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# **Church and Politics:**

## **some guidelines from the New Testament**

**BRUCE N. KAYE**

### **Introduction**

The full title of this paper is long and complicated: 'Church and Politics: the changing of laws and socio-political structures, and the relation of church and state.' I take it that the basic question at issue here is how Christians today are to go about improving the society in which they live. How are they to analyse and evaluate their political and legal situation?

A variety of methods might be used in an attempt to deal with this question. One could go straight into the analysis of the present situation, identifying the points at which the present politico-legal situation had relevance for Christian moral values and trying to relate those values to the analysis. One might take a more historical approach, seeking to identify the principles upon which Christians in the past have sought to relate to their society and to attempt some projections into the present situation.

For my part, I have chosen a method which arises out of my own particular interest in life, namely the study of the New Testament. I propose to conduct this enquiry by asking how the New Testament writers analyse and evaluate their politico-legal position. This means looking first of all at some of the material relating to Jesus, then Paul, and finally the tradition represented in 1 Peter and the Johannine literature. If you are hoping for some prescriptive guidelines about the way society should be ordered from the New Testament, then I am afraid you may be in for a disappointment. Yet it is in part for this very reason that the bulk of this paper will be concerned with the consideration of the New Testament material.<sup>1</sup> At the conclusion of this survey I would like to make some suggestions about the relevance of this material for today, and more particularly to suggest a way of dealing with such questions which does justice to the emphases of the New Testament, and the needs of the contemporary situation.

## **A THE NEW TESTAMENT MATERIAL**

### **1) Jesus**

Two particular passages, the question about tax to Caesar and the

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one about the Temple tax, together with the general question of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, relate to our subject.

a) *Caesar's tax* (Mark 12:13-17; Matt.22:15-22; Luke 20:20-26).

This particular passage comes in a series of conflict stories during the final period of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem. It may be that the actual saying was preserved in the early church because of debates between Christians and Jews about political involvement.<sup>2</sup> We really have no way of being certain about that. It is clear, however, that the saying 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's' comes in a conflict setting in the Gospels.<sup>3</sup> Jesus displays himself as the master Rabbi in putting his opponents to rout, and then driving them away with his own final challenging question to them about the Messiah. In terms of the evangelists, this triumph of Jesus over the rabbis of Jerusalem is one of the main points of the passage.<sup>4</sup>

A further point is the way in which the guile and deception of the opponents of Jesus are displayed, and some commentators have suggested that this thrust in the passage points to the emphasis being on the second half of Jesus' saying.<sup>5</sup> Thus Jesus' opponents are being told to render to God what is his.

From the viewpoint of our question, there is no substantial content that we can use from Jesus' answer. There is nothing to help answer the question 'What is Caesar's?', either in general terms, or in any form that would enable disciples of Jesus to use this formula in another circumstance to help answer such a specific question.

There may be just one hint, however, that we should tuck away for later reference. Jesus' questioners come asking, 'Shall we pay taxes?', using the uncompounded form of the verb 'to give', Jesus replies using the form *apodote*, 'give back'; the form that is used by Paul in Romans 13:7.<sup>6</sup> That may imply that Jesus acknowledged the legitimacy of taxation demands; if not in general, then in the particular case here.<sup>7</sup> I do not think that Jesus' reply can be taken to rule out revolution, and I do not think that Jesus can be interpreted as rejecting the Zealot way in this answer.<sup>8</sup>

b) *The Temple tax* (Matt.17:22-27)

Every free male Jew over the age of twenty was obliged to pay each year a half-shekel of silver for the upkeep of the Temple. Authorized collectors gathered the tax outside Jerusalem, even though Jews were, strictly speaking, obliged to take it to Jerusalem themselves. There were certain accepted exemptions from this tax, and rabbis often claimed exemption. Jesus was, from the point of view of the collectors, not a straightforward case, though they do seem to expect that he will pay.<sup>9</sup>

Jesus' argument does not follow the various rabbinic lines, but rather takes the quite general example of the oriental king who does not tax his own household. Because Jesus and his disciples belong to God's household, and are in his service, they are free from the tax.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, Jesus does pay it; but for a very specific reason, 'so as not to offend them'. 'Them' in this phrase is almost certainly the tax collectors,<sup>11</sup> and the offence would be that they were led into a conflict between the Jerusalem authorities, to whom they were responsible, and Jesus.

