bias of power in a fallen world just as seriously as he does, though they draw quite different conclusions from his.

Thirdly, and this is the nub of my controversy with his thesis (I am not convinced that all the theologians and biblical scholars he claims as allies do hold the same position), he demonstrates a clear theological dualism which leads him, in my opinion, into a number of contradictory positions. He appears to accept a radical distinction between nature and grace, which leaves him with no alternative but to reject all use of political power *(arche)* in the human sphere as having nothing to do with the reality of God's kingdom. Many unfortunate consequences flow from this radical disassociation; I will mention two. The first is that he has little theological advice to offer ordinary Christian people seeking to bear a faithful testimony to Jesus Christ in the cut and thrust of political life; 'when doing theology one *must* speak of God; when doing politics one *must not* speak of God' (p. 183). The second is that he succumbs to the illusion that anyone (particularly a Christian) is able to abstract themselves from responsibility for the kind of power being exercised in a given place at a given time. A world-denying creed (which is what he explicitly claims for Christ in his encounter with Pilate) cannot pretend to be neutral between different ways of holding political power. It is, by definition, reactionary. Of course, by no means all political activity engaged in by Christians is truly liberating. But I would strongly maintain that we can distinguish, on the basis of some continuity between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of the Messiah, what is more or less liberating in terms of human beings living together in community. Eller, too, seems to believe that relative distinctions can and should be made. However, though his theology of Christian anarchy warns against the dangers and pitfalls of confusing political crusades with the one and only cause of God, it does not help us to discern how concretely God's good gifts may be exercised faithfully in the real world of power. Could it be that Eller confuses anarchy (the rejection of manipulative power) with nihilism (the rejection of political authority as such)?

Andrew Kirk, Selly Oak, Birmingham.

Philippians

Moisés Silva

The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary Series; Chicago: Moody Press, 1988, xxiii + 255 pp., $23.95.

This commentary on Philippians, by a distinguished NT scholar from the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, is the initial volume in Moody Press' ambitious venture of producing still another exegetical commentary series with a conservative theological orientation. When completed this series will number fifty to fifty-five volumes, covering every book of the Bible. It is designed especially for informed lay persons, students and scholars. The exegesis and exposition of each volume will be based on the original languages of the Bible and each author will provide his/her own fresh translation of the text.

Silva prefaces his volume by saying that this new project has allowed him to put into practice some of his own ideas about commentary writing. For example, he is convinced that the traditional verse-by-verse approach of most commentaries is often detrimental to a faithful exposition of the biblical text. Hence, he departs from this practice and chooses instead to write his commentary in the form of 'exegetical essays' on carefully defined units of thought, units that must be read 'in blocks – the larger the blocks the better' (p. xiv). His approach, however, does not neglect a discussion of the more technical problems of text, language and interpretation, much of which he places in a section entitled 'additional notes', that immediately follows the exegesis and exposition.

Silva's introduction is relatively brief. He believes that many of the matters usually discussed here 'are best treated as they come up in the text itself, since the exegesis of the text is the primary tool for resolving such problems'. He does, however, include in this introductory section other helpful information that is not always found in commentaries. Some of these are: (1) a reconstruction of events detailing Paul's contacts with the Philippian church; (2) a 'textual history' which helps one better to assess individual textual variants as they occur in the text; and (3) a brief but interesting exegetical history of Philippians – sketches and evaluations of several of the major commentaries on this letter from Chrysostom's study to works of present-day scholars.

One cannot but be impressed with Silva's skill as an exegete. His extreme care in analysing the text, his thorough understanding of the original language, his grasp of linguistic subtleties, his mastery of secondary sources – all combine to provide the reader with an excellent commentary. My criticisms, therefore, pale in the light of these fine qualities and are more of the series itself than of Silva's work.

1. First of all I seriously question the advisability of beginning another major *evangelical* critical commentary series at a time when the Word Biblical Commentary Series, which also purports to be 'the best in evangelical scholarship', is even now in progress and has not yet been brought to completion. Surely Silva himself must know the answer to this question, for not only did he write this initial volume, but he is the NT co-ordinator (*i.e.* editor) of the series. The mere fact that this venture allows him and

exegetes like him to put into practice 'a few ideas about commentary writing that they have entertained for some time' hardly seems justification enough for the enormous outlay of intellectual energies and financial resources required to bring such an ambitious but redundant project to fruition.

2. The editorial policy of this series (Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary) of putting Greek words and phrases in their original script, followed immediately by English transliterations and translations at their first occurrence and after that of making use of transliterations only, is carried out precisely by Silva. But such a practice certainly clutters up the unit being discussed and tends more toward confusion than clarification. If readers are not familiar with the Greek script, transliteration will be of little value to them, especially when most have no idea of how Greek transliterated words should be pronounced. Furthermore, it will be frustrating for these same people to read such things as καρπός (*karpos*, 'fruit') and δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosynē*, 'righteousness'), *etc.*, and be expected to remember these foreign words and to hold both their forms and meanings in mind so that they can understand what is meant when they read further on a sentence like this: 'even if *dikaiosynē* here were interpreted as forensic, the ethical note would still be present in *karpos*'. And if lay persons will be frustrated by this pattern of things, readers who are familiar with a Greek script will be annoyed at having to read back through the English symbols to the Greek words that underlie them.

3. The practice of writing exegetical essays in large blocks certainly has its advantages, not the least of which is its ability to focus on the major thrust of each unit. But these do not out-weigh the advantages of the carefully done verse-by-verse commentary accompanied by a full explanatory summary of each section (*cf.* the Word Biblical Commentary Series), if for no other reason than that, while drawing attention to the so-called 'big picture', many of the smaller matters that may be of great interest or importance to a student or pastor or scholar must be neglected or not discussed at all. The supplement of 'additional notes' alleviates this problem to some extent, but not entirely. There are too many places to look, so that ironically in the end the intent of the editors is realized: one has here a commentary that 'is not designed to provide quick answers'.

4. On occasion Silva allows his theological presuppositions to control his exegesis. The clearest example of this is found in his discussion of the passage that includes the familiar saying, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' (2:12). Whereas the larger context of this verse (beginning with 1:27), which describes a spiritually sick church and cries out, therefore, for some such translation of v. 12 with its crucial word, 'salvation', as this: 'obediently work at achieving spiritual *health' (salvation)*, Silva argues instead that this verse and its crucial word 'speaks of personal salvation'. Although his arguments are carefully worked out, with only a few *ad hominem* thrusts, they nevertheless seem to stem from an antecedent theological conviction that the word 'salvation' has one fundamental meaning wherever it is found in the NT, namely, that it refers to the ultimate saving work of God. Silva does concede parenthetically, however, that the personal salvation in view here (in 2:12) 'manifests itself *primarily in healthy community relationships*' (p. 137; italics mine).

It is this same theological orientation that calls into question his interpretation of another well-known verse – Philippians 1:6. Once again, where the context of this verse demands that the 'good work' begun by God among the Philippians, and which Paul clearly had in mind, be understood as the partnership of these Christians with him in the spread of the gospel, Silva understands it to refer to the Philippians' salvation (p. 52). But the theological idea of 'salvation' (*i.e.* God's redeeming and renewing work in the lives of Christians) must be imported from elsewhere; it is not in this text or its context. Surely it is God who begins the work of personal salvation, and it is God who will carry it through to completion, but this is hardly what was in Paul's mind when he wrote Philippians 1:6.

5. In a brief review of W. Schenk's *Der Philipperbrief*, Silva writes: 'It is . . . unfortunate that Schenk conveys a certain arrogance. I do not refer to a personal quality, but a disciplinary cocksure-ness . . .' (p. 35). There is regrettably a bit of this same cocksure arrogance that mars Silva's own work. It is a pervasive tone that can be felt more in the reading than can be detailed with specific examples (although these are not lacking). My wish, then, for this present volume can best be expressed in Silva's own words about Schenk's: 'One can only hope that readers of his commentary will not be put off by that tone and so miss the rich exegetical fare that he has to offer' (p. 35).

Gerald F. Hawthorne, Wheaton College, Illinois.

Israel's Law and the Church's Faith. Paul and his Recent Interpreters
Stephen Westerholm
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Exeter: Paternoster, 1988, viii + 238 pp., $14.95/£11.75.

