On January 19, 2004 in Munich, at the invitation of the Catholic Academy of Bavaria, Jurgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger engaged in a public discussion on the topic ‘The pre-political moral foundations of a free state’. In this remarkable dialogue between these high profile representatives of the credenti (believers) and the laici (secular persons), between philosophy and religion, Habermas called for secular society to acquire a new understanding of religious convictions and to acknowledge that these convictions pose a ‘cognitive challenge’ to philosophy. It was as if a wall of separation had become, in an instant, a doorway to dialogue. In this timely book, Trainor makes a decisive intellectual response to the ‘challenge to dialogue’ posed by the ‘Munich moment’. He holds that the ‘secular’ and the ‘sacred’ do not depict separate realms but that they are integral aspects of a single dynamic totality. The ‘sacred’, he maintains, is the origin and end of the ‘secular’, and the ‘secular’, he holds, is only truly and fully itself when suffused with the ‘sacred’, that is, when the ruling authorities, organisations and social groups within the secular realm exercise their ‘relative autonomy’ in such a way that the ‘sacred’ (God, the Holy Spirit-in-us) is perfectly at home there, and when the Father, descending upon this realm through the authority of the Son, encounters in love the Spirit ascending within us. This means that the state is the ‘sacred in the midst of the secular’ or the ‘own self’ of society as a collective person (the Holy Spirit co-present with us in our community), and that each human society, because it is vertically related to the Divine, is not only cultural ‘all the way down’ (as postmodernism rightly contends), but also universal ‘all the way down’ or ever open to the intimations of the ‘universal Spirit’ (as the Gospel insists). All of this casts the problems currently posed by ‘rights-versus-the (common) good’ / ‘plurality-versus-unity’ disputes in the new light of ‘differences being held together by a single divine embrace’.
Christ, Society and the State

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To

The Immaculate Heart

of Mary
Introduction

*The kingdom of God is among you*
Luke 17:21

*Man fully alive is the glory God seeks*
St Ireneaus

*My kingdom is not of this world*
John 18:36

On January 19, 2004, at the invitation of the Catholic Academy of Bavaria, Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger engaged in a public discussion in Munich on the topic ‘The pre-political moral foundations of a free state’. Just as remarkable as the dialogue that took place on that day between these high profile figures is the fact that these intellectual ‘antipodes’ agreed to meet at all. In his foreword to the published version of their discussion, Florian Schuller points out that this remarkable event ‘had its origin in impressions from outside the German linguistic sphere’.¹ He mentions that in Italy a ‘very intensive, open and commit-

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ted discussion’² had been going on for years between the credenti (believers) and the laici (secular persons), between philosophy and religion, but that ‘we in Germany seem to lack a common philosophical dialogue on the basis of different positions that are interested in each other (as in Italy) or structures that permit a plurality of world views to engage in a societally institutionalised yet completely free conversation on a high level of reflection (as in France)’.³ It is hardly surprising, then, that Habermas’s call in 2001 for secular society to acquire a new understanding of religious convictions and to acknowledge that these convictions pose a ‘cognitive challenge’ to philosophy caused a great stir.⁴ It was as if a wall of separation had become, in an instant, a doorway to dialogue. My feeling is that we, in the English-speaking world, are more like Germany than we are like Italy and that we need to try our utmost to rise to the ‘challenge to dialogue’ that the ‘Munich moment’ poses. In this book, I attempt to rise to this challenge by contributing in a useful way to the broad domain of social and political theory, but I wish to approach this domain (and to look at a number of important topics and concerns within it) from a faith perspective and, in so doing, (i) to make a fruitful contribution to a dialogue between those ‘within’, so to speak, and those ‘without’ the realm of faith, (ii) to contribute to an ‘intra-faith’ dialogue between Christians who hold opposing views concerning the ‘true’ social and political significance of their faith and

². Ibid.
³. Ibid, 11
⁴. Ibid, 10
(iii) to steer as judicious a course as I can between these two kinds of dialogue (between the credenti and the laici, and within the realm of faith), whilst duly acknowledging those areas and occasions when the two in effect merge into one.

