THE WHITLEY LECTURE
1996-1997

POWER AND DISCIPLESHIP
Towards a Baptist Theology of the State

Nigel G. Wright

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The Whitley Lecture

The Whitley Lectureship was first established in 1949, in honour of W. T. Whitley (1861-1947), arguably the first systematic modern Baptist historian. Whitley was a notable scholar and servant of the Church of Christ. He had pastorates in England and Australia. He served the denomination in both countries in many ways, including pursuing historical studies.

Whitley was a key figure in the formation of the Baptist Historical Society (1908). He edited its journal which soon gained an international reputation for the quality of its contents. Altogether he made a particularly remarkable contribution to Baptist life and self-understanding, providing an inspiring model of how a pastor scholar might enrich the life and faith of others.

The establishment of the Lectureship in his name was intended to be an encouragement to research by Baptist scholars into aspects of Christian life and thought and to enable the results of such research to be published and available to the denomination and beyond.

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We are delighted that this new series is inaugurated by Nigel Wright. Dr Wright began his ministry at Ansdell, Lytham St Annes. He has been a Tutor at Spurgeon's College. He is presently minister at Altrincham Baptist Church. He has taken up a theme that is an important one for all Christians but one that has had a particular interest for Baptists.

Brian Haymes
on behalf of the Management Committee

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I intend in this lecture to advance several arguments which many Christians instinctively reject and yet which I believe to reflect the authentically Baptist understanding of the state. Those arguments are that the state, by which I mean the central repository of social power and political force within any given territory,[1] is a necessary but complex and theologically ambiguous power which is properly both 'secular' and religiously 'neutral'. Correspondingly, the church of Christ, although profoundly interested for God's sake in the public and political spheres and able to speak prophetically to specific situations, best fulfils its mission when it maintains a critical distance from established political parties and interests. In developing this argument I first of all make some general observations in order to establish certain crucial insights which will then illuminate an overall position 'towards a Baptist theology of the state'. As the words 'secular' and 'neutral' tend to be read in differing ways, understanding the specific ways in which they are being used in this lecture will be of considerable importance.

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THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND POLITICS

The Christian faith is inherently political. By this I do not mean that Christianity offers us ready-made and indubitable policies that may be inserted into the party manifestos at the next general election. Even less do I mean that the gospel can be reduced without remainder to certain political categories or states. This really would spell disaster. Rather, more distantly and indirectly, Christianity affords us a vision of the whole of life, including of course its social and political aspects, and assigns relative degrees of importance or unimportance to its component parts. Furthermore, it offers us insights into the deepest nature of human beings and human societies and so provides raw material out of which sound decisions may be made in the task of organizing our common existence.

The Christian confession has always accorded the civil realm a high degree of importance, but has equally denied to it the status of all-importance. Here lies its primary political insight: Christianity, while offering a total vision of life is anti-totalitarian in the place it accords to any political system, nation or ideology. In God's world there are no autonomous realms. Immediately, therefore, the ruler or the state must be viewed as a limited power subject to higher loyalties. Born in an age of absolute imperial power, Christians proclaimed in their baptism on the basis of the resurrection of Christ not 'Caesar is Lord!' but 'Jesus is Lord!'. In this confession lies a crucial distinction between loyalty to God and to the emperor, a distinction consistent with the Jewish roots from which the Christian tree has sprung and which permits of no contest. The Lord alone is God. A key text which appears time and time again in Christian pronouncements concerning the

demands of rulers and states is Acts 5: 29, 'We must obey God rather than men!'.

This is particularly significant because pre-Christian societies tended to be sacral in composition. By identifying the ruler closely with the deity and often by making the two into one, such societies were held together by a single religious principle which gave religious sanction and legitimation to those who held power. Ruler and deity were one and the same. To obey the ruler was to obey God and disobedience to rulers was akin to blasphemy.[2] Along these lines, the need for cohesion in the sprawling Roman empire within which Christianity emerged had led to the cult of Emperor veneration. Christians found themselves at variance with this religious ethos. They were willing to honour the Emperor but not to worship him. They were prepared to pray *for* the Emperor but not to pray *to* him. They repeated in their creed that Christ had been 'crucified under Pontius Pilate' and so perpetuated the memory of the conflict, and therefore the difference, between wordly rulers and their power and God's peaceful and crucified Messiah. Christian faith and conduct was thus counter-cultural, practising the kind of 'detached involvement' characteristic of Jesus himself and so sharply distinguished from the *status quo*.[3] Church and what we now call 'state' were in tension, and sometimes in open conflict.

From those unlikely materials which constitute the centre of Christian belief, the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, a radical and distinctive kind of political theology was waiting to emerge. Yet the sheer variety of Christian responses to the social order throughout the history of the church must lead us to conclude that, whatever insights are implicit within the

Christian faith, it is another matter to work them out explicitly and theologically in the complex world of human power systems. Duncan Forrester discerns already in the first centuries of the church's history a range of theologies of the political which may be considered a spectrum of options for later theology.[4] At one end is the uncritical 'court theology' of the church historian Eusebius which effectively mirrored the old paganism by translating the pagan Emperor cult into Christian terms. The rule of Emperor Constantine was here explained in eschatological, almost messianic terms as the triumph of the church. A Christian ideology was used in Eusebius' theology to lay the foundation for Christendom and the Holy Roman Empire.[5] The toleration of Christianity through the Edict of Milan in AD 313, and thereafter its progressive elevation to become the orthodox religion of the Roman state under Theodosius in AD 392, was the process by which Christianity outgrew its counter-cultural origins and became substantially aligned with the established power structures.[6] At the same time, the 'subversive' memory of Christianity's radical and counter-cultural origins was kept alive, although possibly in a somewhat domesticated form, through the growth of the monastic movement.

At the other end of Forrester's spectrum is the so-called 'withdrawal' theology of Tertullian with its consciousness of the disjunction between church and pagan world, between Jerusalem and Athens. Tertullian represents the majority of pre-Constantinian Christianity in which non-participation in state service was the norm, the gulf between Christians and the idolatrous requirements of the state being considered too large. Tertullian is frequently regarded here as the key representative of what Ernst Troeltsch identified as the 'sect-type' of Christianity in

contrast with the 'church-type' which would characteristically encompass Eusebius.[7] In Troeltsch's analysis, where the church-type aspires to *universality* and so is brought into compromise, the sect-type practises *intensity* and so is arguably in more direct contact with Jesus and the gospel.[8] In these two types, the Eusebian and the Tertullian, we encounter that tension which we identify in the title of this lecture, that between power and discipleship. To what extent is it the case that to enter into the exercise of worldly power reduces the quality or clarity of Christian discipleship? Alternatively, must it be the case that to pursue Christian discipleship wholeheartedly removes the disciple from the often ambiguous world of human statecraft? However, it is not necessary to embrace Tertullian's strategy of withdrawal in principle and for all time to see that it may be a viable strategy for the church in *certain* places at *certain* times. Neither is it accurate to regard such a position as politically irrelevant since non-participation and non-conformity can also be forms of creative political witness and even means of incubating new forms of communal and civic life which have the power to transform the political community at large.[9]

