

horizon of their lives. Such a community — and there can be other modes of such communities — will be the strongest prophetic witness to the limits of the state's competency and powers and manifest how citizens will insist on living *beyond* the political arrangements. The Wolterstorffian revision of the Divine “No!” is not against the liberal state as such, but against the liberal state made supreme, displacing the other proper and rich spheres of human life and being.

One might ask if a political theology can be so neat and tidy, the liberal democratic state derived from Romans 13? The ardent skeptic of liberalism will charge that Wolterstorff is blind to the fundamental flaws of the liberal order, blind to the Christian “No!” to human powers upon which the liberal political system rests. The secularist, who it is hoped would accept liberalism on other grounds, might be puzzled and dismissive about appeals to biblically-based argument.

To those who have inherited Barth's problem, Wolterstorff demonstrates that Paul's vision of the church and civil order is the roadmap to ensuring relative harmony and justice in *this* life (and that is God's plan, too). Christians are called to focus on faith, values, and piety, *and also* recognize the need for a *better* order in the material world of power and interactions. The challenge he lays down for Christian political theologians is how to take seriously the demands of the Gospel while recognizing that the Gospel's vision of moral governance of *this* life leads to the necessity of the political state to ensure certain modes of basic justice. The liberal democratic state — when it is well-ordered and properly situated amidst other spheres of life — can be our best avenue for instituting good order and makes the most room for the Churches and other religious communities of good will that are the hospitable places where we truly live.

Response by Nicholas Wolterstorff

doi:10.1017/S175504831400056X

This is a very accurate and perceptive review of my book; I thank Michael Kessler for it. As Kessler observes, the book is a “pushback” against the fashion, current among many Christian intellectuals, of bemoaning the liberal democratic state. I hold that the liberal democratic state is a pearl of great price and that we, who are Christians, should acknowledge it as such and speak up in its defense against its detractors.

The liberal democratic state did not emerge from somewhere beyond the pale of Christianity; it was not imposed upon us by invaders from Mars, by Hindus from India, by Muslims from Persia. It was not an alien import. It emerged in the Christian West as a solution to the strife that ensued upon the breakup of ecclesiastical unity in the early sixteenth century. It was deeply religious reformers and dissenters who argued most vigorously for the religious freedom that is definitive of liberal democracy.

Add to this that the concept of natural rights that was employed by thinkers in the eighteenth century to articulate the foundations of this new form of state was not invented by individualist philosophers of the so-called secular Enlightenment; as we now know from the work of Brian Tierney, the concept was first employed by canon lawyers of the twelfth century. It was subsequently employed by Spanish theologians of the sixteenth century, de las Casas prominent among them, and by second generation Calvinist theologians and their successors.

That said, I nonetheless share the complaints against present-day American and European society and culture that Kessler lists; it's a point that I did not sufficiently emphasize in my book. Here is Kessler's list: "declining moral values, fetishized modes of individualism, technological domination, unbridled markets, and unconstrained consumption; an ever-expanding field of state authority over life; and a decreasing tolerance of conscientious variances and religious communities."

How can I share these complaints and still defend the liberal democratic state? Because I hold that these evils are not to be laid at the door of that form of polity which is the liberal democratic state; the liberal democratic polity existed for well more than a century before these evils took root. Most of them are to be laid at the door of late modern capitalism and at the door of the amorality and libertarianism that late modern capitalism encourages. The liberal democratic polity is fully compatible with bankers and entrepreneurs regarding it as their calling to provide worthwhile services to the public and meaningful and appropriately rewarded work for their employees. It is late modern capitalism that encourages them to aim, instead, at making money for themselves and gaining power.

It is often said that the core idea behind the liberal democratic polity is the autonomy of the individual – or, since it is obvious that no one can be completely autonomous and still live alongside others, maximal compatible freedom. I have argued elsewhere (in *Understanding Liberal Democracy* 2012) that the governing idea is instead the right to equal political voice of all adult citizens, the exercise of this voice to be conducted within the framework of a constitution that protects citizens from the

passage of laws that require or permit the state to violate their fundamental natural rights. What people say with their political voice, and how they say it, is then their responsibility.

In *The Mighty and the Almighty* I develop the claim that, for Christians, the fundamental consideration in exercising their political voice should be what justice requires, and beyond that, the flourishing of the community. It appears to me that, for many of my fellow American Christians, individual liberty rather than justice is the first consideration and often the only. Libertarianism has invaded the church. Rather than struggling to counteract the tendencies and effects of late modern capitalism, large segments of the church abet those tendencies and effects.

In my book I also suggest that, in exercising their political voice, citizens should listen to the concerns and convictions of their fellow citizens and should always honor their dignity. It appears to me that a good many Christians today are like others in feeling no compunction whatsoever in dismissing out of hand the concerns and convictions of their political opponents and in demeaning them. In our society today there is a serious breakdown of moral education by families, groups, and institutions; the church is not exempt from culpability in that breakdown.

Reply by Michael Jon Kessler

doi:10.1017/S1755048314000571

I want to thank Professor Wolterstorff for his attention to some of the broader themes that cut across the authors' concerns. One of our hopes for this volume was that by taking a diverse mix of scholars, some with radically different views, and placing them in conversation, we might see themes emerge that cut across traditions, religions, and methods.

I was struck by his focus on the two-rule doctrine in his review (and his focus on Patrick Deneen's narrative of the "Great Combination"). This focus highlights the centrality of the rejection of the two-rule doctrine to the argument of *The Mighty and the Almighty*. Wolterstorff argues, as a corrective to Deneen's narrative, that the modern reception of the two-rules doctrine is a reversal of the earlier versions: "Hobbes and Locke did not undo Augustine's Great Separation but reversed the two-rules doctrine: religion was now enlisted in support of the state rather than the state being called to support the church." I would emphasize