Here we have Jesus rendering to the Jewish authorities a tax from which he regarded himself as free, because of the implications of his action for others involved. Once more we notice that Jesus does not take a radical view of the legitimacy of taxation generally. He accepts the tax, and bases his own argument on an illustration that implies the legitimacy of the taxation for those who are not of the household of the king. The point we are left with in relation to our question is that this analysis of the legal position of Jesus and his disciples brings to light the principle that particular action may be determined by the consideration of the moral position of others involved, as well as the actual legal position of the disciple himself.

### *c) Jesus' trial*

This is not the place to go into all the details of the legal aspects of Jesus' various so-called trials. The accounts in the New Testament, and the discussion of them, are sufficiently well known for me simply to make three points. First, that the New Testament writers consider Jesus' death to be the result of hypocritical and deceitful actions by wicked men. Almost all the significant participants are so regarded: Judas, the high priestly group, Pilate, and the fickle Jerusalem crowd. Secondly, the procedures of Jesus' arrest and trial were unjust. In the strict legal sense, at least, certain aspects of the proceedings were irregular; and in the broad sense Jesus is condemned on the testimony of false witnesses, by a legal authority who could find no ground for execution, on a charge which was patently political. He was a just man unjustly executed. Thirdly, however, this death of Jesus was according to the set purpose and will of God.

This combination of factors draws attention to an important undercurrent in the thinking of the New Testament writers about their social and legal position. Their commitment is first and foremost to the purposes and will of God. The legal penalties which they suffer, justly or unjustly, are thought by them neither to invalidate nor necessarily to hinder those purposes. This gives them a certain detachment from the social and legal structure of their day. They are not finally committed to it; their citizenship is elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

## 2) Paul

### Acts

Before coming to the material in Paul's letters, we should note briefly the references in Acts to Paul's experience of the civil authorities. There are five principal references: Paul and Silas and the magistrates at Philippi (Acts 16:19-40), Gallio's judgement at Corinth (Acts 18:12-17), the riotous assembly at Ephesus (Acts 19:28-41), Paul's use of his Roman citizenship with the tribune in Jerusalem (Acts 22:25-29), and Paul's appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11,12). The more important of these references for us are those where Paul takes an initiative or action: that is to say, the use of his citizenship in Philippi and Jerusalem, and his appeal to Caesar. In the case of Paul's use of his citizenship at Philippi, he probably had in mind the position of the infant church which he was leaving behind. It was better for them that the founder should not leave under a legal cloud. In the case of the exchange with the tribune in Jerusalem, Paul is using his position for his own protection. It may have been that he was not recognizably a citizen, and he may not have been in the habit of carrying the metal certificates of citizenship often carried by merchants. Claudius Lysias clearly accepts the claim and treats Paul accordingly.

The use of the law for self-protection in this way probably also explains the appeal to Caesar in Acts 25. When faced with the prospect of the charges against him being transferred to Jerusalem, Paul's response is a politico-legal one. He sees that from a legal point of view the matter could go either way. He could be protected by the Roman authorities, or he could, with complete legality, be turned over to the Jewish authorities to be dealt with as an offender against a religious law about the Temple in Jerusalem. Paul did not need much political sagacity to see that he would not receive a very sympathetic or even a fair hearing in that quarter. Thus he uses his legal right to appeal to Caesar and keep the matter clearly in the jurisdiction of the Roman authorities. Equally, Festus responds with a politico-legal decision. He probably had a legal right to release Paul even after he had made his appeal to Caesar, but from the point of view of his relations with his superiors and his subordinates this would certainly have been an unwise line of action. Sherwin-White puts it nicely:

It is not a question of law, but of the relations between the Emperor and his subordinates, and of that element of non-constitutional power which the Romans called *auctoritas*, prestige, on which the supremacy of the Princeps so largely depended. No sensible man with hopes of promotion would dream of short-circuiting the appeal to Caesar unless he had specific authority to do so.<sup>13</sup>

### The letters of Paul

In Paul's letters there are many references to the social and legal situation of himself and his readers. It would be surprising if it were otherwise. He touches on his own experience of the social authorities

in different places in his account of the trials of an apostle,<sup>14</sup> and Philippians is written from prison.<sup>15</sup> Paul's readers are involved in social hospitality generally,<sup>16</sup> situations of marriage and divorce,<sup>17</sup> slavery,<sup>18</sup> and the law courts.<sup>19</sup> The most instructive passages in Paul's letters for our purpose are those in which he provides an analysis of the politico-legal situation to which he is speaking, and the two most important of these are Romans 13:1-7 and 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7, though we will need to look also at his comments about civil litigation before the public courts in 1 Corinthians 6.