In the centre of Forrester's spectrum is Augustine's uneasy understanding of church-state relations. Two distinct lines of thought were developed by Augustine. The first, growing out of the polemic of the Donatist controversy, assessed the conversion of the Emperor as an eschatological event. Through this the civil government, which belonged in the New Testament to the fallenness of the 'world' as part of the 'order of preservation' (to employ the theological language of a later generation),[10] became transposed in Christian understanding into the 'order of redemption' in order to work with the church against heresy

and barbarism. This became, therefore, the classical interpretation of church and state in 'Christendom' or what is sometimes called 'Constantinianism'.[11] However, after the fall of Rome Augustine's theology, particularly as found in his late and classic work *City of God* took a different turn by refusing to identify God's eternal kingdom with any passing, earthly realm. This analysis incorporated increasingly the Donatist distinction between church and state.[12] The state is characterized here by self-sufficient pride and the church, in distinction, by love. Augustine thus became a subverter of the classical public realm by contrasting the state unfavourably with the church.[13]

City of God sketches an anthropology and corporate spirituality which exposes the inauthenticity of politics beyond the church. If justice gives to each what is due, the political community is flawed fundamentally by failing to give to *God* what is due to him.[14] Political rule therefore originates from fallenness and sin and exercises coercive power towards the wrong ends.[15] Earthly cities are built upon a primal crime[16] and upon pagan political *dominium* or domination which reinforces human sinfulness while inhibiting its effects.[17] This then amounts, in the words of John Milbank, to an 'unremittingly subversive analysis of the Roman political order' which has been ignored in Augustine's work because the other strand of his teaching was ultimately used to legitimate political, coercive power afresh.[18] Unlike Eusebius, Augustine is well aware of the corruption of worldly power and of the essential conflict here with the church's mode of being. But also, crucially, unlike Tertullian he can contemplate the church making use of what he calls the 'peace of the world', meaning the world's ways of enforcing peace, for the ultimate purpose of true heavenly peace.[19]

This spectrum of political theologies suggested by Forrester is closely paralleled, not surprisingly so, by Roland Bainton's analysis of historic Christian approaches to war and peace.[20] Bainton's spectrum moves from the 'crusade' position through the 'just war' to the 'pacifist' positions. Pacifists find all involvement in war contrary to Christ and claim in this that they follow the earliest Christian traditions, not least those established by Tertullian. Both crusade and just war positions represent a degree of accommodation to worldy power. The distinction between them however is not without significance. Whereas the crusade position can, like Eusebius, take a sanguine approach to the realization of God's purposes through the intentional use of state power and force, the just war position, like Augustine, is less robust. Here, force and violence are taken as the nature of things in a fallen and sinful world. Wars happen; the question is whether their evil can be mitigated and whether Christians, instead of standing aloof, may not better serve their fellow human beings and restrain evil by seeking to limit the inevitable extremities of war even at the cost of sullying themselves. This typology of Christian attitudes to war and peace can be seen, in correspondence with Forrester's spectrum of Christian political theologies, to have at its heart the concern to understand the appropriate relationship between Christian discipleship and worldly forms of power.

My point in reviewing this relatively familiar territory is two-fold: Firstly, to begin to display some of the difficulties in framing a theology of the state. For, whereas we might more easily agree in our day and age that certain options, for example Eusebius' court theology and its counterpart the crusade, do not have their origin in the gospel (even though they might appeal in some respects to Old

Testament models), the tension between those positions represented by Augustine and Tertullian is one Christians still wrestle with. It is by no means clear how exactly we move from the Bible, or even from Jesus, to our contemporary world to resolve these issues. This debate lives not least within the Baptist tradition with its twin, although not equal, reference points in Anabaptism and Reformed theology.

Secondly, it is of no little interest to me that insights originally of an essentially religious or spiritual nature are implicitly laden with considerable political implications, the ramifications of which could scarcely have been understood by their original recipients. This is true of the primordial Christian confession of Christ as Lord of the universe. A primarily religious confession is found to have political corollaries. If Christ is Lord then Caesar cannot be Lord. Granted it takes time, and wrong turns, to work out the implications of such a confession for the political realm and granted also that there are continuing disagreements about its implications, there are also points of theological consensus which have increasingly emerged, particularly in the rejection of totalitarian political or politico-religious systems. As one who believes that within the Baptist tradition certain insights have been recovered which are intrinsic to the gospel, insights which are primarily religious or spiritual in nature in the sense that they are concerned with the relation of human beings to God, my concern in this lecture is to develop the implications of those insights more systematically in order to arrive at, or at least to contribute to, an understanding of the state which is informed by them. This has, of course, been developed by Baptists before, but in surprisingly meagre ways, given the proximity of our concerns to political issues,

particularly in the area of religious freedom, and with the same vulnerability to wrong turns that we see in the wider Christian debates.

BAPTISTS AND ANABAPTISM

Where do we start? To understand the Baptist tradition it is necessary to refer to two points of origin and inspiration. I do not refer here to the two original Baptist denominations, General and Particular, which have since become substantially one, but rather to the emergence of Anabaptism in continental Europe from 1525 and the growth of English Baptists from 1609. Nor do I intend here to debate the contentious issue of historical causation, being content to accept the widespread judgement that English Baptists are primarily a development from within English Puritanism, not from Anabaptism.[21] I do, however, accept the observation of E. A. Payne that 'ideas have legs' and that Anabaptism produced some of those ideas which influenced the beginnings of the English Baptists.[22]

In other places I have set out what I believe to be at issue between English Baptists and continental Anabaptists:[23] English Baptists were persuaded, along with their Anabaptist counterparts, that rulers ought not to use coercion in matters of religious belief and conscience. But they declined to take with the Anabaptists that further step which forbade the Christian believer to participate in the functions of government, above all those of the magistrate. For the Anabaptist. the use of the 'sword', or coercion and force, in criminal justice was necessary on account of human sin but remained, in the words of Article VI of the Schleitheim Confession of 1527,[24] 'outside the perfection of Christ' and so was not an acceptable sphere in which the

Christian might serve. There is a paradox here in that the sword is both legitimate and illegitimate; legitimate in that without it human societies would descend into anarchy, and so rulers have a duty to wield it; illegitimate in that it is in conflict with Christian behaviour as enunciated by Christ, for instance, non-violence and non-resistance. Governments *must* exercise force; Christians *must not* participate in it; *ergo* Christians must not participate in government.[25] For the Baptist, by contrast, since the sword was ordained by God for the preservation of society, it must also constitute a legitimate sphere of service. Whereas Christians must follow in Christ's way of love which certainly involves the rejection of violence, the state in its peace-keeping role constitutes an exception to this rule by divine permission, provided of course that it be used justly. The sword does not necessarily lie 'outside the perfection of Christ', although when misused, as in the coercion of the religious conscience, it certainly does. When used to defend the widows and the fatherless, which is a biblical duty for rulers,[26] and as an expression of wrath against the wrongdoer, it might well be wielded by Christians.