Stephen Westerholm has written an excellent book. It is easy to read, clearly argued, exgetically based, and theologically sensitive. It tackles one of the most debated issues in biblical studies: Paul's view of the Mosaic law. But what makes the book not only excellent but important is the perspective on this issue that Westerholm takes. The last ten years have seen books on Paul and the law pouring off the presses, all of them reacting to E. P. Sanders' epochal *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977). Most take the line that Sanders' revisionist interpretation of first-century Palestinian Judaism requires a corresponding revision in our interpretation of what Paul says about the Mosaic law. For if Jews in Paul's day did *not* view the law, or 'works', as a means of salvation – as Sanders argues – then the traditional interpretation of the law/gospel, works/faith, merit/grace antitheses in Paul are called into question. Paul uses these antitheses when he argues with Jewish opponents; and a new understanding of what his opponents were saying appears to demand a new understanding of what Paul was saying. Yet these antitheses lie at the heart of traditional Protestant theology. The new interpretations of Paul and the law have been severely critical of this tradition, which is usually traced to Luther, who is accused of reading his own struggles with Roman Catholic merit theology into Paul. It is against this background that *Israel's Law* must be seen to be appreciated. For Westerholm unabashedly defends Luther's basic interpretation of what Paul has to say about the law. In doing so, he not only provides students with a valuable critique of, and alternative to, the current spate of 'revisionist' books; he also defends doctrines that have been basic to Protestant theology, preaching and lifestyle since the Reformation.

Westerholm, who is Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, sets his own interpretation of Paul in the context of the recent debate. The first part of his book contains valuable sketches of the contributions of key scholars on issues central to the debate over Luther's interpretation of Paul: Schweitzer and Wrede on the centrality of justification by faith; Montefiore, Schoeps and Sanders on the alternative interpretation of Paul and his Jewish heritage; Kümmel and Stendahl on the role of Paul's 'conscience' in his theology; Bultmann, Wilckens and Sanders on Paul's critique of the 'righteousness of the law'; and Drane, Hübner and Räisänen on the consistency of Paul's teaching. The student who wants an overview of this issue could not do better than start here. Westerholm disappoints the reader hoping to find direct interaction with these scholars; he allows his criticisms to arise through his positive exposition in the second part of the book. Yet his decision is probably the right one: it keeps the focus on the issues rather than on particular scholars and their idiosyncratic presentation of the issues.

In the second part of the book, Westerholm takes up the issues raised by the scholars he surveys in the first part. On most of these issues he ends up preferring Luther's viewpoint to those of the great Reformer's modern detractors. Against those who would 'soften' or eliminate the typical Lutheran contrast between 'law' and 'gospel', 'faith' and 'works', by blurring the distinctions between these pairs, Westerholm insists on the full force of the antithesis in Paul. 'Law' has nothing to do with faith; nor can 'works of the law' be confined only to certan kinds of works. Westerholm is not as clear as Luther that 'justification by faith' is the centre of Paul's theology. But he does argue that the doctrine is far more than a 'subsidiary crater': for it reflects Paul's passion to guard the grace of God from any admixture with human merit. Here also Westerholm finds Luther to be a true 'paulinist'. Unlike Luther, however, Westerholm is not convinced that the Jews in Paul's day were arguing for 'works' in distinction from grace. Westerholm endorses Sanders' central conclusion – Jews did not believe that a person could be saved by works – and goes so far as to criticize those who would construct Jewish theology on the basis of Paul (in which category he apparently puts Luther). It is Paul, not Judaism, who distinguishes between 'faith' and 'works' – a distinction made necessary by Paul's view that sinful human beings must rely *exclusively* on God's grace. While wrong about the Jews, then, Luther was right to find in Paul an insistence that salvation is based on divine grace to the exclusion of human achievement. Westerholm also agrees with Luther – against Sanders – on the reason why human achievement, or the law, cannot justify. It is sin, according to Romans 1–3, that makes it impossible for the law to justify a person. What is the purpose of the law, then? According to Luther, its 'principal' purpose was to reveal human sinfulness. While he does not think that Paul makes this function of the law as important as does Luther, Westerholm does find in Paul's teaching about the law bringing a 'knowledge' of sin the 'foundation' for this idea.

Westerholm's defence of Luther's views on these matters is a valuable service to the church: for Protestant Christians have – rightly, in my opinion – believed them to be clearly taught in Paul and to be vital to biblical Christianity. But Westerholm's defence of Luther's views on two other issues would not command such general acceptance. First, Westerholm believes that both the OT and Paul claim that the Mosaic law promises salvation to those who obey it. That God knew from the outset it could never be obeyed so as to bring salvation, and so planned 'from the foundation of the world' to provide Christ as the only means to salvation, does not remove the fact of the promise. I think

Westerholm is right on this, but many would disagree. Second, Westerholm argues that Paul does not make the Mosaic law a source of guidance for Christian ethics. This denial of the so-called 'third use of the law' agrees with Luther (although this is a debated point), but is contrary to Calvin and the stream of reformation Christianity derived from him (*e.g.* Puritanism). While sympathetic to Westerholm's view on this point, I wonder whether this states the matter a bit too strongly; at the least, one would have expected interaction with Ephesians 6:1-3. In light of these points, then, I suspect that some who are generally sympathetic with Westerholm's perspective will nevertheless think that his scheme is *too* 'Lutheran'.

I am hesitant to voice criticism of a book that is so well done and with which I agree to such a considerable extent; but I wish to raise at least two questions. First, if Sanders is right about Palestinian Judaism, and 'works of the law' are works of genuine obedience to the law, just what is Paul doing when he denies that works of the law can justify? Paul appears to be implying more here than that Jews did not, as Paul did, carefully separate 'works' and faith or grace. Whatever the 'time' of justification, Paul seems to be saying that Jews made obedience to the law the basic condition for salvation. Is it possible, then, that Sanders' reconstruction of first-century Judaism has too rigidly excluded elements of 'legalism'? Second, what is the situation of OT saints who lived in the era of the Mosaic law? Clearly they were 'under the law' in the sense that they were bound to obey its precepts; equally clearly they were not under the 'curse' of the law. What, then, was their relationship to the law? And how does their situation affect Paul's salvation-historical 'old covenant/new covenant' scheme?

Israel's Faith is written at such a level that pastors, students and scholars alike can profit from it. And profit from it they should. The debate about Paul and the law is no narrow academic concern: it affects our theology at a vital point. The reformers saw this, and insisted on certain distinctions that have been the hallmark of Protestant Christianity — faith versus works, law versus gospel, grace versus human achievement. We, the heirs of that tradition, should not surrender these distinctions easily. And no better arguments for maintaining them against the onslaught of criticism can be found than are provided in *Israel's Faith*.

Douglas Moo, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.

The Cry of Jesus on the Cross: A Biblical and Theological Study
Gérard Rossé
tr. Stephen W. Arndt (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), x + 145 pp., $8.95.

This translation of a book first published in Italian is very welcome for two reasons. First, it does something which is rarely done nowadays: it moves successfully from serious biblical scholarship to profound contemporary theology. Secondly, its subject is one for which just such a study was needed. Jesus' cry of dereliction ('My God, why have you forsaken me?') has been identified as the key to the deepest theological meaning of the cross by a number of contemporary theologians, most influentially Jürgen Moltmann in his *The Crucified God*, to which Rossé makes frequent reference. Rossé shows both that the theological interpretation which Moltmann and others have placed on the cry is broadly justified and that a biblical-theological study of the cry can also qualify, extend and enrich that interpretation.

Rossé investigates the place of the cry in the pre-Markan tradition of the passion, in which he thinks Psalm 22 was used from the beginning to interpret the passion of Jesus. He finds no decisive evidence for or against the historicity of the cry as Jesus' actual words, but this does not diminish its authority or significance as a theological interpretation of the meaning of Jesus' death: 'a revelatory word of God on the death of Christ'. (Incidentally, he seems to me to make unnecessarily heavy weather of the problem of how the bystanders suppose Jesus to be calling for Elijah. The most obvious interpretation of Mark's account is that Jesus' words were indistinct and misheard by the bystanders.) There is a thorough account of the place of the cry in Mark's understanding of the death of Jesus, in which it functions as Mark's equivalent of Paul's claim that Jesus was made 'sin' or 'a curse'. It means that Jesus 'has completely assumed the human condition of estrangement from God'. Markan theology confirms Moltmann's claim that the cry must be understood within the relationship of Jesus the Son of God to his Father. But most illuminating is Rossé's emphasis on Mark 14:36 to show that Jesus is most deeply united with his Father precisely at the point of abandonment: he experiences, as Rossé felicitously puts it, 'the loss of God for the love of God'.