#### a) *Romans 13*

I have argued elsewhere<sup>20</sup> that in this passage Paul is referring to the particular Roman authorities of his day, and that on the basis of his assessment of them he makes the theological statement with which this passage opens. It is not necessary to go over the arguments in support of these conclusions here. Rather, I would like simply to note a few points before going on to the analysis of the argument of the passage.

If the time of writing Romans is to be set within AD 54-59, then the contemporary sources suggest that there was settled government in the Empire, and a number of sources particularly draw attention to the humane influence on imperial affairs of Seneca and Burrus.<sup>21</sup> It is quite unfair to assume that the inadequacies of Nero's later rule are present from the beginning of his reign. When we look at the people to whom some sort of obligation is enjoined in the passage, it is not possible to be precise about their identification. *Timē* not only means worship or esteem, but it is also used in a legal sense for damages such as would be settled by a court;<sup>22</sup> *apodounai* is used in this context for the payment of such damages.<sup>23</sup> *Timē* also has a political sense, used to describe the value at which a citizen's property was rated for taxation.<sup>24</sup> *Phobos* has a range of meanings, including the respect which one would give to someone with authority: a magistrate, someone with family or clientele *potestas*. It is not possible to be certain about the precise nuance of *phoros* and *telos*,<sup>25</sup> but they clearly refer to taxes. The picture of the sword is most likely a general picture, or one taken from the capitol.

The crucial question is the analysis of the argument of the passage, and it may be of some help if I were to outline the way in which John Calvin interpreted this passage so as to highlight my own interpretation. Calvin claims that the rulers of the time 'not only hated piety, but also persecuted religion with the most hostile feelings',<sup>26</sup> and Paul seeks to establish the authority of the magistrates more carefully for this and other reasons. In doing so, Paul 'first lays down a general precept, which briefly includes what he afterwards says: secondly he subjoins an exposition and a proof of his precept.'<sup>27</sup> The general precept is found in verse 1: 'We ought to be subject to magistrates'.

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The reason for this is also in verse 1: 'because they are constituted by God's ordination.'

Calvin takes verse 3 as support for the initial exhortation—'the causative *gar*, for, is to be referred to the first proposition, and not to the last verse'—and he also sees this verse as giving a 'ground of utility'. In other words, government is a divine provision 'to provide for the tranquillity of the good, and to restrain the waywardness of the wicked.'<sup>28</sup> Calvin is all too well aware that not all governments behave in a manner of which he would approve, but he takes Paul to be speaking of the 'true, and, as it were, of the native duty of the magistrate, from which, however, they who hold power often degenerate.' Bad government does not, in Calvin's view, remove the obligation to submit. On this verse he argues:

. . .princes do never so far abuse their power. by harassing the good and innocent, that they do not retain in their tyranny some kind of just government; there can then be no tyranny which does not in some respects assist in consolidating the society of men.

This is a pragmatic argument which would be questioned by many. Can a tyranny never reach the point where, on pragmatic grounds, it is better to have a rebellion than the tyranny—with a view to, at least, a more tolerable tyranny?

Calvin sees further support for the basic exhortation of the passage in verse 5:

What he had at first commanded as to the rendering of obedience to magistrates, he now briefly repeats, but with some addition, and that is—that we ought to obey them, not only on the ground of necessity arising from man, but that we thereby obey God.

In other words, even if the power of the magistrates to punish were removed, the obligation to submit would still be present. At the conclusion to his comments on verse 7 Calvin says:

Now this passage confirms what I have already said—that we ought to obey kings and governors, whoever they may be, not because we are constrained, but because it is a service acceptable to God, for he will have them not only feared, but also honoured by a voluntary respect.

Calvin's understanding of the argument is therefore as follows:

statement of basic general principle	13:1
general supporting considerations (they are ordained by God)	13:1
supporting argument of utility (magistrates, even bad ones, provide for the good of mankind)	13:3
repetition of basic exhortation	13:5
supporting argument of conscience	13:5

The logic of the argument as analysed by Calvin is basically deductive. A fundamental proposition is given, and certain consequences developed from it. I would like to suggest that the logic of the argu-

ment is quite the opposite to this, that the passage proceeds by way of explanation, and that as the explanation is developed the ground for the initial statement becomes clear. That initial statement is thus the conclusion drawn from the material in the passage, not the premise upon which the rest of the passage is built.