I have also sought to show elsewhere that at the root of this Baptist-Anabaptist distinction lies a difference in perspective concerning the nature of law. Following the Mennonite scholar Conrad Brunk,[27] I have argued that the paradigm of law which has dominated Anabaptist-Mennonite thinking is Lutheran in character. Brunk describes it as 'legal positivism'. It finds the ground of systems of law in the will of the ruler and the coercive power that supports it. Law is based upon the right of conquest, of what Augustine has called *dominium*, domination. Baptists have greater kinship with that alternative approach to law which Brunk calls by contrast

'natural law'. Here law is the product of shared aims, values and principles of conduct within a community and grows out of a moral consensus. Law, then, and government are not the naked power of the ruler but a community's self-determined way of managing its own affairs. So conceived, law may be viewed as a way of promoting, maintaining and establishing moral norms; it is hard to see how this realm and its enforcement can be unambiguously declared to be 'outside the perfection of Christ'.

In Lutheran-Anabaptist terms law is seen negatively as that which is imposed by an authority dominant over its subjects. According to Brunk, no significant concept of social justice is found, therefore, either in traditional Lutheran or in most historic Anabaptist thought. It is unsurprising that both Anabaptists and Lutherans had difficulty in reconciling the demands of the earthly and the heavenly kingdoms and held them in stark contrast. The paradigm makes all governmental activity suspect, a matter of domination. What is strange here is that Anabaptist church communities developed laws for their own discipline from within their own decision-making processes and yet failed to develop the analogy in a way which could be applied to civil society. By contrast, the traditionally Reformed approach to government, in which the concept of covenant has been allowed an important role, has greater affinities with the natural law approach and a strong commitment to achieving a just civil realm. Government might play more than a minimalist role, keeping in check the criminal and lawless. It might become the very means of promoting the common good. This point of contrast between Lutheran and Reformed approaches might be seen to reflect the socio-political contexts from which they

emerged, the Lutheran from the princely territory or oligarchically-ruled city, and the Reformed from the corporate ethos of the early modern city.[28]

My point in this exposition is not to say that the Baptists are right and the Anabaptists wrong, but rather, in a more complicated fashion, to advance the idea that a contemporary theology of the state in the Baptist tradition must hold together these two perspectives and do justice to both in order to do justice to itself. Fallen human power systems are nothing if not complex. Domination of the many by the few is a fact of human history. This brute fact is in many places long in process of being qualified and reconstructed by the many exerting themselves against the few. We call this 'democracy'. But the fact of domination, usually in the form of rule by an élite whether of the left or the right, remains even in supposedly democratic societies. Indeed, the language of democracy might be used to disguise the fact that distribution of power is still in the hands of the few.[29] *An abiding, Anabaptist-like suspicion of worldly power remains appropriate. Yet alone this would neglect the good that may be done through the development of just laws and their humane enforcement. Therefore a continuing (but not naïve) search for social and civil justice through state agency has its place, as the Baptist tradition has upheld in common with other Christians.*

This is the essence of my argument. Any Baptist and Christian theology of the state must be ambivalent concerning this complex reality. It does not think one simple thought but holds together several thoughts simultaneously. I wish to develop this by reference to two defining ideas by two contemporary theologians.

POWERS AND PALIMPSESTS

The first theologian is Walter Wink, whose trilogy on the so-called 'Powers' has attracted widespread comment because of its stimulating analyses.[30] In his third volume, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in an Age of Domination*, Wink develops his theme that the New Testament language of powers and principalities is indispensable in enabling us to understand human societies. In previous contributions to the trilogy[31] he has argued that all institutional realities are composed of inner and outer dimensions. The inner dimension he calls 'interiority' and is the 'spirituality' constellated in any human institution. What the New Testament knows as 'the world', human society in defiance of God, Wink refers to as 'the System'. The biblical language of angels, demons and the devil does not refer in his understanding to metaphysical ontologies, fallen beings, but to the interiorities of alienated social structures. This language is an effective way of denoting the reality. 'Satan', therefore, is the collective weight of human fallenness, the spirituality constellated by the alienated human race in its entirety or by a society that idolatrously pursues its own enhancement.[32] The System involves domination kept in place by violence. Yet alongside this negative picture it must be understood that the powers are *simultaneously* good, fallen and to be redeemed. This is an essential statement for understanding Wink. The powers are good (because they are created), fallen (as a consequence of human alienation from its divine origin) and to be redeemed (through God's work in Christ) and this not sequentially, so that they are *successively* totally good, then fallen and then to be redeemed, but *simultaneously* all three at one and the same time.[33] So

Wink can say,

> It is precisely this simultaneity of Creation, Fall and Redemption, freed from literalistic temporalizing, that delivers us from naïveté regarding our personal or social powers for transformation. It liberates us from the illusion that at least some institutions are 'good' and viable and within human direction, or can be rendered so by discipline or reform or revolution or displacement. The Powers are at one and the same time ordained by God and in the power of Satan. They can, to some degree be humanized, but they are still fallen. They can be open to transcendence, but they will still do evil. They may be benign, but within a Domination System of general malignancy.[34]

This enables Wink to

> negotiate a truce between two camps long at odds. The one argues that all governmental, economic, educational, and cultural systems are intrinsically evil, though capable of some limited good. This position is held by some Amish, Mennonites and others from the Anabaptist tradition. The other insists that governments and other public institutions are not just post-Fall phenomena but intrinsic elements of God's creation, and therefore capable not only of reform but even of being 'christianized'. This position is associated with the Calvinist tradition. . . [T]he invidious 'either/or' of the debate leaves us either abandoning the Powers to secularity or installing an establishment Christianity: either withdrawal or theocracy . . . Instead of these two extremes, the New Testament view of the Powers

> gives us a broad continuum of possible emphases, adaptable to every situation. There are no pre-packaged answers to tell us how Christians should engage the powers . . . all live in a paradox of 'as if not', as being in but not of the Domination System. 'Come out of her, my people' (Rev. 18: 4) may be our marching orders but so may be the call to assume secular office (as with Joseph and Daniel). Spiritual discernment takes the place of fixed rules.[35]

By stressing the ambivalence of the powers, Wink enables us to hold together insights which we can now see to correspond closely to those we have distinguished within the Anabaptist-Lutheran and Baptist-Reformed traditions. If the Anabaptist reminds us of the fallenness of those powers, their lust for domination and control, their collapse into themselves and their own self-interest which parallels and grows out of the collapse of human beings into self-centredness and self-seeking, the Baptist reminds us that beneath that existential fallenness there is an ontological createdness which renders the powers necessary for human welfare in the first place and encourages Christians to press towards their recovery and redemption. And if the Anabaptist strategy for its own day and time of distancing itself from the 'Domination System' as it experienced it cannot be definitively proclaimed to be mistaken, neither can it be taken as normative for other places and other times. The Baptist concern, in common with the Reformed in general, for the shape of the civil order, in short for its redemption, also has its place.

This portrait of the powers takes us so far and illustrates the ambivalence of Christian theology towards the state to which I have made reference. It shows how

insights from the two strands of Baptist history I have referred to might be mutually illuminating. We need, however, to go further. For in what sense does that entity which we call the state and which we experience in the contemporary world belong to the ontology of God's creation and to what extent is it a distortion of God's intent? Here we turn to a second picture, this time supplied by John Milbank in his demanding book, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*.