There is a useful chapter on the history of interpretation of the cry, from the Fathers to the present, and three short but richly suggestive chapters on the contemporary theological significance of the cry. For example: 'In the abandonment, Jesus lives to an extreme the nearness of God to man in his extreme solidarity with humanity' (p. 112); 'Now every cry of abandonment involves the Trinity' (p. 115); 'Jesus in his abandonment is the God of those without God. He presents himself in a special way as the response to contemporary atheism' (p. 120); 'In order to draw near to men estranged from God, God does not fear reaching them in their estrangement, thus appearing as the opposite of God' (p. 131). These quotations should whet the theological appetite!

Richard Bauckham, University of Manchester.

The Progress of Redemption
Willem VanGemeren
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988, 544 pp., $19.95.

This work by the Associate Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary is really a thematic survey of God's redemptive and kingdom programmes. The introduction argues for a three-fold approach to Bible study (p. 43). One should study a passage in its literary context, its canonical context, and its redemptive-historical context. The first category is genre-sensitive and focuses on the message as it is contained within the book alone. The second level associates the book with other like works of the period and with the book's placement in the canon. How does Joshua fit in with the other historical books of Israel? The third level is the level of theological synthesis. How does this section fit into the whole of the Bible? The author applies this three-part model to biblical-theological study. It is a sound approach. The book is divided into twelve parts, usually reflecting a key division of the canon and of history, though the first four units deal with material in the Torah to lay a foundation for what follows. Most of these units deal with a given period in three chapters distinguishing these three basic steps.

The structure of the book is the key to understanding it. The goal is to move through the Bible so that the progressive development of key themes is manifest. The book is well suited for a survey class on the plan of God in the Bible. VanGemeren wishes to stress the fundamental unity of God's plan and discusses every book of the Bible as it relates to these fundamental themes. He is keen to show how all the covenants are still operative and that there is unity in God's plan and in his institutions as he brings salvation to reality. VanGemeren argues that the kingdom of God has always been present, whether in the theocratic structure of Israel, in the church, or in the consummation. He closes with a plea that despite differences in how evangelical traditions see the end, there is much that they hold in common (p. 474).

In addition, he briefly treats other relevant issues, so that his study is comprehensive in a way other such studies are not. He has a short section on the intertestamental period (ch. 26), overviews the history of the church (ch. 36), and mentions what he regards as the seven challenges currently facing the church (ch. 38). This last chapter is brief and nicely done.

The book has many merits. First, it very adequately and sensitively moves through the various books of the Bible and shows how the promises of God are presented gradually, with the early passages only becoming totally clear in their force as later revelation serves to clarify earlier revelation. For example, Genesis 3:15 is handled with care both in terms of its clear emphasis in the context of Genesis of a struggle between man and creation and in terms of its later relevance to Jesus Christ (pp. 92-93). Second, many themes are brought to the surface in each section so that basic emphases in the various units of the Bible are made clear. Third, the relationship of later texts to earlier biblical ideas is consistently noted. All these benefits make the volume useful, though it must be said that the survey form of the work means naturally that there is little new here and that almost all themes are treated very briefly.

Despite these merits, problems remain. The book's structure makes the treatment repetitive and hard to work through. One wishes the author had put the book into three sections: one working through the books individually, another working through the canonical groups, and the third tying together the pieces into the basic synthesis. There still would have been some repetition, but this way the flow of the argument for each level of interpretation would have remained clear, rather than forcing the reader to move constantly in and out of three concurrent discussions. To put together the importance of the Spirit's role for the church one has to read pp. 360, 404, 409-410 and 458-460. This sometimes makes the reading frustrating, though for the diligent there is reward.

Also, VanGemeren has a major desire to challenge a view of the kingdom that is popular in NT studies. This is the view of Kümmel who argues that the kingdom is already and not yet. VanGemeren wishes to argue that the kingdom has always been present and that the NT emphasis on the kingdom's presence is in continuity with the OT kingdom (pp. 347-355). The discussion is at the centre of his thesis and it seems to fail.

The major problem is a failure to distinguish between OT texts where the kingdom of God is described as present and OT texts on the hope of

the kingdom of God as something to be anticipated. Those OT texts that depict the kingdom of God as present express God's general rule as Sovereign Creator. As such, this OT theme is a given in all biblical periods since it is grounded in God's role as Creator of all men.

The kingdom of God in the NT is a particular eschatological entity, anticipated by the prophets and regarded as of such a superior nature as to be a new entity ushering in a new era. Here one looks at the plan of God as redeemer. From the OT perspective this kingdom is not present, but is coming. Even in the NT, it is arriving: inaugurated, but looking to consummation. A text like Luke 7:27 makes this distinction between promise and inauguration very clear in distinguishing John the Baptist from Jesus, highlighting the difference between the eras. VanGemeren attempts to explain the disjunction between promise and inauguration in texts like Matthew 3:1-3; 11:12-13; and Luke 16:16, but the efforts fail to convince (pp. 349-350). In addition, he fails to consider texts where Jesus mentions the new wine not going into old wineskins or where the Sabbath practices are challenged or where Paul describes the law as a pedagogue. Such passages point to more discontinuity than VanGemeren seems to allow, though he clearly is aware of the problem.

VanGemeren says some important things here, such as that the kingdom is not identical with the church and that perhaps Israel has a future, but to argue the church has always existed is to ignore a text like Acts 11:15-18, where Peter can speak of the 'beginning', or Ephesians 2:14-22, where the new temple is called a *new* man and is built on the foundation of the apostles and NT prophets, not OT prophets as Van Gemeren suggests (pp. 326, 398, 462-463). The people of God are one people, but they existed in *various* institutions through which God has worked. It does not help the portrait of the progress of God's plan to blur these institutions together, even when their functions are very parallel and even though they can share certain metaphors as a result. One can see relationships without arguing for identity.

In sum, this is a helpful survey of God's plan. Its basic approach is sound, though some elements in the execution and emphasis leave questions. For someone seeking an overview of major redemptive themes of the Bible, this is a good starting point.

Darrell L. Bock, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas.

Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, two vols.
Walter A. Elwell (gen. ed.)
Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988, 2,210 pp., $79.95.

The *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* is the newest in a growing list of new and revised reference works available to the serious Bible student. With so many excellent Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias already available, especially in view of the recent highly acclaimed *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, there seems little need for yet another one. What are the special features which this two-volume set brings to biblical research? Will Bible students find information here that is not found in other sources?

This Bible encyclopedia is written for lay people. Technical language is avoided whenever possible. People do not need formal theological training to understand the more than 5,700 articles. Hebrew and Greek words are transliterated. While information usually is communicated in an easy-to-read style, each article reflects thorough evangelical research. Clarity of expression is not at the expense of careful scholarship. The lay orientation of the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* does not conceal the crucial issues confronting biblical scholars. This is not a popular-level devotionalizing of biblical themes, but a serious reference work designed for the lay person who takes Bible study seriously.

Researchers using these volumes will find the basic factual information found in most other Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, such as brief commentaries on the books of the Bible, historical background information about the biblical world and Israel's neighbours, religious practices and social customs in biblical times and all the other normal Bible dictionary facts. In addition, they will discover new material on biblical persons. The articles about the people of the Bible record insights gained from a direct study of the Hebrew and Greek texts of every passage where each person is mentioned. This material represents a special contribution in the publication of Bible dictionaries.

Entries in this encyclopedia are not limited to biblical words. Valuable articles are included on subjects such as archaeology, apologetics, Bible interpretation, textual criticism and the biblical canon. Clearly written articles help lay people understand such modern critical methods of Bible study as form, source, and redaction criticism. From the descriptions and evaluations of the strengths and limitations of these critical methods, the lay reader gains an evangelical perspective on these approaches.

Another area of special emphasis in the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* is the focus on Biblical Theology. According to the publisher's own statistics, there are over 450 pages devoted to the study of the great themes of OT and NT theology. In addition to a general article defining the distinctive approach of Biblical Theology, there are numerous entries covering specific aspects of this subject, providing a comprehensive discussion on many of these concepts. For the informed student who knows the right topics and who perseveres in looking them up, this encyclopedia is a good source on Biblical Theology.