Dialogue cannot take place between individuals or groups who are located in separate, hermetically sealed universes of discourse, between which an unbridgeable chasm or division exists. Now, the very fact that Habermas calls for secular society to acquire a new understanding of religious convictions suggests that, for him at least (and certainly for me), the terms ‘secular’ and ‘sacred’ do not depict such separate realms; what I hope to make clear in this book is that they are, in theory and in truth, (that is, ‘really’ but not always ‘actually’ or ‘empirically’) integral aspects of a single dynamic totality. The ‘sacred’ is, I maintain, the origin and end of the ‘secular’, and the ‘secular’ is, I hold, only truly and fully itself when suffused with the ‘sacred’, that is, when the relative autonomy exercised by ruling authorities, organisations and social groups within the secular realm are exercised in such a way that the ‘sacred’ (God, the Holy Spirit-in-us) is perfectly at home there, and when the Father, descending upon this realm through the authority of the Son, encounters in love the Spirit ascending in us. The ‘sacred’ enfolds, and ethically and spiritually constitutes, the ‘secular’, overcoming the sinful resistance it encounters in our secular realm and patiently (though at times with anger, expressed through prophets of every kind) bringing about life to the full.
When speaking of the sacred-secular distinction, there is, I believe, no harm in using representative symbols, in, for example, using ‘priest’ and ‘king’ to designate or symbolically represent the ‘secular’ and ‘sacred’ respectively, provided that we recognise that ‘priest’ and ‘king’ are both, in their different ways, temporal media of the ‘sacred’ in the secular realm and that ultimately the distinction between ‘priest’ and ‘king’ is a distinction between distinct types of service to the ‘sacred’, rather than a distinction between the ‘sacred’ (exclusively identified with ‘priest’) and something else again. Using (and suitably adjusting) the terminology of Bernard of Clairvaux, we may say that the sacred (God) ‘reigns’, whereas the secular authorities ‘rule’. In this book I hold that the ‘sacred’ reigns through its presence in what I call ‘the invisible community of holy citizens’, by which I mean, not the visible church, but the body of citizens, including believers and non-believers, in whom the public spirit (properly recognised as the immanent, indwelling Holy Spirit) dwells. Citizens are ‘holy’ to the degree (i) that they come under the influence of the Spirit, ‘anonymously’ or otherwise, and (ii) that they live up to the designation ‘people of God’ in Revelation 21:3 (‘Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself will be with them’). We need to bear in mind here Harlan Beckley’s point that neither the church, nor any other collective agent, is ‘a force for redemption in which divine
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justice is fully immanent’. However, the church, reading the signs of the times and open to the socio-political promptings of the Spirit, has a special responsibility to try to be a visible and audible expression of this holy community and to join with all citizens of good will in helping to articulate its will.

All of this may be alternatively expressed by saying that the state is the ‘sacred in the midst of the secular’ or that it is the ‘own self’ of society as a collective person (the Holy Spirit co-present with us in our community). By referring to the state as ‘the own self of society’ (normally referred to in political theory as ‘the moral person of the state’), I mean that the state is the real or true collective purpose of its citizens/subjects (spasmodically entertained in their minds but always an ever present operative ideal) to secure justice and the true good of all. Augustine tells us that the state is simply ‘the generality of men united by the bond of common agreement’, but he makes it clear that it is an elevating and edifying Spirit-inspired agreement; it is in the spirit of the command to love God and our neighbour that Augustine finds ‘the praiseworthy security of the state, for the best city is erected and safeguarded on no other foundation than the bond of faith and unbreakable concord. This happens when the common good is loved, when God is the highest and truest good, and when men