In an illuminating analogy, Milbank conceives of Christianity seeking,

> to recover the concealed text of an original peaceful creation beneath the palimpsest of the negative distortion of *dominium*, through the superimposition of a third redemptive template which corrects these distortions by means of forgiveness and atonement.[36]

Some unpacking of this analogy is appropriate. I take it to mean that Christianity is engaged in a task of recovery. God's creation is essentially peaceful, human beings being created for harmonious and co-operative relationships which reflect in human community the communion of the Triune God. The fall into sin has smothered the divine intention in creation and substantially replaced it with a pattern of violence, conflict and domination. The original 'text' of creation has been covered over in this way by the 'palimpsest'* of later distortions caused through sin and

* A palimpsest is a manuscript, often of vellum or parchment, which has been written upon several times, often with the remnants of earlier, imperfectly erased writing still visible.

fall, although remnants of the original may still be discerned (with some difficulty) through and in spite of the distortions. The work of recovery and redemption is enabled by the Christian narrative of atonement and forgiveness which discloses God's will for human beings and offers a way back to his destined purpose. This narrative embodies itself in a community, the church, which lives according to the new pattern of life made possible through forgiveness and which out of its own life offers ways of discerning and recovering the original text.

This analogy corresponds in general to the portrayal of the powers as simultaneously good, fallen and to be redeemed as developed by Wink. Yet it enables us to take it further by asking whether the state as we currently experience it belongs to the original text of creation or to the distortion of the palimpsest. Here we must argue that in the state as we currently find it in its various manifestations there are remnants and indications of a created ontology.[37] Human beings have been created for relationship and so social existence and interaction, the capacity for work, technology, the development of culture and of law, the building of institutions within which life might be lived out, and a nurturing 'dominion' (as distinct from domination) over creation all belong to the original text of creation. This is sometimes called the 'cultural mandate'.[38] But the specific forms and constellations which human societies and states now take cannot be held to correspond simply with that original text. Instead they embody and express human corporate life in its conditions of alienation and sin. States as we know them cannot therefore be held simply to reflect the divine intention but the actual distortions that we have produced out of the basic fabric and potentials of our God-given common life. They are not creation-ordinances

as such but rather provisional measures governed by divine providence to cope with and hold in check human tendencies towards self-destruction. They do this imperfectly and often unjustly and so should be regarded with the caution indicated by Wink. Yet since they take up and are based upon a created ontology it is legitimate to seek for their redemption and to insist that they serve the cause of justice.

The 'third, redemptive template' to which Milbank refers must be the Christian community which, while sharing in the fallen state of all humankind, is also distinctive in that it is beginning to experience the power of redemption and recovery. Inklings of recovery and redemption, of the 'original text' of creation might therefore be discerned imperfectly but nonetheless more clearly in the Christian community's pattern of life. This points to a 'high' doctrine of the church. Ecclesiology is more than a second-order doctrine. The gospel gives rise to the church and is embodied in the church in a way essential for the fulfilment of Christian mission. The new humanity being formed in Christ by the Spirit enables us to see clearly, although provisionally, what God wills for the whole world of humanity.

We need to ask at this point how a specifically Baptist doctrine of the state might differ from that developed in other confessions. The train of thought we have followed suggests that if a Baptist vision of the church is distinctive this might lead us in turn to a distinctive theology of the state. Crucially, Milbank points to what he calls 'an unresolved matter for Christianity',[39] namely the way in which Christianity's task of recovery is complicated by what he calls the 'persistence of the second text', that is to say the distortion of God's original creation-text by

'*dominium*', the use of dominating power. Indeed not only has the church become implicated in this text, it 'continues to write it'.

We noted a justification for precisely this in Augustine's theology as a consequence of his struggle against Donatism. The peace of the world (achieved by force) was made use of for the ultimate purpose of the peace of the heavenly city. In other words, worldy power was employed in persecution against the perceived schismatic tendencies of the Donatists. From a Baptist perspective, wherever this happens and some Christians seek to impose their version of religion upon others the very nature of the Christian church has been betrayed. However Christ's mission is to be pursued, it will not be by attempting to impose the 'third, redemptive template', as Milbank calls it, by having recourse to the means of the '*dominium*' which belongs to the distortions of the palimpsest. This only complicates the palimpsest beyond measure. The third, redemptive template must be applied through the regenerative power of the gospel proclaimed and lived, not through impositional means. This perspective is the foundation of religious liberty.

At this point Anabaptists and Baptists sought to disentangle themselves from the distortions into which Christendom had fallen through its uses of coercion to compel consciences into conformity in the search for redemption. From this function of the state, which they understood as abuse, they were right to withdraw, as others might now admit. Furthermore, if the present form of the state is seen as a provisional measure to contain human destructiveness, not belonging to the creation order as such but to this age of conflict and domination, the present alliance of any church with any state must be seen as

fraught with danger. Such an alliance is scarcely to be justified in the name of concern for the created order since this fails to grasp the distinction between the original text and the distortions of the palimpsest. Or, as Wink has pointed out, it fails to recognise the *simultaneity* of the goodness, fallenness and openness to redemption of the powers. Alliances with states are apt to distort the nature of the church by importing the element of coercion, domination or worldly power into the church; conversely, the church might lend to those states a degree of religious dignity which is unwarranted.

As the essentially religious confession that Christ is Lord implied an understanding of the state which deprived it of divine dignity and allowed it only a servant role, so in the Baptist insight into what we would now call freedom of conscience and religious liberty, certain political implications are to be found. The first Baptists did not come to their conviction of religious liberty primarily on political grounds. The nature of the gospel and of human duty to God claimed for them a higher importance than the claims of earthly powers and led them to reject state interference in their religious convictions. The state is once more seen here as a limited entity: it is confined to the exercise of civil justice but in this role it is both legitimate and a potential sphere for Christian service. Its role is not to impose any religious or indeed irreligious interpretation of human life but to maintain the social fabric within which people may engage voluntarily in the search for meaning.

In this sense it is proper to speak of the 'secular state', provided we mean by that not a state which propagates secularist ideologies (this would after all be just another form of the religious state), but one which confines its sphere of service to temporal and this-worldy affairs

while allowing that these are by no means the only realities with which human beings must come to grips. In this there is clearly implied the potential for plurality. *The secular state does not foreclose on the discussion concerning the meaning of life. Rather it allows the contest of ideas to run its course and provides the framework within which on the basis of a common humanity, not necessarily of a common religion, truth might be sought and contested.*

Having gathered some elements out of which a theology of the state might be attempted are we now in a position to attempt a systematic statement? This task will occupy the remainder of this lecture.

THE STATE: A REASONED STATEMENT

All theology must, of course, begin with God and for Christians God is conceived as communion, as Father, Son and Spirit. A Christian theology of the state begins with the conviction that the God who created the world is also redeeming the world and that that community which we call the church of Christ is central to this activity. In Christian understanding the church has priority of importance (but not of power) over the state and is itself the 'bearer of the meaning of history'.[40] Theologically, the church takes priority over the state and precedes the world ontologically.[41] The function of the state is therefore to be derived subsequent to our understanding of the role of the church in history.