Two other features increase the value of this work. Cross-references at the end of articles direct the reader to other articles where more information is available on the subject. Many articles also end with a select bibliography of English language works.

This publication is enhanced by many relevant illustrations and maps. Unfortunately, all these vital aids are black-and-white except for the map section at the end of volume two.

This reviewer is particularly impressed with the quality of the editorial personnel and the more than two hundred, primarily British and North American, evangelical contributors of articles. They represent a 'Who's Who' of evangelical scholarship. Most of the major articles represent the condensed insights of a lifetime of study and research on the specific topic by leading evangelical scholars who have authored other works on it, not an initially prepared article on an assigned topic.

There is little doubt that the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* is an effective reference work for its targeted audience. It appears to make a special contribution in the articles on biblical people and Biblical Theology. The major frustration that some serious lay students will have is the absence of detailed scholarly argumentation to help evaluate alternative positions. In some cases more space is used raising problems than helping to solve them. For example the discussion of the problems involved in trying to harmonize the four gospel accounts of the discovery of the resurrection outlines the problem in great detail, but disappoints the reader by giving very general, undocumented solutions. More balance between statements of problems and descriptions of possible solutions would strengthen some articles. All in all, however, consulting the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* should prove to be a prudent investment of study time.

Kermit A. Ecklebarger, Denver Seminary, Colorado.

The New Dictionary of Theology
J. A. Komonchak, M. Collins, D. A. Lane (eds.)
New York: Michael Glazier, 1987; Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1987, 1,112 pp., £50.

This Dictionary is the work of an international team of Roman Catholic scholars and theologians, who have tried to condense into a single volume the many-sided theological activity of the Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. The accent is contemporary, the subject matter largely philosophical and relevant to modern concerns. Not a few traditional themes get hardly any treatment (*e.g.* Apophatic Theology), whereas whole pages are devoted to the burning issues of Abortion, which has caused so much anguish in Rome.

The articles are generally well written, though they vary enormously in size. Some are little more than a straight definition of the subject, whilst others are exhaustive articles covering several pages. Comparison with the recently published *New Dictionary of Theology* (IVP) reveals that the latter is more evenly balanced here, and it is hard not to think that the editors could have smoothed things out more than they have. A little more on Adoptionism, perhaps, and a little less on Art?

Further comparisons with the evangelical volume reveal just how different is the theological atmosphere which Catholics breathe. Looking just at the letter A, the IVP volume has 54 entries, of which eight are biographical. The G & M book has only 43 entries, but none of these is biographical, and it seems that biography is excluded from the Dictionary on principle. But of these there are only 20 entries in common, and only eight which are of comparable length! The eight make an interesting list: Angels, Apocalyptic, Apostasy, Aristotelianism, Ascension, Asceticism, Atheism, and Authority (a long article in both cases!).

There are six common entries where the Catholic side is much more detailed than the evangelical one. These are Abortion, Analogy, Anointing, Anthropology, Apologetics and Apostle, clearly reflecting the philosophical, moral and sacramental leanings of Catholicism. There are also six common entries in which the reverse is the case. These are Adoptionism, Agnosticism, Anonymous Christianity (a surprise, considering the term was popularized by Karl Rahner!), Antichrist, Apostolic Fathers and Arianism. Here the historical and evangelistic bent of evangelicalism clearly comes to the fore.

However, we must not forget that some of the longest entries in the Catholic Dictionary are not reproduced in the evangelical one at all, and vice versa! The Catholic volume has entries covering such subjects as Adoration, Altar, Annulment, Architecture, Art, Assembly, and

the Assumption of Mary, which the evangelical book either omits or refers to other entries, whereas the evangelical Dictionary expounds at length on Adam, African Christian Theology, the Alexandrian School, Amyraldianism, Anabaptist Theology, Anglicanism, Arminianism, Assurance and Atonement, which the Catholic side 'suppresses' in the same way!

The contrast is truly extraordinary, and one cannot help but think that the two different books will have to be combined before real ecumenical dialogue can begin. In how many important areas do we find ourselves talking not merely at cross purposes, but about completely different things! On the positive side, it can certainly be said that the similarity of title is deceptive — the two books are very different, and students will need both if they are to cover the whole field adequately. Evangelicals may be forgiven if they think that it is not worth their while to purchase a volume which specializes in concerns with which they have little sympathy, but they cannot claim to have a good understanding of Roman Catholicism if they ignore the matters they prefer to leave out. The same, of course, is true for a Roman Catholic as well. Indeed, discussion of the differences between the two traditions could quite well begin with the contents of the two Dictionaries, by asking the participants to try to understand the criteria for selection and treatment used in each.

Gerald Bray, Oak Hill College.

The Incarnation of God. An Introduction to Hegel's Theological Thought as Prolegomena to a Future Christology
Hans Küng
T. & T. Clark, 1987, 608 pp., £24.95.

It is an index of the state of contemporary systematic theology in the English-speaking world that while this important work, published in Germany in 1970, was translated into Italian, French and Spanish by 1974, an English translation only appeared in 1987. We owe Dr J. R. Stephenson an immense debt of gratitude for undertaking the translation of this substantial and complex work.

It is the very complexity of this work which has placed this reviewer in a rather difficult position as regards assessing its value for the readers of a primarily undergraduate journal. There is clearly no doubt that Küng's treatment of Hegel's theological significance is a masterly and unique work which serves to introduce an extremely difficult and obtuse thinker to theologians who have yet to engage with him. However, that being the case, and Küng's own clarity of thought and presentation notwithstanding, it has to be said that this book has as its intended audience those for whom the carefree days of undergraduate theological study are but a passing memory. The level of complexity is, by the very nature of the subject matter, far beyond that which an undergraduate could reasonably be expected to master. However, having said this, I would want to say that this is a book that all those engaged in the study of modern theology ought to be aware of and, further, that all those responsible for teaching courses in this area ought to have read.

That Hegel has been a major influence upon the modern theological enterprise is a commonplace observation. However, Küng manages to explore this indebtedness with a rare balance of clarity and sophistication. He begins by examining the development of Hegel's thought with reference to his familial, social and educational background. He considers his early attitude to religion and his relationship to Enlightenment modes of thought and their accompanying attitudes. In this Küng gives us a very useful picture of the Enlightenment man and his disposition towards the Christian faith which is fascinating in itself. This line of analysis is continued in a section concerning Hegel's attitude to the person of Jesus, who 'had a serious rival in one no less good: Socrates' (p. 63). Küng brings out in his discussion of the Hegelian critique of religion the notion of a resurrected Christ as an unhelpful distraction from the importance of 'the earthly Jesus as an ideal of virtue' (p. 71), and there is an interesting section, attendant to this, dealing with Hegel's question 'How did the proclaimer become the proclaimed?' The indebtedness of Hegel to Kantian thought on these matters is also clearly spelt out.

With chapter three we see Küng beginning his treatment of Hegel's own distinctive form of speculative philosophizing, nurtured during his Frankfurt days. It is here that we see Hegel's abandonment of the Enlightenment notion of Jesus as virtuous teacher, in favour of an understanding of him as in some way expressive of the unity of God and man. This notion of the essential unity between God and man represents an important reorientation away from the Kantian understanding of religion as something noumenal and other-worldly towards a more immanent conception of humanity's experience of God. Küng captures this point when he writes: 'Fichte, Schelling and Hegel were agreed on the rightfulness of the *shift of consciousness from the hereafter to the here-and-now*' (p. 189).

The significance of the incarnation of the Son of God for Hegel can only readily be understood in the light of his overall ontology where the Spirit as unconscious universality comes to awareness of itself through a process of self-othering. Hegel regards the Christian notion of God's differentiation of himself as Father and Son and the Son's subsequent alienation from the Father through the incarnation as expressive of this truth of speculative thought: 'Hegel advocates the concrete God, and the concrete God is a living God, the God who externalises himself and becomes man, who passes through a "life-history" ' (p. 210). Chapters five and six deal with this issue and those related to it in considerable depth.

In chapter seven Küng examines Hegel's idiosyncratic, and some might say notorious, understanding of world history as this relates both to the place and significance of the person of Christ in it and as the mode of the World Spirits coming to consciousness. Gone completely is Hegel's view of Christ as of equal significance to Socrates, for example; the notion of the God-man is now central to Hegel who sees reconciliation with God as the unification of the finite with the infinite (*cf.* p. 328f.).

