having to regard a divine grounding of a common morality as plausible, even if they cannot affirm it in good faith." All the other writers in the collection who explicitly address the topic recommend dialogue among those who hold differing political theologies, rather than attempting to find some common set of general principles. Robin Lovin, in his essay, gives an insightful analysis of what such dialogue would look like, as does the editor in his essay, "Difference, Resemblance, Dialogue: Some Goals for Comparative Political Theology in a Plural Age."

In conclusion, let me call attention to Jerome Copulsky's essay, "History and Essence: The Construction of a Modern Jewish Political Theology." One often hears it said that liberal democracy is (or can and should be) neutral with respect to all the religions present in the citzenry. In his essay, Copulsky describes in detail the struggle that the leaders of European Jewry undertook in the 19th century to reshape Judaism so as to make it possible for the Jewish community to fit into the liberal democratic state. When that "shaping up" had taken place, it might indeed have looked as if the liberal democratic state was (or could and should be) neutral with respect to Judaism and all the other religions present in the citizenry; but that's because these religion had already all shaped up. The liberal democratic state is not neutral with respect to religions as they come. Copulsky's essay makes the point more powerfully, and in more detail, than any other that I know of.

***The Mighty and the Almighty: An Essay in Political Theology*. By Nicholas Wolterstorff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 190 pp. $29.95 paper**

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It is *de rigeur* these days among some Christian intellectuals to bemoan the liberal state. The list of complaints is serious: 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. Christian political theology, under

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the spell of the "two rules" doctrine and a healthy skepticism about human capacities and endeavors, manifests a deep suspicion of the modern state as a primary cause of these evils.

Yet when devastating crises occur, suddenly, certain core features of the liberal state are embraced. Take, for instance, Karl Barth's 1946 essay "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," written after the catastrophe of WWII: "The Church desires that the shape and reality of the State in this fleeting world should point towards the Kingdom of God, not away from it" (*Against the Stream* 1954: 34). He further concludes that "the Church always stands for the constitutional state" as well as liberal hallmarks of the established rule of and equality before the law, and individual liberties to "carry out [one's] decisions in the politically lawful sphere" (Ibid. 36–37). The problem, of course, is *how* we know to so direct political affairs and *which* human skills we use in directing them. So much of Barth's vision of human reason led in the other direction, suspicious of human capacities that might help us sort out a better direction for traversing this fleeting world.

Nicholas Wolterstorff sees the contemporary theological-political problem for Christians arising from this inability to adequately reflect on how the Church should support, judge and participate within the state. His book rejects the arguments of enlightened moderns who, as Mark Lilla put it, sit on a distant shore, self-satisfied that they have transcended the clutches of political theology and no longer live in that murky shire where citizenship and doctrine overlap. Political theology is alive and well. But secularism is not the worst enemy of political theology. Wolterstorff writes: "confront the sour and caustic attitude toward the liberal democratic state expressed nowadays by a good many Christian scholars and intellectuals" (5). A predominant mode of contemporary Christian political theology has been to see the Christian as a pilgrim traversing through a foreign land of illegitimate political and legal powers. A new generation of thinkers, identified with John Howard Yoder and developed by thinkers like Stanley Hauerwas, diminishes or negates the state's authority; in light of Christ's dominion, the *civitas* only exercises brute power to coerce compliance with its fallen policies. Whether liberal and democratic or not, the state is a fallen power. Woterstorff's seeks to correct this dismissal of the modern democratic order, the kind of just political institution that might save us from catastrophe.

The book seeks to push back against the naysayers by discerning and developing the inherent ideas of the necessity of good political order that lay in Christianity's incipient form — Paul's injunction to "submit"

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to the authorities in Romans 13. We humans are still in this space-time continuum; Christ has come but this life goes on. The task for Christians who take both of these facts seriously is to understand rightly how the state is an institution that serves a necessary role in organizing common life and preventing us from slaughtering each other. That is, Wolterstorff seeks to theorize the relationship between God's authority that subsidizes and legitimates the state, and the state's authority that it derives from its own processes and powers. How is Christ's rule manifest in and among the democratic political community?