To redeem and restore a fallen world, and humankind within it, the Father has sent the Son and sends the Spirit. Into this reconciling activity God gathers the community of the church around his Son as the firstfuits of salvation and establishes it as the *locus* of his mission. This is the basis

of a Baptist ecclesiology since it implies that the church exists as a regenerate community of disciples, those who are offering themselves for the fulfilment of the divine purpose. Yet the church is gathered as God's primary earthly instrument in the work of reconciling all things to himself. Within this community a new way of life based upon forgiveness and mutual service is coming to expression which stands at variance with the self-seeking and self-interest which characterize human society at large and which reach their apex in powerful human political systems.

This view of the church and of history reverses the common assumptions of both secular and religious thinkers by making the church the very 'motor of history',[42] rather than a marginal force within history. Yet the drama of salvation takes place within a world which never ceases to be God's world and within a social order which although fallen is still providentially governed by God and grows out of God's good creation. Moreover the new community of believers, although with its own character and distinctives, is inextricably dependent upon the wider human community within which it is set and by which also it is shaped. Its relationship to that wider community is neither conformist nor dismissive but rather *missionary* in nature. It is committed to work for its redemption and is therefore unable to give it up; yet neither is it able to accept the world the way it is by reason of its injustice. It lives within a tension created by respect for creation, awareness of its distortions and hope for its redemption. The missionary church works towards creation's ultimate transformation by the power of God and sees partial signs of this within the present order.

It is essential in this both that the church develop its

own distinctive manner of life, in which it is tasting the 'power of the age to come' and witnessing in word and life to that power, and that it take seriously the 'cultural mandate' which values and accepts responsibility for human life and creation in their totality. From this it may be observed that the church is rightly concerned in its own life to become an obedient community of disciples, but that in this vocation it has the whole world in view and not just itself. For the sake of the world's redemption it is necessary for a community to be gathered which is sufficiently distinct from the world in the way it goes about its own life to be able to offer to that world an alternative way and a greater hope.

Within this context, states as we currently know them, centralized social agencies disposing of the monopoly of force within given territories, are temporary expedients or concessions which God ordains or allows as means of restraining chaos and anarchy while the ~~world~~ church fulfils its mission and awaits creation's full redemption. In other words, the state exists for the sake of the church, to provide that framework of order and stability within which the humanizing and redeeming work of the gospel can run its course.[43] This perspective both limits the significance of the state and establishes it. The state has a clear place in God's providential government of human society and it must fulfil its function in a way which pleases God, but it is set within certain bounds. It may help to preserve the social order but it cannot be the means of redemption nor should it claim divine honours or messianic significance. It belongs to this world and to this age. *It is secular as distinct from sacral, that is, free to fulfil its function without clothing itself with specifically religious symbolism to provide legitimation for itself.*

In this respect the gospel can be said to have exercised a secularizing or demythologizing influence upon understandings of the state whenever it has unmasked idolatrous state pretensions to divine status. This is the effect of the declaration in Romans 13: 4 that rulers are 'God's servant to do you good', not in themselves objects of ultimate concern and devotion. The secular state must therefore be contrasted with the 'religious' state, that is with a state which is directly or indirectly in the service of one religious vision in such a way as to deprive others of religious freedoms. To attempt this is to exceed the state's mandate which is to secure the context within which the human search for religious meaning might take place and in which the gospel might act by means of its own inherent and liberating power in people's lives. A religious state forecloses on this search by determining what the answers must be in advance. Such a state is both corrupting of religion in that the religion employs force to compel conformity and so undermines itself by its complicity with coercion; and corrupting of the state in that the state loses sight of its mere secularity and uses religion to give exaggerated legitimacy to its own forceful activities. The paradox of these claims is that, although they imply the disestablishment of religion, that is the formal unhooking of the state from a sectional religious interest, where there is within a society no shared sense of accountability to a transcendent reality the state is inclined to forsake its mere secularity, fall prey to other non-religious ideologies and become idolatrous.

A crucial distinction to make at this point is that between *society* and *state*. Often these terms are confused. Society is much bigger than the state. The state grows out of society as its extreme boundary in which the use of force

is in operation. A secular (not secularist) state in the terms I have defined it may grow out of a religious society. Just as a religious society might be tempted to use the state for its own ends against other religious interpretations so a secularist or irreligious society might employ state power against any religion. In both cases the state becomes corrupted and partisan. The state is called under God to apply itself to secular concerns but where there is no longer in society at large a sense of accountability to a transcendental reality the temptation for the state to assume an idolatrous status is the greater.

If the state is seen as a provisional ordinance for the time of human sin and fall, it must also be seen as a permissive ordinance. It is in other words an alternative to that direct rule of God which can alone safeguard a perfect balance of justice and compassion. For this understanding, Israelite kingship may be taken as an analogy. Kingship in Israel was, according to one persistent strand of biblical witness, a permissive ordinance of divine accommodation to human unwillingness to submit to *divine* kingship. It was taken up into God's purpose and yet remained a flawed and intrinsically unstable instrument employing domination and exploitation.[44] All such kingships are destined to pass away in the day of the Lord when God once more rules directly over the world and its people.[45] This is the background against which to read Romans chapter 13, the *locus classicus* on the state. This text is by no means, as it has sometimes been used to be, a wholesale validation of all governments. Submission to the 'powers that be' is here enjoined for the reason that Christians may properly submit to a power which is being providentially over-ruled by God, not because those powers have God's approval in all that they do. This needs to be borne in mind when certain

governments are enthusiastically and uncritically endorsed. Even an idolatrous power might find itself fulfilling the task of carrying out God's punishment on those who do evil[46] or of praising those who do good,[47] which is the end to which God permits or ordains them.

Furthermore, each state represents a particular 'configuration' or 'constellation' of the human potential for organization and institutionalization. There is no state 'as such', no metaphysical entity of independent existence outside the people who compose it.[48] Actual states are rooted in and develop from the human capacity for corporate and co-operative organization and are the particular forms assumed under the conditions of sin and fall from this potential. They are malleable, open to re-configuration. The created energies and sub-structures rooted in the very nature of creation and which give rise to the state are capable of redemption and transfiguration, but the particular forms and configurations which now exist are to be abolished and superseded in the consummated kingdom by the direct rule of God.

Because each state is merely provisional and is less than the direct rule of God it might be expected that even though they are providentially over-ruled, states remain intrinsically flawed. The peace and justice they maintain are only ever after the measure of generally available human insight.[49] All systems of government, however stable and peaceful in the present, have their origin in violence and the lust for power. As Reinhold Niebuhr has argued in unsurpassed fashion, there is an intensification of fallenness in structures as opposed to persons. Social groups are always less moral than the people who compose them.[50] Structures of government tend, for instance, to serve the interests of the ruling élite and to reinforce the existing

distribution of power. A faith at whose heart is the crucifixion of the messenger of peace on political as well as religious charges cannot take a naïve attitude towards political authorities but will be aware of the gulf often apparent between divine and state action. But the cross which judges human actions also indicates that state actions may be providentially determined. Against their will they are required to do God's will to the extent that a limited justice and a limited peace are maintained.