The eighth and final chapter bears the title *Prolegomena to a Future Christology*. In it Küng attempts to provide us with an insight into the various reactions to Hegel's thought, coupled with his own contribution to the debate. Although he makes a probably less than serious reference to this present work as an attempt to 'penetrate the "opponents' stronghold" ' (p. 413), his avowed concern here is 'not to offer any definitive conclusions but simply to break more new ground by way of discussion' (p. 413).

There is no way in which my scant few comments can possibly do justice to a work of scholarship of this kind or even hope to convey an adequate sense of its breadth of content and overall theological application. For this reason I feel it appropriate to let the author himself have the last word as it seems to me that he is best placed to describe what he has done and what it is he hopes to have achieved:

> From start to finish we have been involved in constant debate with both Hegel and Christology. Each of the seven chapters has worked its way like an inward-moving spiral through five interlocking layers of material, starting with Hegel's life and work, then focusing in turn on the general development of his thought, the contemporary intellectual milieu, and the unfolding of his Christology, and ending in theological debate. This kind of experimental and penetrating initiation and discussion has demanded great patience and many deep breaths from the reader — and before that, of the author . . . — yet not, we hope, without bestowing on the reader a commanding view of Hegel's thought along with considerable insight into it. (p. 413).

M. Alsford, Thames Polytechnic.

The Philosophy of Religion 1875-1980
Alan P. F. Sell
London: Croom Helm, 1988, x + 252 pp., £35.

The first thing to note about this book is that it is a *narrative history* of the philosophy of religion in the period covered. This reviewer originally expected something on the lines of John MacQuarrie's *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*, with summaries of the ideas of major thinkers. What we actually are given is an account of the running debate within philosophy of religion, and references are as likely to be to reviews in the *Expository Times* as to major works. It is a pleasure to add that the book is well written, and no difficulty to read as far as style is concerned.

It is not meant to introduce to the field, as Professor Sell makes clear in his introduction. Such books are usually arranged by theme, covering (say) arguments about the existence of God in one chapter and those about religious language in another. This begins just before the heyday of Absolute Idealism in Britain, and continues past its rise and fall, through the times when analytic philosophy was almost uniformly hostile to religion of any kind, and on to what he calls the 'almost open house' of the present day. Geographically, he concentrates on the British Isles. (There is, therefore, only a limited amount on existentialism.) He is not completely consistent here, though. Josiah Royce has a brief section to himself; so does Paul Tillich; and the final chapter includes discussions of the process philosophers and — a useful point for evangelical readers, as they are often ignored — the Calvinist presuppositionists, schools which flourish chiefly in America or on the Continent. (There are some process theologians in Britain, but Sell limits himself to the American ones.) I presume it was this concentration on British thought that led to the very curious omission of William James, whom one would have thought quite an important figure in the philosophy of religion, but who is not mentioned at all except in a couple of passing references which have nothing to do with his own thought.

I should imagine that theologians and theological students will find this book helpful chiefly as a kind of glorified bibliography. Professor Sell has read, and in his book alludes

to, a vast amount of material, and anyone who wants to know, not only what books (say) Ian Ramsay wrote but also something about reactions to his work by contemporaries will find this book very useful. I doubt if they will find it easy going as a straightforward read. Although it reads quite easily, it presupposes a fair acquaintance with the philosophical background. It is assumed that the reader has at least some idea of what Bradley, or Whitehead, or Wittgenstein were getting at, so that the writer can draw out their place in the religious debate without having to explain their philosophical stance from the beginning. Indeed, some of his references are rather tantalizing. When one is told, for instance, that Thomas Brophy and R. F. Aldwinckle have both written articles on the subject 'Is there a Christian philosophy?' (p. 234), but is not told what their answers were, nor (if these were positive) what they thought a Christian philosophy would be like, one is likely to feel slightly cheated. Of course, the result may be to send one to the original articles, which is no doubt all to the good; but it would have been helpful to have been told a little more in advance.

It may be that this book will be more helpful to philosophers than to theologians. It could help them learn how theologians reacted to the various trends in philosophy that have appeared since 1875; it could also, if they are not specialists in the philosophy of *religion*, help them learn how that particular department of philosophy has developed within these trends.

It is also, at its price, likely to be more help to the rich or extravagant than to the poor and thrifty.

Richard Sturch, Islip, Oxford.

The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381 AD
R. P. C. Hanson
Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 931 pp., £34.95.

The Arian Controversy has not been well served in recent years in English. Until now English readers have had to go back to the much slighter work of H. M. Gwatkin (1889) for a comprehensive treatment of the whole controversy. By its very size Professor Hanson's book will establish itself as the standard work for many years ahead; for it combines doctrinal development with a detailed account of the complex church politics of the period. Systematic coverage of most figures (major and minor) who appear in the dispute along with the literature they produced will also enable this work to be used for reference purposes.

Hanson presents his book as a compendium of the results of scholarship up to the International Patristic Conference of 1987. And this is a fair assessment. Hanson pinpoints those questions scholars have been asking and sets out the different solutions, but not at the expense of shrinking from his own judgments.

That is not to say the book lacks originality. Far from it! Hanson's most significant contributions lie in his attempt to elucidate a distinctive Arian soteriology and in his delineation of Homoean Arianism. The first of these is the issue of the moment in scholarship in this field. Can we retain the traditional view of Arianism as a distinctly cosmological controversy or is this simply the façade which hides a deeper soteriological concern? Hanson plumps emphatically for the latter, and in the process accredits the Arians with more appreciation of the sufferings of Christ than their Nicene opponents. In particular, the Arians affirmed that only the genuine sufferings of God, albeit a lesser sort of God, could save us. Hanson approves this assertion of divine passibility. But is it a fair summary of the Arian position? There are difficulties in the evidence. There is the almost total silence of Arius himself on this point. Then there is the tendency within evolving Arianism to exhibit some of those very docetic features with regard to Christ's suffering which are all too apparent in Nicene authors. Besides, as Hanson readily agrees, the Arians were undoubtedly concerned to protect the Supreme Being from all suffering by postulating in Christ a distinct and lesser divinity. Perhaps the most serious objection, however, to the soteriological theory is the lack of any appreciation of this among Arian opponents. This might be credible if Arianism were some localized, hole-in-the-corner affair. But it was not. Or if we are inclined to see in Nicene exponents a deliberate campaign of misrepresentation, what motive had they for this or what resources to make it effective? Exponents of the soteriological thrust of Arianism will have to explain this curious historical phenomenon if their views are to carry the day. In the meantime the debate will go on.

Homoean Arianism, Hanson's other interesting contribution, was distinguished by the assertion that the Son of God was like the Father according to the Scriptures. Traditionally this movement, which emerged in the 350s, was dismissed as essentially political. It used credal vagueness to pave the way to doctrinal laxity. Hanson, however, argues that this was a theological tradition in its own right which was to have a significant future, particularly among the Goths. Here Hanson's contentions will carry weight, though some will feel he has exaggerated its differences, especially in the early stages, from the Neo-Arianism of Aetius and Eunomius. Though Homoean Arianism was relatively moderate and had its attractive representatives, it also embodied those features Hanson most readily criticizes in the Arian camp generally—an ultra-conservative readiness to restrict themselves to the language of Scripture as though that ensured the answer to every problem.

It is interesting that Hanson should eventually side with the expanded Nicene position, as endorsed at the Council of Constantinople of 381, for the very reason that Arian opponents realized that extra-Scriptural language was vital to elucidating the meaning of Scripture. Athanasius, and above all the Cappadocians, gain credit for the developments here. The idea of development is important to Hanson, who has no time for the idea that prior to the controversy the church had a Trinitarian orthodoxy, however loosely defined, which was challenged by Arianism. Instead, he sees this as a period of discovery where it would be foolish to talk in absolute terms of 'orthodox' and 'heretics'. The Arians did on occasions make good points, and had their own way of handling Scripture. We might describe it as a struggle between two types of religious conservatism. A novel way of looking at the controversy, but a profitable one!