The argument can therefore be analysed like this:

- 13:1 the basic exhortation—'be subject to the existing powers'  
the basic claim on which the exhortation is grounded—  
'there is no authority except from God and the existing  
authorities have been arranged by God'
- 13:2 an implication of this general statement—'those who  
resist will incur judgement'
- 13:3 an explanation of this claim—'the rulers are not a terror to  
good works but to bad'

This explanation is developed in the second half of verse 3 and in verse 4 by telling the readers that if they wish to have the praise of the ruler, and not to be in fear of him, then they should do good and not evil.

- 13:5 a repetition of the basic exhortation, with two supporting  
considerations, wrath and conscience.
- 13:6,7 further particular forms of the general exhortation.

The reference to wrath in verse 5 may go back to the statement in verse 2—'those who resist will incur judgement'—and the mention of conscience may go back to the references in verses 3 and 4 to good and evil behaviour. However, verses 3 and 4 are the crux of the problem. Can they really be taken to refer in general terms to 'the state'? Calvin clearly finds this a problem in his exegesis, and he is not alone amongst commentators in this respect. These verses are clearly not intended to persuade the readers to do good, and not to do evil. Rather they are intended to say something about the rulers. The difficulty is that as a general statement it cannot stand because it is so manifestly not true, and it is so unconditional. Paul does not say 'the ruler should . . .' or 'if the ruler . . .'; he states, as a bald unconditional fact, that 'the ruler is . . .'. Given this, and the historical circumstances at the time of writing, it is difficult to resist the idea that Paul is here speaking about the particular authorities of his day.

If we accept that Paul is referring to the particular authorities of his day in verses 3 and 4, then we have here an argument that combines particular descriptive material and theological evaluation. Because he is able to say the things he does about the authorities of his day, Paul is prepared to speak of them as ordained by God.

This analysis of Romans 13 is therefore very significant, because it shows that the passage is a theological evaluation of the politico-legal situation of Paul and his readers. It is therefore very important to identify the criteria by which Paul makes this evaluation.



Paul approves of these authorities because they approve good works, and are a terror to evil. Thus the authority is the minister of God, in relation to the readers, for good (*eis to agathon*). Unfortunately this one general criterion seems to be the only specific thing that we can draw from this passage, in terms of evaluating criteria. However, two other points can, I think, be made. First, Paul treats the politico-legal structure more or less as a whole. He exhorts his readers to pay *all* their dues, taxes, honour and respect; as well, of course, as submission. Secondly, Paul draws the idea of conscience into this argument. This means that, involved in the evaluation in which he has been engaged, Paul has had to make some particular judgements. This introduces us to the general question of how Paul thinks moral decisions are made. That he presumed his readers should make such moral decisions, and should have such discernment as to enable them to make sound judgements, may be seen from his prayer in Philippians 1:9-11. However, we shall return to this general question later; for the moment we must look at two other passages in Paul's letters.

b) *Thessalonians 2:6-7*

These verses come in a passage which is very difficult to interpret with confidence, and there is wide variety of opinion amongst scholars. The passage is relevant to our considerations only if the 'restraining one' in verses 6 and 7 is understood as referring to the Empire.<sup>29</sup> At the present time the man of lawlessness is being restrained by the Empire (or the Emperor), and the *parousia* of Christ will not be until the man of lawlessness has been revealed. This is part of an argument to rebut the idea that the day of the Lord has come. In the present situation, therefore, the Empire, the Roman state, has a positive and restraining role within the purposes of God. That role is here thought of within the framework of eschatology, and is, in this framework, a temporary role.<sup>30</sup>

The interpretation of this passage cannot be settled apart from the interpretation of Paul's eschatology generally, and in the Thessalonian letters in particular. Without going into detail here,<sup>31</sup> I may be permitted to say that I do not think that there is any connection between ethical laxity or disorder and eschatological interest in the Thessalonian letters, nor do I think that the language of imminence in Paul's eschatology necessarily implies chronological proximity.<sup>32</sup>

This passage does contribute one point for our question. The state, insofar as it maintains order in the body politic, may be seen in that activity as part of the purposes of God which reach their culmination in the day of the Lord. Order, therefore, is a positive criterion, though by no means a sufficient criterion for a favourable evaluation of a particular political situation.