Here we reinforce the primary role of the state, which has to do with the maintenance of justice, peace and freedom. The fullness of these realities will come only from God's direct rule, yet by divine mandate in the present age the state has a policing role which can be directed precisely against wrong-doers. It aims both to thwart and restrain evil and to safeguard the values of a community. It does this by expressing and channelling public anger against wrong-doers to prevent such anger becoming excessively vengeful, disproportionate and destructive. To achieve this it must be effective and just in the way it fulfils its task, lest by ineffectiveness it brings itself into contempt or by injustice it becomes liable to disrespect. The object of such actions is to reduce violence and uphold the peace since, without such a central agency holding the monopoly of force and doing so under regulation and with accountability, the doors are open to each person 'doing what is right in his own eyes'.[51] The policing function effectively and fairly carried out is therefore essential in reducing and overcoming violence.[52] And beyond that, as Dr David Thompson has recently pointed out, the underlying question with which the state must deal is how to build a society where criminality is not seen as a profitable exercise.[53]

A Baptist theology of the state fully endorses this role of the state in keeping the peace through legitimate policing. As we have already noted, the state's mandate is held in a Baptist theology not to permit it to intervene in specific matters of religious belief and conviction. Here I argue that the state is religiously 'neutral'. I do not mean by this that any state is or can be without specific commitments to the values it upholds, but rather that *'neutrality', understood in the sense of* impartiality *not* indifference, *is itself a biblical value which the state should uphold both in delivering justice without regard to social status and in its dealings with people of differing religious persuasions.* Religious liberty is arguably the liberty from which all other freedoms derive.[54] Baptist axioms affirm that true religion cannot be coerced, that truth is able to assert its own authority, that faith or lack of it are also related to the prevenient action of God in election and cannot be anticipated by state action in a way which fails to respect divine freedom.[55] Neutrality *in this sense* is not the product of an irreligious vision hostile to religion (although I do not doubt that such a vision exists and is in contention) but of a particular vision with its origins in the Baptist tradition. This does not amount therefore to a denial that religious values may shape the nature of society or of the state but rather that they should shape it in the direction of religious impartiality (not indifference). Religious faith, and supremely Christian faith, when it is true to itself, acts through persuasion rather than by imposition.

Having described the provisional and limited nature of the state, and sounded warnings about the way in which it may enter into alliance with a specific religious vision, I now wish to assert, in keeping with the citations from Wink and Milbank to which I have already drawn attention, that

within the fallen structures of human states is a created ontology which is essential to human life and which awaits redemption. This created ontology may best be understood as *covenant*, the intrinsic human capacity for committed and loyal relationship. Human beings have been made for harmonious relationships with God and with each other. Symbiosis, community and co-operation are necessary elements of their existence. This essential, created reality is embedded in all social and political systems. If human states are also rooted in the reality of domination, Christian action towards the state is directed towards qualifying its nature as domination in the direction of covenant, to recovering from beneath the distorted palimpsest of our own manufacture through many ages that original, peaceful creation of God's intention. This is the other reality we must not neglect in our appraisal of the state. J. P. Wogaman defines the state as 'society acting as a whole with the ultimate power to compel compliance within its own jurisdiction'.[56] For these reasons the state can undergird the weak with the collective power of the whole community.[57] Conceived of in these terms the state quite legitimately becomes a means whereby human collective power might be used, and indeed often is used, beneficially. Indeed, the more effectively a state is able to function as what William Temple first called a 'welfare' state the less necessary it will be to act as a 'power' state[58] and the more it will be able to maintain the peace without recourse to the use of force. Yet to function in this way requires us to penetrate through the distortions of state power to discover that ontological bed-rock which Milbank describes as the original, concealed text of creation. *In this sense*, as a covenant of free citizens based upon the created disposition of humankind and the anticipation of heavenly

citizenship, according to Jürgen Moltmann, the state belongs to the essence and not the alienation of humankind.[59] The church helps recover this reality not least as through the 'redemptive template' of its own life it is able to draw attention to the original divine intention in creation beneath the distortions of human history, an intention which is well expressed by analogy with the concept of covenant relationships which is foundational to the biblical vision of the people of God and of all humanity.

A CONCLUDING APPLICATION

Let me end with a reflection upon the implications of this theology as outlined for the strategy of Christian mission. Here I believe it is in order to make a distinction, not a separation but a distinction, between the church as a gathered, visible community and the church as a multitude of scattered, invisible disciples. This distinction corresponds with Jesus' own saying, 'You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth'.[60] God's will for human societies is steadfast love, mutual loyalty and co-operative endeavour. For the sake of this task it remains essential for the Christian community *as such* to maintain a critical distance from the constant push and pull of self and political interest which passes for modern politics. The church as a distinct community stands apart from this in order the more clearly, if always imperfectly, to live according to the love and forgiveness which its gospel proclaims. It bears witness that, whatever the political implications of the gospel, salvation does not come through politics but through the Messiah of God and his coming Kingdom. It bears witness to a manner of life which is

based upon mutual acceptance, covenant love, forgiveness and the use of power to serve and not dominate. It derives this manner of being from Christ and in so doing it functions as a 'pacesetter' for the wider world. As Christ becomes the light of the church so might the church become the light of the world. The church bears the meaning of history.

However, if this 'otherness' is necessary for the church as a series of identifiable communities, it is also the case that individual members of the church will be scattered throughout all organs of society involving themselves as best they can in the distorted 'palimpsest' of human social and political life. In their scattered existence they will sometimes subvert 'the System' when its idolatries become clear; they will sometimes affirm and strengthen that which corresponds to God's purpose for his creation as they come to understand this from their life within the church; they will seek for those modest and sometimes radical improvements which are signs that the world's redemption is near. There ought in principle to be no obstacle to a Christian's involvement either in those state functions which correspond closely to our created ontology as social beings or to that peacekeeping function of the state which it bears by divine mandate. Jesus' description of the church as 'salt and light' captures these two dimensions for us: as distinctive communities the church gathered is called to shine clearly; as the church scattered Christian disciples have their effect, often invisibly, in subverting the bad and building up the good.

In short, then, a Baptist theology of the state will maintain the kind of ambivalence towards the state which comes to us when the emphases of the Anabaptist and Baptist traditions are held in tension. Such an ambivalence

is by no means novel in Christian theology since it directly mirrors that involved in claiming both that human beings are made in God's image and that they are fallen creatures. This tension, which alone can do justice to the reality of human nature and to the biblical witness, carries with it the self-same difficulties in discerning our created human ontology beneath the distortions of our actual existence.

It is fair to say that the English Baptists assumed a position between Anabaptism and Reformed Christianity with an inclination to the Reformed. The theology I have here outlined is, I think, similarly situated not least in that, although the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition has consistently agreed about the role of the state and the necessity of force, it has argued that the faithful disciple should not participate in this aspect of the state's vocation. The theology I have developed here insists, in keeping with Baptist history, that this is not the case. Since the policing function of the state is mandated by God, since it is directed towards maintaining the peace and reducing the overall level of violence and since on the model of covenant a community must find ways of agreeing and then enforcing its common values and its own existence, a Christian disciple may conscientiously participate in this aspect of the state's vocation and do so in the name of Christ. The 'sword' is not necessarily 'outside the perfection of Christ';[61] indeed, there are aspects of the policing function (the protection of the weak, the resolution of conflict and the restraint of evil) which are arguably Christlike. All these state functions will be evaluated in the light of Christ whose non-violent way points in the direction of their operating at a minimal level of force and being replaced wherever possible by non-violent and certainly non-lethal alternatives. Yet whilst occupying this traditional Baptist ground, the position I

have outlined has more of an inclination towards the Anabaptist position in its greater recognition of the fallenness of the powers which should guard us against ever placing, as Christians sometimes appear to place, excessive dependence upon political action as the principal thrust against social evils.