It will please and interest evangelical scholars that Hanson (with good reason) sees the dispute as essentially a scriptural controversy. He has included a useful summary of the key texts which formed the battlelines in the controversy (pp. 832ff.), while his own concluding remarks are particularly pertinent for the theme of *Sola Scriptura*. This may be an excellent rallying cry against those who appeal outside of Scripture for their theology, but it will prove a slippery slope for those whose doctrine is based on inadequate understanding of the text and insufficient proficiency in the original languages. We may be amazed at how much progress was made at this time in spite of relatively poor detailed exegesis of Scripture. But, then, how many modern commentaries on John's gospel seriously grapple with the issues cast up by the Arian controversy?

Many newcomers to this field are bound to be disturbed by the seeming complexity of the detailed historical evidence. Hanson is not a man to shirk the details, but his book is so structured that the reader can select either the historical or doctrinal aspects of the controversy. One criticism on the historical level may be in order. It came as rather a surprise to me to read in the concluding chapter that the Emperor was the ultimate authority in matters of church doctrine; for the earlier narrative had hardly been working up to such a conclusion. Only the influence of Constantius II had been treated in detail, while other Emperors received but passing mention. It may be technically accurate to say that no doctrinal or general ecclesiastical policy could be implemented without the Emperor's good will. Canon law had not yet come to terms with the Constantinian revolution! But this is a far cry from saying that the Emperors could enforce their particular predilections on the church. Generally they were reacting to pressures laid upon them rather than canvassing a line of their own. And sometimes without their realizing it, they were being carried along by a minority group. This was particularly true of the frenetic activity of Constantius II during the 350s. How else can we explain the triumph at the end of that period of a minority group as a result of the double councils at Ariminum and Seleucia (359) and their sequel in Constantinople (360)? Hanson may be correct in asserting that all parties sought imperial support for their theology. But that does not mean that all used the same methods or that all had an equal measure of success. This is one area which requires further clarification.

But it would be churlish to labour this objection. Hanson has been reacting to approaches which have reduced the Arian controversy to little more than an ecclesiastical or even imperial power struggle. The greatest merit of this book is its insistence on the vital theological issues at stake. If Hanson has over-reacted, we can readily forgive the fault. In this case the fault comes near to being a virtue. No-one who has grappled with this book will be able to accept Gibbon's sneer that the church was split over a mere diphthong.

In short, our thanks are due to Professor Hanson for putting decades of research at our disposal and not least to the publishers for having the courage to print such a large book.

Graham Keith, Ayr.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Witness to Jesus Christ
John de Gruchy
London: Collins, 1988, 308 pp., £12.95 hb/£7.95 pb.

Modern theology has become increasingly self-conscious. Contemporary theologians write books on contemporary theologians. But the concern extends to earlier twentieth-century Fathers and with de Gruchy's work the Bonhoeffer industry continues to expand. Given such intellectual self-consciousness and literary expansion, one is entitled to demand that with every publication modern theology proves its worth. This publication surely succeeds. It skilfully focuses our attention on a thinker of distinctive force and fecundity who invested with unswerving integrity the word used to describe him in the subtitle: *witness* to Jesus Christ.

This is a collection of texts from Bonhoeffer in a series of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theological texts. Such collections are prone to lead an ambivalent existence. On the one hand, those seriously interested in an author want to read his works in full, not in extract. On the other, those who wish to skim the author are tempted to equate mastery of a selection with the mastery of thought. However, this selection contains some essays or addresses in full as well as extracts. And addicts of theological fast food will only show, if they are satisfied, that they have not properly digested what there is. But the main strength of the work is that by chronological arrangement of texts and selection within those texts it presents the case for trying to see Bonhoeffer's thought as a whole. All commentators agree that Bonhoeffer developed and changed, but the extent of continuity is debatable. In his introductory essay to the literature, the editor opts for a more 'continuist' approach and in a measure the selection itself confirms this view.

There are five sections: Theological Foundations; Christology and Reality; Confessing Christ Concretely; The Life of Free Responsibility; Christ in a World Come of Age. The first contains the early exploratory work in dogmatic and philosophical theology; the second leads us to where Bonhoeffer's pivotal theme, Christology, comes into its own. The third section is therefore the longest. The fourth introduces us to what is surely Bonhoeffer's greatest work, the unfinished *Ethics;* the fifth to what is undoubtedly his most radical, the prison writings. On the whole, de Gruchy nicely attains his goal of presenting the main threads of Bonhoeffer's theological contribution. There are some difficulties. Without knowing much about Kant and Hegel and their impact the reader will find the early selections quite hard. The force of part of the selection from *Ethics* is weakened because the crashing first words of that work are not included: 'The knowledge of good and evil seems to be the aim of all ethical reflection. The first task of Christian ethics is to invalidate this knowledge.' (These are words which probably must open *any* version of the *Ethics,* a work which is editorially taxing because of its literary state at the time of Bonhoeffer's death. A comparison between de Gruchy's proposed new arrangement for *Ethics* and the sixth German edition, also translated into English, will make de Gruchy's editorial comments here uncharacteristically unclear.) But selection is an invidious business and de Gruchy certainly deserves our gratitude.

And Bonhoeffer himself? These texts highlight again how deep in Scripture and Luther were Bonhoeffer's theological roots. If his Christology comes to shape his thought most decisively, it is at its best when embedded in reflection on faith and discipleship; it is less useful when the battlefronts are incarnation and resurrection. But when Bonhoeffer puts heart and mind to grasping the life of discipleship, his deep spirituality, profound independence, dedicated seriousness, courageous acumen and original intellectual power between them make him outstanding as a theologian in our century. There is no concealing the radicalism of 'religionless Christianity' and 'world come of age' that surfaced late in his life. (De Gruchy claims the latter concept was borrowed from Kant but despite Kant's actual words, Dilthey is surely a more promising source.) The health of that radicalism is debatable. But the health of the spirit is served by a plunge into Bonhoefferian waters. John de Gruchy has charted them for us encouragingly.

Stephen N. Williams, United Theological College, Aberystwyth.

The Trinitarian Faith. The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church

T. F. Torrance

Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 345 pp., £17.50.

In this substantial new work, Professor T. F. Torrance offers an account of what he sees as the main lines of Christian orthodoxy through an exposition of the chief articles of the Nicene confession of faith.

An initial chapter traces the links between faith and godliness in what the book constantly refers to as 'the Nicene theology'. As in the series of other works on the nature of theological thinking, Torrance presents his conviction that faith arises from cognitive commitment to the self-presentation of God in Jesus Christ. Faith, and therefore the knowledge which takes its rise in faith, derives its force and truth from the divine realities to which it is open and which press themselves upon the believer. Faith is thus characterized by its 'open range' – its receptivity towards revelation in the incarnation of God.

The dogmatic substance of the book is opened up in the next two chapters which expound the doctrine of God as Father and Creator. Here the primacy of Christology in building a doctrine of God receives heavy emphasis. The Father–Son relation is determinative of how we are to understand the nature of God and of God's relationship to the world. This leads to two further chapters on Christology and soteriology, in which Athanasius provides Torrance with his chief conversation partner. Torrance firmly rejects any attempt to sever the ontological bond between Christ and God the Father. On his account, to weaken this bond is to empty the gospel proclamation of any significance; it is only on the basis of a union of being between God and Jesus Christ that the atoning work of Christ can be seen as effectual divine action. Similarly, great emphasis is laid on the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ: as both God and 'man in our place', Jesus Christ is able to bridge the gulf between ourselves and God, and so act as the true mediator. Something of the same kind of argument is used in expounding the notion of the divinity of the Spirit in chapter 7: since the Spirit is the presence of the very being of God in self-communication to the world, the Spirit's divinity has to be affirmed. This leads to an account of the church as the body of Christ. To make such an affirmation is to see the Spirit as effecting an ontological union between God and humanity: hence ecclesiology is inseparable from the doctrines of Christ and the Spirit. A final chapter seeks to draw the threads together by rooting the entire discussion in an account of the Nicene doctrine of the triunity of God.

The tone of the book – rich, warm, declaratory, kerygmatic – draws the reader along, and there is considerable excitement to be found in these reflections from a magisterial patristic and dogmatic scholar. Moreover, evangelical theologians have a great deal to learn from those who insist (rightly) that Christian orthodoxy does not begin in Wittenberg, Geneva or Princeton. For all that, I found myself at the end of the book with a measure of unease on a number of points. Historically, Torrance's account rests on two premises. First, there is a straight line from the NT (itself a theologically uniform book) to the theology of Nicaea. Second, the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy in the early patristic period can be drawn very clearly. Both these premises may or may not be correct. But they do stand in need of much fuller analysis than Torrance offers, if the book can fulfil its aim of presenting normative Christian doctrine. The arguments against those premises are sufficiently strong to warrant very serious attention: recent work on the theology of Arius, for instance, suggests both that the issues are more complex than Torrance allows and that early Christianity may have been much less theologically firm than the rather hectoring tone of the book would have us believe. Torrance's silence on these issues does not help his case, and gives the book a rather ahistorical tone.