**c) 1 Corinthians 6:1-11**

This passage need not detain us long. It is necessary only to point out that Paul is in no way suggesting that Christians should withdraw from the legal institutions of their society. There was provision in contemporary Roman law for private arbitration.<sup>33</sup> Paul's objection in this passage is to private disagreements between Christians being settled by public litigation. They should settle such things within their own fellowship. In that fellowship there should be someone wise enough to settle such disputes.

It might be helpful at this point to draw together the conclusions of this survey of Paul's letters. It does not need emphasizing that the results do not seem very extensive or very specific. Romans 13 yielded to us only the general point that a favourable evaluation of the politico-legal structure was made if it operated for the good, where the good was defined in the quite general terms of Paul's ethical framework. We noted also that he took the situation as a whole, and that the evaluating was to be thought of within the general pattern of ethical decision-making reflected in Paul's letters. We noticed also that in 2 Thessalonians the role of the state fitted into Paul's general eschatological framework, and that it served to promote order in the present situation.

We can conveniently draw attention to 1 Timothy 2:1-7 at this point, even though the authorship of this document is a matter of some dispute. It seems to me that this passage may be seen as summing up the points just made and elaborating them in one respect, namely, the definition of the 'good'. Here, what is good and acceptable in the sight of God is that Christians might 'live a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.' The writer then goes on immediately to say that 'God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.'<sup>34</sup>What is generally true in Paul's letters about the good, is here spelled out in close relationship to statements about what is sought, or to be prayed for, by Christians in regard to their politico-legal situation, namely, that men might be saved through Jesus Christ.

**3) 1 Peter and John**

So far I have been at pains to emphasize the positive character of the New Testament evaluations of the social order. There is, however, another side to the picture, and it is represented by the Johannine writings and 1 Peter. This side is more concerned to emphasize that the Christian does not belong to this world, that he is a stranger and a pilgrim, and that his lot here is to bear his inevitable suffering well.

In the Gospel according to John we are repeatedly shown that the present institutions of Judaism are to pass away, and that the kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. The Temple is to go; the presence of

God is now to be seen in Christ's risen body. The nation is to be taken away from the leaders of Israel and the worship of God is not to be defined in terms of location. This emphasis in John's Gospel arises from his conviction that in Jesus everything has been fulfilled—grace and truth are to be found in him. Thus the Christian belongs to Jesus exclusively, and all other 'this-worldly' affiliations fade into insignificance. It is fulfilment and personalization that provide the basis for John's 'other-worldliness'.<sup>35</sup>

In Revelation, however, the other-worldliness has a different occasion. There, the severely negative attitude to the powers of this world arises from the corruption of those powers, and the persecution of Christians. It looks forward to a future overthrow of the present evil situation. The book is trying to cope with persecution and suffering and does not seek to deal with the question that concerns us: namely, when we wish to influence the social and political structure, according to what principles should we act?

Similarly, 1 Peter is trying to deal with a situation in which Christians were suffering various kinds of persecution and he deals with the question of the correct response to that problem by his readers. They are to behave well, and to bring honour to the name of Christ by following his example when he suffered. It is not appropriate to do other than deal with the problem in hand. It is asking too much that we should expect of them, in such situations, guidelines for the forming of society.

While this tradition in the New Testament, which is so emphasized in these three documents, does not provide us with positive guidance in our attempt to analyse and evaluate our political legal situation as Christians, it is nonetheless not open to us to dismiss this side of the picture altogether. I would like to come back to 1 Peter to illustrate something of the method we might use in dealing with our basic question, but first of all we need to clarify more precisely the contemporary problem with which we are trying to deal. Given that the New Testament writers analysed and evaluated the political and legal structures of their day in the way I have suggested, how might Christians today approach this question? For reasons that I hope will soon be apparent, I would like to call this next section 'church and state'.

## **B CHURCH AND STATE**

It is possible to make only a number of suggestions here in a brief and cursory fashion. This is to be regretted particularly because the areas concerned are difficult and complex and I do not wish to imply that simple and easy answers are immediately available. However, a brief and succinct statement will, I hope, make my line of approach clear enough.