NOTES

1 According to Weber, 'a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory': M. Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation' in H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Boston and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948), p.78. The Bible, of course, knows nothing of this abstract language of the state and speaks rather of specific and concrete rulers who are simply 'the powers that be' (Rom. 13:1). The modern use of the term 'state' came to prominence in the sixteenth century largely as a result of its use by Machiavelli in *The Prince*.

2 L. Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid: A Study in Church-State Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p.11.

3 R. S. Giles, 'The Church as a Counter-Culture Before Constantine', MLitt Dissertation, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1988, p.2. Giles defines a counter-culture as, 'a social construction set up as an objective reality within society, but which is quite distinct from that society, from which it experiences some degree of alienation', p.3.

4 D. Forrester, *Theology and Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp.20ff.

5. A highly critical appraisal of Eusebius' thought at this point can be found in A. Kee, *Constantine versus Christ: The Triumph of Ideology* (London: SCM Press, 1982). A review by Henry Chadwick suggests that Kee may have over-stated his case, *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 May 1982.

6 Although forever associated with the name of Constantine, this process took time to effect. Ramsey MacMullen (*Christianizing the Roman Empire: AD100-400* [London and New Haven: Yale

University Press, 1984] traces three stages: Up to the peace of the church in 313, new members entered the church impressed by the proofs and content of the Christians' faith (p.109). After this the church grew because there was financial advantage in being a Christian (p.115). After 380 there was the systematic application of persuasion and armed force (flattery and battery) to finish the task of Christianization (p.119). By 407 it could be claimed that non-Christians were outlaws and that a state religion had emerged (p.101). The turning point however was clearly AD 312/3 (p.102). The toleration of Christianity was apparently originally intended to institute a form of pluralism in which Christianity would triumph over paganism by persuasion without coercion: H. Dorries, *Constantine and Religious Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), pp.21, 23, 26, 28-29. Coercive measures began against heretics, but even here Constantine was aware of their ineffectiveness (pp.93, 101). General toleration gave way to repression of paganism as Constantine's position grew stronger: N. Baynes, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934 and 1972), pp.18-19. Paganism was penalised by Constantine's sons and then comprehensively by Theodosius the Great (379-95) whose policy of enforced conformity became the starting point for subsequent legislation (pp.49, 51-52). Under Theodosius the orthodox Christian state was founded in 392. So imperial need for a unifying religion was joined with an interpretation (or misinterpretation) of the absolute claims of Christianity to result in a messianic fusion of the kingdoms of Christ and Caesar by the time of Justinian (527-65) to produce 'Christendom'.

7 'The Church is that type of organization which is overwhelmingly conservative, which to a certain extent accepts the secular order, and dominates the masses; in principle, therefore it is universal. i.e. it desires to cover the whole life of humanity. The sects, on the other hand, are comparatively small groups; they aspire after personal inward perfection, and they aim at a direct personal fellowship between the members of each group. From the very beginning, therefore, they are forced to organize themselves in small groups, and to renounce the idea of dominating the world. Their attitude towards the world, the State and Society may be indifferent, tolerant or hostile, since they have no desire to control and

incorporate these forms of social life; on the contrary, they tend to avoid them; their aim is usually either to tolerate their presence alongside of their own body, or even to replace these social institutions by their own society. Further, both types are in close connection with the actual situation and with the development of society. The fully developed Church, however, utilizes the State and the ruling classes, and weaves these elements into her own life; she then becomes an integral part of the existing social order; from this stand-point, then, the Church both stabilizes and determines the social order; in so doing, however, she becomes dependent upon the upper classes, and upon their development. The sects, on the other hand, are connected with the lower classes, or at least with those elements in Society which are opposed to the State and to Society; they work upwards from below, and not downwards from above': E. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches Volume I* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), p.331.

8 *ibid.*, pp.335-337.

9 Forrester, *Theology and Politics*, pp.20-26. See also on this C. Villa-Vincencio, *Between Christ and Caesar: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Church and State* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p.6.

10 Jürgen Moltmann attributes this term (*Erhaltungsordnung*) to Dietrich Bonhoeffer who contrasts it with an 'order of creation' (*Schöpfungsordnung*). The latter implies an institution which derives intrinsic worth from its supralapsarian creation (i.e. prior to the fall), whereas the former indicates an institution which originates after the fall and is of temporary value only, although preserved by God's grace or wrath: 'The Lordship of Christ and Human Society' in Moltmann, *Two Studies in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), pp.76, 79-80. See also K. W. Clements, *A Patriotism for Today: Dialogue with Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (London: Collins, 1986), pp.48-49.

11 P. P. Peachey, 'Christ and the Nation in Western History', in P. P. Peachey, ed., *Biblical Realism Confronts the Nation* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1963), pp.22-23. Elsewhere Peachey defines Constantinianism as follows, 'At the core, Constantinian Christendom represents a synthesis in which religion provides sacred legitimation for the secular order and the polity secures monopoly

and protection for the religious institution': 'Constantinian Christendom and the Marx-Angels phenomenon', *Mennonite Quarterly Review* Vol 55 No 3 (1981), p.184. My own definition is, 'Constantinianism is the explicit or implicit attempt by the Christian church acting from a position of power, privilege or patronage to impose Christian values by the use of social and political power in what are believed to be the interests of the kingdom of God'.

12 R. R. Ruether, 'Augustine and Christian Political Theology', *Interpretation* Vol 79 (1975), p.258.

13 R. Williams, 'Politics and the Soul: A Reading of the *City of God*', *Militown Studies* Nos 19 and 20 (Spring and Autumn, 1987), p.57.

14 *ibid.*, pp.58-9.

15 *ibid.*, pp.63-3, 68.

16 *City of God*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p.600.

17 *ibid.*, p.593.

18 J. Milbank, 'An Essay Against Secular Order', *Journal of Religious Ethics* (December 1987), p.208.

19 *ibid.*, p.406; *City of God*, pp.877, 892.

20 R. H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes to War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960 and 1986).

21 K. R. Manley summarises the debate in, 'Origins of the Baptists: The Case for Development from Puritanism-Separatism', in W. H. Brackney and R. J. Burke, eds., *Faith, Life and Witness: The Papers of the Study and Research Division of the Baptist World Alliance 1986-1990* (Birmingham, Alabama: Samford University Press, 1990), pp.56-69.

22 E. A. Payne, 'Contacts Between Mennonites and Baptists', *Foundations* Vol 4 No 1 (January, 1961), pp.3-19.

23 'The "Sword": An Example of Anabaptist Diversity', *Baptist Quarterly* Vol 36 No 6 (April, 1996), pp. 264-279; 'Baptist and Anabaptist Attitudes to the State: A Contrast', *Baptist Quarterly* Vol 37 No 7 (July, 1996), pp.349-357.