This leads to a second worry. The book does almost nothing to relate the work of Nicene theologians to the wider religious, political and institutional history of early Christianity. The result is a curiously intellectualist presentation: the theological texts under consideration appear as detached, quasi-timeless statements brought into being simply by the fact that their authors submitted to the claims of God upon their minds. But is that really a credible account of the functioning of fourth-century religious institutions, or of irascible characters like Athanasius?

A final anxiety: despite the massive number of references to patristic authors, there are very few quotations in the book. Torrance tends to proceed (as in other works) by paraphrase, leaving the reader unable to judge the appropriateness of his exposition without exhaustive work on the same primary texts. Given the very strong convictions which Torrance brings to the material, this is especially regrettable. Moreover, sources from different epochs and places seem to be drawn together in a rather haphazard fashion: an account of faith in Nicene theology on pp. 20f., for example, refers to Hilary of Poitiers, Paul's Romans, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, and the liturgy of St James. Where or what is Nicaea?

In sum: this book is an exhilarating read, and the seriousness with which it treats Christian orthodoxy is exemplary. But readers should beware of generalization, over-confident assertion, and an historical attitude which borders on the cavalier.

John Webster, Wycliffe College, Toronto.

The Identity of the Church

A. T. and R. P. C. Hanson

London: SCM, 1987, 276 pp., £10.50.

This 'Guide to Recognizing the Contemporary Church' by distinguished Anglican theological twins ranges more widely than its title suggests. It includes chapters on orthodoxy and doctrinal development, as well as treating ecclesiology expansively, with special reference to ecumenical issues. A number of central concerns will occasion no surprise to readers familiar with earlier books by the Hansons. The stance adopted is robustly Anglican, capable of declaring a plague on both Protestant and Roman alike – but equally of recognizing extensive kinship and common ground with both. Hansonian Anglicanism unambiguously rejects the conventional doctrine of apostolic succession – sunk without trace by historical scholarship, but no more will it allow other, for example presbyterian, claims to possess a uniquely 'scriptural' ministry. It insists on a rigorously critical handling of both Scripture (with no time for its infallibility or inerrancy) and tradition. Indeed, the discussion is characterized throughout by a certain hard-nosed, no-nonsense realism. In church union schemes it is a waste of effort to try to prevent the intransigent

'rump' remaining outside. However attractive and beneficial a reformed papacy might be, the chances of a reform thorough enough to satisfy the Hansons are scarcely worth entertaining. Their criticism of Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church pulls no punches; its very limited 'concessions and modifications of the old-fashioned rigorist view' are welcome, but only as 'the starting point for the working out of a drastically altered doctrine of the church'.

But perhaps the authors should have been more rigorously critical of their own stance. 'The two crucial points for the Anglican form of ministry, which Anglicans cannot forgo' are 'episcopal government and the principle of priesthood, whereby the bishop, the priest *par excellence*, can delegate priesthood in a limited form to other priests, presbyters or ministers'. It is disconcerting to find 'the principle of priesthood' in effect added to the Lambeth Quadrilateral (which mentions only the historic episcopate) — and at a time when ecumenical discussion seems at last to be taking seriously its absence from NT accounts of ministry (*cf. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*). Furthermore, when episcopacy is commended on the sole ground of being 'surely the traditional, universal form of ministry', a mild demurrer is called for. As our authors well know, the bishop of a village in Roman Africa in the third century has very little beyond the name in common with, say, the Bishop of London today; his counterpart is to be found in the leading minister of a local church community.

The chief interest of this work consists in its being a contribution to contemporary discussion, both Anglican and ecumenical. It does not break new scholarly ground, although it draws upon wide learning as well as varied experience of the church in different parts of the world. Its ecclesiology is an inclusive one: the Society of Friends and the Salvation Army may not practise baptism, which is virtually the Hansons' sole boundary to the church, but even so they are not excluded. Most evangelical Anglicans will want a firmer doctrine of the church with a more extended biblical basis, but many will be willing to go some part of the way with this exposition.

The work is enlivened throughout by crisp expression of opinion. 'The *Book of Common Prayer* will sooner or later become a significant historical relic and nothing more.' 'It is likely that the charismatic movement will blow itself out in the next few years, having served its purpose.' 'One must not condemn the leaders of the African Independent churches, but one cannot refrain from deploring them.' The Hanson brothers are not reluctant to provoke. They will probably be disappointed, but perhaps not surprised (if they are realistic), if they provoke as much dissent as assent.

D. F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh.

Science and Creation — The Search for Understanding

John Polkinghorne

London: SPCK, 1988, 113 pp., £4.95.

This is the third in a trilogy of books emanating from the pen of the former Professor of Mathematical Physics at Cambridge and Chaplain of Trinity Hall examining the relations between science and religion. The main purpose of this most recent volume is to focus on specific areas of theological thinking and 'to explore those features of the physical world which arise from the behaviour of complex physical systems'. This he does in a splendid programmatical way by drawing upon examples from the very frontiers of modern scientific research at both the micro level (Quantum Field Theory) and the cosmic level (General Relativity Theory) and providing a fruitful interaction with both contemporary and traditional theology.

The 'way in' to such a dialogue for Polkinghorne is through natural theology. Having provided a concise and helpful survey of natural theology's long and chequered history, he considers its value for today with specific reference to the works of Torrance and Lonergan. It is argued that physics requires a metaphysic for its intellectual completion and that it is theism which makes that provision. However, the world of physics, let alone the world of common experience, reveals that there is disorder as well as order, chance as well as necessity interlacing with each other. The implication this has for our view of God as Creator is, according to Polkinghorne, that God is no longer to be seen as the cosmic Craftsman but more as the 'divine Juggler'. Lawful necessity can be understood as reflecting God's faithfulness to his creation, whilst chance reflects God's vulnerability in bestowing the gift of freedom.

As one who is committed to a unified view of truth, Polkinghorne makes very short, but effective, work of both reductionism and idealism, opting instead for a 'complementary metaphysic of mind/matter' in a manner not wholly dissimilar from that championed by Donald MacKay, whose work, perhaps surprisingly, the writer seems to be unaware of. It is maintained that what unites both theology and science is their common concern to explore the way things are, with both attempting to 'behave in terms of the nature of the object'.

In a most stimulating final chapter, Polkinghorne draws together the main strands of his argument under the title 'Theological Science'. He shows how the church's christological understanding arose out of this desire to do justice to the data, no matter how 'odd' or complex that data might be. To be sure, it is not suggested that the church simply provided the interpretation to a given fact, but that in Christ the interpretation is *part* of its facticity. Accordingly for Polkinghorne, the incarnation is the perfect fusion of symbol and event.

Professor Polkinghorne has performed a remarkable and admirable task in so short a compass. In dealing with theoretical physics, he reveals his skills as a first-rate communicator, making accessible to the non-specialist the substance of such ideas and their relevance to the scientific–theological debate. His positive and productive approach to the mutual insights that science and theology can provide is most commendable. There is, however, an asymmetry in this relation in that it is theology which provides science with the deeper unifying principle.

There are, however, a number of question marks that we would wish to place against various points in his thesis. In the opening chapter Polkinghorne fails to make the important distinction between natural *theology* and natural *revelation*. Indeed, he cites certain scriptural passages such as Romans 1:20 as encouraging the attempt to pursue a natural theology. At most, such passages may legitimate belief in natural revelation, but this is a far cry from the natural theology of Aquinas or Swinburne, the difference lying in their epistemologies.