## 1) Law and morals

The immediate problem for anyone who comes to the question of law and jurisprudence and who has some moral convictions and values which he regards as relevant to the whole of life, is to identify the character of the relationship between those moral convictions and law. I find it increasingly difficult to accept that law is an independent and autonomous area of discourse.<sup>36</sup> I find Roscoe Pound's statement more acceptable: 'Jurisprudence, ethics, economics, politics, and sociology are distinct enough at the core, but shade into each other.'<sup>37</sup> The relationship between law and morals is really part of the wider question of the relationship of law to the understanding of human life and society. It is not possible, therefore, to provide some simple formula which will cover the case. The two areas are, however, clearly inter-related. Oliver Wendell Holmes took the point a little further than Professor Pound when he said, 'If your subject is law, the roads are plain to anthropology, the science of man, to political economy, the theory of legislation, ethics and thus by several paths to your final view of life.'<sup>38</sup>

Not only is the relationship between law and morals part of a wider question, and susceptible only of the formula that they are inter-related, but we may also say that because of the nature of each area of discourse, and its involvement in human affairs, they are in a continuing relationship of dialogue and criticism.<sup>39</sup> There are no final solutions. Just as between different societies there are different presumptions, and different shapes to the jurisprudential and judicial frameworks, so within a given society there are variations and changes as new situations arise, and new ways of thinking come to the fore.

From the New Testament we have not been able to discover any consistent view of how society should be ordered. Indeed there is no reason why Christians should feel any absolute commitment to the 'state' in its modern form as the way in which human society should be organized. Indeed they should be most wary of any absolute commitments in this area. There is a great deal that can be said in favour of the modern state as a political unit, though I think there is little to be said in favour of the absolute sovereignty of nation-states.

The New Testament writers viewed the present situation from the standpoint of the death and resurrection of Jesus on the one hand, and his return in glory on the other. The 'good' is that which moves towards salvation and maturity in Christ. The goal of sanctification for the Christian is the perfection in Christ, which brings praise and glory to God. Thus in the various relationships in which he finds himself, the Christian seeks to move towards that which facilitates the growth of all men towards maturity in Christ.

In matters of social structure and politics this goal is conditioned by the fact that there are now, and always will be, men who do not acknowledge Christ and who do not come to salvation. The Christian,

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in this sense, lives in a pluralistic society, and he may often be a member of a minority in that society. That fact must influence the way in which he judges the good in particular societies at particular times. His commitment is to all men, not just to his fellow-Christians.

The actions and decisions of the Christian in regard to the law and the socio-political structure are part of his moral decisions generally. Society is such that any decision or action implies something about the law and the social structure and, in any case, the Christian knows that he should not opt out since he is put into the world. The question thus arises: how does the Christian make his moral decisions?

### 2) Moral decision-making

I wish to emphasize just one point here, without thereby implying that this one point comprehends the whole question of moral decision-making. The point is that the Christian community has a fundamental and key role in the decision-making process. From the point of view of the New Testament, one would have thought that this point was so obvious that it hardly needed emphasizing. But we seem today to have so lost sight of the church as a living community that it does seem necessary to emphasize it. Ephesians 4:15-16 puts the emphasis rather nicely:

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.

The Corinthians were encouraged by Paul to deal with concrete matters of discipline and civil dispute within the context of the ministry of the church.

Perhaps I might illustrate the reciprocating relationship between the encouragement and edification of the Christian community on the one hand, and the involvement of Christians in the life and structures of society on the other. By common consent, 1 Peter is addressed to a situation in which Christians are involved in society and are suffering as a result of this. There is not a lot of agreement amongst scholars about the kind of persecution, or the date of this persecution, and some think that the letter is made up of two parts each reflecting different persecution situations. I would like to suggest that the letter can be read so that a balancing pattern emerges in the structure of the letter. On the one hand there are sections in the letter which are clearly addressed to the readers' involvement in society; and on the other hand, on either side of these sections, there are passages dealing with the Christian community:

1 Peter 1:1-2:10	the Christian community, its basic character
2:11-3:7	the Christian in society, in general terms (2:11 f) and in relation to the social structures (2:13-3:7)

- 3:8-12 the Christian community, the importance of sympathetic loving relationships  
3:13-4:6 the Christian in society, facing conflict  
4:7-11 the Christian community, personal relationships and ministries  
4:12-19 the Christian in society, further conflict and the need for good living  
5:1-5 the Christian community, its structure, the rule of elders  
5:6-14 final summing-up and conclusion.

This balancing pattern illustrates rather nicely the way in which the Christian community serves and supports the life and testimony of the Christian in society. There is no sense of withdrawal from society, though in this particular case the Christians are on the defensive in the face of hostility. The problems of the Christian thus involved in the structures and realities of society inevitably influence the encouragement and support provided from within the Christian community or, as we might somewhat loosely call it, the Christian church.