24 For the Confession see, *The Schleitheim Confession*, translated and edited by John H. Yoder (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1973), pp.10-18.

25 The legitimacy of government and of its use of force is repeatedly and strikingly affirmed in the historic Anabaptist-Mennonite confessions: e.g., H. J. Loewen, ed., *One Lord, One Church, One Hope: Mennonite Confessions of Faith* (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985), pp.67, 77, 78, 99, 123-124 etc.

26 e.g. Exod. 23: 6-9; Deut. 10: 12, 19; Isa. 3: 13-15.

27 C. G. Brunk, 'Reflections on the Anabaptist View of Law and Morality', *Conrad Grebel Review* Vol 1 No 2 (Spring, 1983), pp.1-20.

28 W. O. Packull, 'Between Paradigms: Anabaptist Studies at the Crossroads', *Conrad Grebel Review* Vol 8 No 1 (Winter, 1990), p.6.

29 J. H. Yoder, 'Church and State according to a Free Church Tradition', in D. F. Durnbaugh, ed., *On Earth Peace: Discussions on War/Peace Issues between Friends, Mennonites, Brethren and European Churches 1935-1975* (Elgin, Illinois: Brethren Press, 1978), p.285.

30 W. Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in an Age of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

31 e.g., *Naming the Powers*, pp.99-105; *Unmasking the Powers*, p.4.

32 *Unmasking the Powers*, p.25.

33 *ibid.*, p.67.

34 *ibid.*, p.70.

35 *ibid.*, p.84.

36 J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p.223.

37 J. H. Yoder can speak here of peoplehood as belonging to this ontology along with 'ethnicity, a sense of place and forms of community': 'A "Peace Church" Perspective on Covenanting', *Ecumenical Review* Vol 38 (1986), p.320. Sociality as a created good might even include pressures and sanctions to teach and motivate wholesome behaviour. But Yoder is pessimistic about

disentangling the created reality from the power of states and rulers because there is no epistemologically reliable access to the original creation: *The Stone Lectures*. Unpublished lectures presented at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1979 and as the *Jaynes Morgan Lectures* at Fuller Theological Seminary also in 1979, deposited in the library of the London Mennonite Centre, p.53. It is strange that Yoder is so pessimistic concerning 'epistemological access', given his strong doctrine of the primacy of the church in discerning the purpose of God.

38 'The story of creation itself indicates that the cultural mode of formative activity is grounded in God's creation order. God immediately gave man the great cultural mandate: subdue the earth and have dominion over it. God placed this cultural command in the midst of the other creational ordinances. It touches only the historical aspect of creation. Through this aspect creation itself is subject to cultural development.': H. Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1979), pp.64-65.

39 *Theology and Social Theory*, p.224.

40 The phrase belongs to J. H. Yoder, 'Continental Theology and American Social Action', *Religion in Life* Vol 30 No 2 (Spring, 1961), p.230.

41 J. H. Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1964), p.17; *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1984, p.11.

42 The phrase, once more, is Yoder's: 'A Light to the Nations', *Concern Pamphlet No 9* (1961), pp.15-17.

43 Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State*, pp.5, 16.

44 1 Sam. 8: 11-22.

45 Rev. 11: 15.

46 Rom. 13: 4.

47 1 Pet. 2: 14.

48 E. Yoder, 'Christianity and the State', *Mennonite Quarterly Review* Vol 1 No 3 (1937), p.174. E. Jüngel has it that the state exists by divine appointment (*ordinatio*) not as an order of creation (*ordo*)

grounded in a metaphysic: *Christ, Justice and Peace: Towards a Theology of the State in Dialogue with the Barmen Declaration* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1992), p.46.

49 Jüngel, *Christ, Justice and Peace*, p.48.

50 R. R. Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (London: SCM Press, 1963).

51 Jude 21: 25.

52 A crucial caveat needs to be entered at this point concerning the distinction between policing and war. Just war thinking tends to argue from the necessity of a policing function to the justifiability of war under certain circumstances. Yet if these two activities are *dissimilar* then the logic fails. Arguments for their dissimilarity are based upon the fact that whereas policing maintains the peace, war is by definition the abolition of peace. The state's task is to preserve society *from* war and from both the threat and use of military force: Jüngel, *Christ, Justice and Peace*, pp.75-87; J. H. Yoder , *The Politics of Jesus; Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), pp.206-207 and *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace and Revolution: A Companion to Bainton* (Elkhart: Co-op Bookstore, 1983), p.106.

53 D. M. Thompson, Moderator's Address to the Assembly of the United Reformed Church, June 1996, p.2.

54 E. Brunner, *Justice and the Social Order* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1954), p.56.

55 The Christian claim to universal significance does not at first sight offer a basis for tolerance and has often been used to deny it. But if free and self-engaging response implies the freedom to withhold that response, tolerance becomes unavoidable. In addition, to be intolerant ignores our limited understanding and overlooks fallibility. This is not to render Christianity doubtful but to distinguish between *the original truth of the person of Christ* and the derivative *human attempt to encapsulate that in doctrine* which is always mutable. The dialogical context provided by tolerance permits the latter to come under scrutiny and so to improve itself: G. Tinder, *The Political Meaning of Christianity: An Interpretation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), pp.125-130.

56 J. P. Wogaman, *Christian Perspectives on Politics* (London: SCM Press, 1988), p.13.

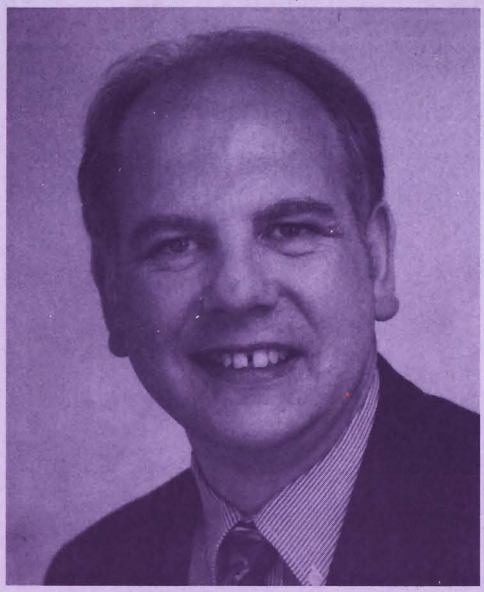
57 *ibid.*, p.231.

58 Matt. 5: 13-16.

59 I owe this reference to D. M. Thompson, Moderator's Address, p.3, citing W. Temple, *Citizen and Churchman* (London: 1941), p.35.

60 J. Moltmann, 'Covenant or Leviathan? Political Theology for Modern Times', *Scottish Journal of Theology* Vol 47 No 1 (1994), pp.30, 34.

61 J. W. Miller, 'Schleitheim Pacifism and Modernity: Notes Towards the Construction of a Contemporary Mennonite Pacifist Apologetic', *Conrad Grebel Review* Vol 3 No 2 (Spring, 1985), p.163.



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