This is a very Christian question, and Wolterstorff recognizes he aims for a Christian answer. At the same time, he asserts that in a participatory democracy, "it's important that we each be open to our fellow citizens concerning the deep sources of how we think about political issues" (8). Wolterstorff pursues a hospitable dialogue with fellow citizens within a plural, participatory democratic order, offering his view of the Christian theological account of the liberal democratic state that might correlate to their own justificatory visions. An important implication of his argument is that all citizens are legitimately citizens; the political bond cannot be premised on Christian bases for its legitimacy. At the same time, he performatively challenges the model of public reason liberalism that would have him bracket these "deep sources" and find palatable, translatable grounds for his convictions. He offers his narrative — and his argument — in a model of dialogical goodwill. This is deeply honest and refreshing.

Wolterstorff aims for a full-throated account of the liberal democratic state's authority that is simultaneously — and separately — endorsed by Christian theology. Polycarp is his model, a martyr who recognizes that he lives within multiple loyalties and under dual authority. The question for Polycarp is not how to hierarchically order God's rule above the states, but how to navigate two simultaneous orders of normative authority — orders that sometimes impose conflicting demands upon us. Polycarp is a witness to hard choices, the necessity of juggling multiple demands.

Wolterstorff confronts Yoder's objection to this scheme directly — for Yoder, the state has no authority and therefore this supposed duality of powers does not exist. Furthermore, the "two cities" objection means that while the state may have power to govern, that authority is, for the Christian, like power over an alien. Christians are in, but not of, the world. Put these together and a powerful strand of political theology takes root: the Christian, with their sights on the heavenly kingdom, owes no loyalty to, nor responsibility for, the state.

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While Polycarp is the saintly model of dualistic living, the theoretical grounds for Wolterstorff's political theology comes first from an analytical excursus in chapters four through six where he develops the idea of "governance authority structures" which, logically speaking, ground the idea that we create governing structures for positive human flourishing. He then proceeds to an analytical re-reading of Paul's injunction in Romans 13 to "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities" to counter the traditional reading that "the state is to exercise vengeance (retribution) on God's behalf; individual believers are not to avenge themselves but instead to return evil with good" (85). This has led to an impoverished reading of what the state ought to accomplish — only punishment. Wolterstorff reads Paul's argument far more richly: the state is also ordained as the institutional structure that organizes powers to protect individuals and groups from serious harm. Furthermore, the state is not created merely to exercise power per se, but to exercise power to ensure God's moral governance of the world for the good of humans. Paul's injunction to submit to the state is *because* the state exercises *de jure* moral authority as the governing authority structure and presupposes that God desires for justice to be done in the world. Wolterstorff's analysis of "governance authority structures" is the logical connection between Paul's injunction and the moral authority of the liberal democratic order.

What role does the Church play if the state is a moral force to institute justice? Wolterstorff reminds us that Paul primarily helped build a *Church*, not a new form of civil order. The way the Christian community should deal with the state is to operate in and around it, overlapping with but not yoked to it. The Church — in order to be the community it is called to be — must seek a state that encourages and ensures through the exercise of its institutional powers the kinds of freedoms among its citizens that make it possible for the church to exist and flourish. On Wolterstorff's account, these are the limits upon the state and the rights of citizens — such as ecclesial autonomy, liberty of worship and conscience, and non-interference — that are hallmarks of the Lockean-American liberal state. Wolterstorff draws out these liberal principles from within the nature of the Church as Paul envisions. It is the nature of the Church within a social order of plural persons that imposes this obligation on the state to refrain from imposing a theological vision. This Church can coexist with the liberal state quite well, when both do their work and leave the other to their proper roles.

The state is thereby limited by the presence of the Church — the community of the faithful shaped and enspirited by the *kerygma* as the ultimate

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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

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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.

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