love each other most sincerely because they love themselves for the sake of Him from whom they cannot hide the true sentiment of their hearts’. The sovereignty of justice and the common good should preside over our life as a political community; this is, in the words of Bernard of Clairvaux, ‘no ordinary sovereignty’, for it is the true sovereignty that presides over and calls to account the ruling authorities or, again more simply, it is the state. The ‘sacred’ vis-à-vis the ‘secular’ is the presiding authority of the will to justice and the common good (simultaneously a divine and an ideal collective social will) and it exercises a constant ‘spiritual gravitational pull’, so to speak, upon each political community. This spiritual/sacred authority is ultimate but indeterminate, the felt intimations of the ‘sacred’ in the midst of the ‘secular’, whereas the political and legal authority of actual, empirical sovereigns or rulers is penultimate but determinate, the sacred ‘secularised’ or the universal ‘concretised’. The former type of authority is really ‘authority-in-itself’ or the ultimate Author, God the Father and it unleashes the sacred/spiritual ‘power of Truth’, whereas the latter simply exercises the ‘power of force’. In his *Defender of the Peace*, Marsilius of Padua speaks in these terms, regarding the authority of the sacred (in his times and in his terms, the ‘authority of the priesthood’) as the ‘authority of truth’ which convicts and persuades, in contrast to secular political authority which is based on command and sanction, but a similar distinction between these two types of authority is found in John of Paris, in Martin Luther (the famous two kingdoms doctrine) and in the Salamanca school. In this book, the spiritual/secular authority of the ‘priesthood of all
citizens’ (both the *credenti* and the *laici*) replaces, or serves as the functional equivalent in our times of, Marsilius’s ‘authority of the priesthood’ or sacred authority. What this means, expressed in more personal terms, is that each of us has a responsibility (or even a kind of ‘authority’ as a citizen) to ‘preside’ over, whether or not we ‘rule’, our society, that is, to arrive at our own conception (i) of its origin and end, (ii) of what its true wellbeing consists in, and (iii) of the extent to which the actual, empirical political rule in our society matches up to its ‘presiding spirit’ or, in my terms, to the state. This applies to believers and non-believers alike.

It is not a consequence of this analysis and interpretation of the sacred-secular distinction that the visible church or Christian believers have no distinct role to play in civic and political life and that they must now fade imperceptibly into the ‘invisible body of holy citizens’, those conscientiously exercising the ‘priesthood of all citizens’. Rather the church must attempt to be its voice and visible presence, and it has a special responsibility to do so for it symbolises the presence of the sacred in the midst of the secular and is uniquely placed (i) to issue to its political community a call to social repentance and (ii) to be a visible ‘social light’ that draws the surrounding society into its sacred truth. It is important for the church and its mission, not just to have a definite institutional presence in society but also a strong, clearly visible social presence that stands at a safe distance from its institutional presence and that casts a challenging ‘light to its nation’. This is, I think, what Oliver O’Donovan has in mind when he says that the church ‘never was, in its true character,
merely the temple of the city; it was the promise of the city itself’. Hence, whilst I would take issue with Stanley Hauerwas’s rejection of ‘the very idea that Christian social ethics is primarily an attempt to make the world more peaceable or just’ and his view that Christians, as such, should not bring their faith to bear when reflecting, as citizens, on social and political issues, yet at the same time I fully agree with his insistence that the Christian churches have been too ready and too quick to embrace the ‘problems of Constantine’ as their own. I hold that Hauerwas is right to insist that for Christians there is simply nothing more important, and more true to the essence of their faith, than forming a community of believers (generally a church) in which Christ’s love, mercy and forgiveness is clear for all to see and which, by its witness and example, attracts those being saved to ‘come and see’. He is surely incontestable in his claim that the first task of the church is not so much to act effectively or successfully in the world but to be the ‘community of Christ’ in the world, the practical ‘corporate’ manifestation of the love and truth of his kingdom. Hauerwas grasps a genuine aspect of our life as Christians in the world when he says that the church is not a sect but a counter-cultural colony living within and among a largely secular culture, and he correctly insists that the main task of the church is to be a transformed (or an ‘ever being transformed’) ‘micro’