In relation to developing a natural theology, Polkinghorne cites with approval Bernard Lonergan's contention that the quest of the intellect *is* the quest for God such that 'God is the unrestricted act of understanding'. But this seems to rest on a fundamental category mistake. To suggest that the scientist in his quest for knowledge is, although he may be unaware of the fact, in search of God, is like saying that the literary critic in his attempt to understand *Hamlet* is really trying to understand the man Shakespeare. C. S. Lewis (*Fernseeds and Elephants*) has pointed out what an incredibly speculative and misleading exercise it can be when one tries to move from one area of study (the writing) to the other (the mind of the author). One can see how a scientist qua scientist might become dissatisfied with the conceptual limitations of his discipline in being unable to provide a 'metaphysical home' for his work, and thus for this he turns, qua honest enquirer, to theology, but his pursuit in one field (science) is not to be confused by identification with his pursuit in the other (theology), although the two can be related.

One other serious question mark may also be placed alongside the writer's treatment of 'chance' within the creative purposes of God. One suspects that the theological price being paid here is too high, namely the undermining of the doctrines of God's sovereignty and providence. What may be 'chance' to us (epistemological uncertainty and/or ontological indeterminancy) need not be so to God who knows all things and upholds the universe according to the word of his power. Although Polkinghorne affirms the biblical belief that God will ultimately achieve his loving purpose for his creation, the 'vulnerability' model he proposes offers no guarantee of this and it is difficult to see how his position significantly differs in this regard from that of Process Theology which he criticizes.

These reservations notwithstanding, one would wish to welcome this excellent book and warmly commend it to all those who wish to engage effectively in this important area of study.

Melvin Tinker, Keele University.

First Aid in Pastoral Care

Leslie Virgo (ed.)

Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987, 276 pp., £6.95.

Canon Leslie Virgo, Adviser in Pastoral Care and Counselling for the Diocese of Rochester, has brought together a valuable series of essays on aspects of pastoral care to produce what is offered as an introductory handbook. The chapters, many of which first appeared as articles in *The Expository Times*, cover general issues (the biblical basis, pastoral skills, the needs of those giving pastoral care) and specific areas (age-related issues, marriage and sexuality, race, work, prisoners). Intriguingly there are chapters on the charismatic movement and group work as first aid, and refreshingly, a chapter on pastoral care and worship.

The seventeen contributors are all very skilled in their fields, and the level of the book is aimed at a wide readership of the pastoral caring professions. This is a valuable first resource for theological students and pastors, although each topic is necessarily rather cursorily treated. Some chapters have helpful reference to further referral agencies, and some — but sadly not all — have suggestions for further reading.

While the Christian assumptions of the contributors are clear, the theological basis of the chapters is very variable. Leslie Virgo himself provides a sensitive opening chapter on 'the biblical basis', arguing that the pastoral caring role is a conscious acceptance that the carers know themselves to be engaged in the caring response of God to human beings. Pastoral care goes beyond psychological understanding into the implications of God as one who both blesses

and curses. Both Testaments point to the blessing of God in giving the power for life: 'pastoral care is the practical working out and involvement with and in the God who blesses'. But the curse is the deadly 'dissolution that takes place in the soul'. And in pastoral care, blessing and curse are experienced together: human life is lived in a tension. The discovery of life through death is to experience resurrection as the fulfilment of blessing. Pastoral care moves us forward into resurrection.

Not all the contributors have such a clear theological undergirding, and in some, the agenda seems to be dictated by psychological or sociological insights to which a Christian perspective is rather added on.

There are some really surprising gaps. 'Stress', for example, only gets a brief mention in the chapter on adolescence. 'Anxiety' does not appear in the index, and though 'depression' is mentioned in various chapters (on family, mid-life, suicide, bereavement), one would have thought that such a pressing problem of pastoral care deserved a chapter on its own. Likewise, the care of the divorced only merits nine lines in the chapter on marriage. There is nothing on incest or child abuse.

Thankfully there is a chapter — all too often forgotten in manuals of pastoral care — on the needs of the carer, though the particular stresses found in clergy marriages and families are not really addressed.

There are timely warnings about some of the dangers inherent in some forms of charismatic spirituality, and a most sensible discussion of psychic disturbance. A great lack in the book, however, is any careful consideration of the relationship between pastoral care and the ministry of prayer and sacraments on the one hand, and of the relationship between pastoral counselling and spiritual direction on the other. The assumption of many chapters is of a one-to-one counselling relationship between pastor and person in need, but that model needs to be evaluated in the light both of the corporate nature of Christian growth and discipleship within the Body of Christ, and also of the social context within which pastoral care is offered. The individualized pastoral model needs also to be constantly evaluated in the light of the close links in Scripture between emotional, social and spiritual well-being.

The sociological and psychological perspectives on which many chapters are based provide vital insights for which the pastor can be grateful. But these changing perspectives need constantly to be evaluated in the light of the gospel, and a critical conversation undertaken between theology and the human sciences. There is not enough such critical conversation in this book, which, while good in many ways as far as it goes, does not really engage in the interdisciplinary conversations which are needed to ensure that pastoral care is rooted in the gospel.

David Atkinson, Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

Book notes

Biblical Doctrines
B. B. Warfield
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988, 665 pp., £9.50.

Studies in Theology
B. B. Warfield
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988, 671 pp., £9.50.

Banner of Truth have reissued the second and ninth volumes of the Oxford University Press series of Warfield's collected writings, which first appeared in 1929 and 1932 respectively. The former volume contains 16 articles on a variety of biblical doctrines. Thirteen of these are also found in the better known series edited by S. G. Craig in the 1940s and 1950s, eight in *Biblical and Theological Studies* and five in *The Person and Work of Christ*. The latter volume (*Studies in Theology*) contains 21 articles on a variety of theological themes. Only eight of these are readily available elsewhere: five in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, two in *The Person and Work of Christ* and one in the 1970 reprint of *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield* (vol. 1). The relation between the different editions of Warfield's articles is as tortuous as that with C. S. Lewis and the potential buyer will do well to check that he does not already possess half the contents of the book in earlier incarnations! Warfield fans will be grateful that more of the master's writings have been made readily available.

Roman Catholicism: A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective
Paul G. Schrotenboer
Singapore: World Evangelical Fellowship, 1987; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1988, 99 pp., $5.95.

This slim volume is a significant document produced by the World Evangelical Fellowship in a series of its meetings in consultation with Roman Catholic observers. It expresses greater sympathy for Roman Catholic views than do many evangelical works while at the same time clearly exposing those areas where Roman Catholicism and Protestantism remain incompatible. The two branches of Christianity, for example, have come much closer to each other on doctrines of biblical authority and justification by faith but remain seemingly as far apart as ever on certain issues regarding Mary and the sacraments. All theological students should be aware of the developments outlined in this little book.

Truth and Community: Diversity and Its Limits in the Ecumenical Movement
Michael Kinnamon
Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1988, ix + 118 pp., $8.95.

Evangelicals who pay scant attention to the ecumenical movement will be surprised to learn about some of the directions it has recently taken. Two of the most significant include a diminution of attempts at institutional unity at the expense of the distinctives of individual theological traditions (one of the most objectionable features of an earlier ecumenism for many evangelicals) and increasingly positive overtures toward evangelical theology (favours not always returned in kind!). This book continues both of these developments and reproaches both the WCC and fundamentals for preaching truncated versions of the gospel. Even though many evangelicals may feel that Kinnamon tolerates too much diversity, his discussion deserves a wide hearing.

Inerrancy and Hermeneutic
Harvie M. Conn (ed.)
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1988, 276 pp., $13.95

This is one of the more important works among an otherwise overly large body of North American evangelical literature on biblical inerrancy and infallibility. All of the contributors teach at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, which carries on the conservative Reformed tradition of the old Princeton Seminary before it abandoned evangelical distinctives. For the most part, the contributors present the most recent and most nuanced stages of the discussions on biblical authority and show that commitment to the concept of inerrancy is not incompatible with a moderate appropriation of biblical criticism and a relatively sophisticated understanding of hermeneutics.

Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.
John S. Feinberg (ed.)
Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1988, xiii + 410 pp., $14.95.

To what extent can the major themes of the OT be compared with those of the NT and to what extent do they contrast? Major theological systems have been built at opposite ends of the spectrum of answers to this question, most notably covenant theology (continuity) and dispensationalism (discontinuity). This collection of essays pairs contributors from these contrasting perspectives on such issues as salvation, the law, the people of God and the kingdom. Strikingly, those who have traditionally emphasized discontinuity move more closely toward a centrist position than those who have emphasized continuity and, in this volume at least, produce the freshest and most persuasive syntheses.

Craig Blomberg

BOOK REVIEWS

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20)