The point has particular relevance in that the Christian dialogue and criticism of the politico-legal situation in which the Christian finds himself must arise in the context of this kind of church ministry. The mutual encouragement and instruction amongst Christians must get down to the particulars of the social situation. The Christian group exists for this very purpose. It does not have any other role than the sustenance and edification of Christians who are in the world worshipping God in life and action. It is this sense of church and state in relationship which is the key to the modern Christian's analysis and evaluation of the politico-legal situation.

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## NOTES

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- 1 For other surveys see H. von Campenhausen, *Tradition and Life in the Church* (London 1968) ch. 6, and C.K. Barrett, *New Testament Essays* (London 1972) ch. 1. See also the collection of essays in *Law, Morality and the Bible*, eds. B.N. Kaye and G.J. Wenham (IVP: Leicester 1978).
- 2 See H. Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* (London 1976) p 274.
- 3 M. Albertz, *Die synoptischen Streitgespräch*, 1921.
- 4 Anderson, *op. cit.* p 276.
- 5 E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark* (London 1971) p 244.
- 6 See D.E. Nineham, *Saint Mark* (Harmondsworth: 1969) p 315 and Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, p 90.

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- 7 One may notice that Luke gives a more specific political introduction to the story (Luke 20:20) though he uses what, from the comments of J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (London 1972) pp 228ff, may be judged to be a less specific term for the tax which was so important in the Zealot reaction.
- 8 See J.D.M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London 1970) p 335.
- 9 See Strack-Billerbeck, I, pp 760ff.
- 10 Derrett, *op. cit.* pp 250ff, cp. 1 Sam. 27:25.
- 11 *ibid.* p 256.
- 12 One may notice the importance of this trend in John's Gospel: see Barrett, *op. cit.*, p 10.
- 13 A.H. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford 1963) p 65.
- 14 2 Cor. 11:23-24, see the reference to King Aretas 2 Cor. 11:23-33.
- 15 Phil. 1:7 and see the reference to the Praetorian in Phil. 1:13.
- 16 e.g. 1 Cor. 8:10.
- 17 1 Cor. 7:1-3.
- 18 1 Cor. 7:21, and Philemon.
- 19 1 Cor. 6:1-11. He also uses the terminology of adoption and inheritance knowledgeably.
- 20 *T.S.F. Bulletin* 63 (1972), pp 10-12.
- 21 e.g. Dio Cassius, *History of Rome*, 61, Tacitus, *Annals*, 13:11.
- 22 II, 1:159.
- 23 Plato, *Lg.* 914c.
- 24 Plato, *Lg.* 744w.
- 25 *phoros* meaning direct tax, Herod. 3:13, and *telos* meaning direct tax, Plato *Rep.* 425d, P. Oxy. 1473,30 (Third century AD).
- 26 J. Calvin, *Romans*, tr. and ed. John Owen, 1849 (Grand Rapids 1958) p 478.
- 27 *ibid.*
- 28 *ibid.* p 480.
- 29 Barrett, *op. cit.*, pp 12f.
- 30 See E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (London 1957) pp 84f, and Derrett, *op. cit.* pp 313ff.
- 31 See B.N. Kaye, 'Eschatology and Ethics in 1 and 2 Thessalonians', *Nov. Test.* 17 (1975) pp 47-57.
- 32 A.L. Moore, *Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden 1966).
- 33 See A.H.J. Greenidge, *The Legal Procedures of Cicero's Time* (Oxford 1901) and L. Wenger, *Institutes of the Roman Law of Civil Procedure* (New York 1940).
- 34 W. Grundman, *TDNT* 1, pp 16ff.
- 35 See Barrett, *op. cit.*, pp 10f, and W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London) 1974, pp 288ff.
- 36 See J. Austin, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, 5th Ed. 1911, and J. Stone, *The Province and Function of Law* (Sydney 1946), pp 55ff.
- 37 R. Pound, *Law and Morals* (New York 1969) (McNair Lectures delivered in 1923), p 123.
- 38 'The Law as a Profession' reprinted in *Am. Law Rev.* 20 (1897) p 791.
- 39 M. Ginsberg, *On Justice in Society* (Harmondsworth 1965) p 237, and G. Abrahams, *Morality and the Law* (London 1971) pp 22ff.