community of love and peace (a counter-cultural colony) within a largely secular society, rather than to do ‘important’ political things. In many ways, it is the ‘social presence’ of the church that is the true bearer (assuredly, it is the most effective bearer) of its spiritual/sacred authority. What I have in mind here is all of those socially visible Christian churches and communities (the Franciscans, the Salvos) who in any significant way resemble the community practices of the early post-resurrection Christians, those who sold their possessions, held all things in common, gathered daily as a group in the temple, ‘enjoyed the good will and favour of all the people and thereby daily attracted others to their company’ (Acts 2:43–47). In the case of these early Christians, we see that their ‘social presence’ was the light by which, and medium through which, the surrounding society was drawn into the heart of the sacred. Such communities are an anticipation of ‘the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God’ (Revelation 21:2), a city in which there is no temple ‘because its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb’ (Revelation 21:22); they are a living testimony to society at large that the ideal is possible with God’s grace. Thus, whilst the church must eschew the attempt to directly transform society by political means into a utopian ‘macro’ community of love and peace, it must nevertheless seek to indirectly (or non-politically but fundamentally) draw its society towards its divinely ordained perfection and it must have the courage and audacity to present itself as its (society’s) own true soul.

Richard Niebuhr in his Christ and Culture notes that ‘[t]he effort to bring Christ and culture, God’s work and
man’s, the temporal and the eternal, law and grace, into one system of thought and practice tends, perhaps inevitably to the absolutising of what is relative, the reduction of the infinite to a finite form, and the materialisation of the dynamic’. In chapter two of this book I will be arguing that Niebuhr in this quote makes a very sound point, for it is indeed erroneous to ‘absolutise the relative’ in the sense of ascribing to what is merely relative qualities possessed only by the Absolute, but equally, I will argue, we need to acknowledge that the ‘relative’ only is what it truly is (or only can be what it truly is) in its proper relation to the ‘Absolute’. Certainly, we need to be alert to the danger that (i) we might construe the ‘Absolute’ as, so to speak, ‘absorbing’ the ‘relative’ into itself in a false and distorting way that deprives it (the ‘relative’, the spatio-temporal realm) of its true character or that (ii) we might construe the ‘relative’ as attempting to contain the Absolute within itself, to be absolute itself, rather than to be the medium of the Absolute. The same problem or danger, namely that of absolutising what is only relative, is also raised by Lesslie Newbiggin in his book Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture. In that work he asserts that, as cultural beings, we are in culture as a fish is in water, and that the gospel itself is from beginning to end ‘embodied in culturally conditioned forms’. At the same time he holds that the gospel ‘calls into question all cultures, including the one in which it was origi-

Finally embodied’.

If, however, the gospel is itself cultural ‘through and through’, then how, one may well wonder, can the gospel call each particular human culture to account or find a vantage point beyond culture from which to cast its critical light on particular human cultures? Broadly, my response to this question is to say (in chapter two) that whilst we should indeed acknowledge, as Newbiggin suggests, that human societies are cultural ‘all the way down’, we need to also acknowledge that human societies embody or ‘concretise’ universal values and that they are thus universal ‘all the way down’ too. It is the ever present universality of each human culture or the vertical relation each human culture has to the Divine (the ‘Absolute’) that enables the gospel to speak universally and critically to all human cultures. This ‘real presence of the universal’ doctrine holds that that what we might broadly and liberally call the Ressourcement/culture school (de Lubac, Troeltsch, von Bathasar, Ratzinger, Stassen, Newbiggin) is right to assert that the truths of faith cannot be transmitted in a cultural vacuum and that no cultural expression of the faith is ‘absolute’, since each exists for its time only. However, the ‘real presence’ doctrine also holds that what we might call the ‘Rahnerian’ universal/instrumentalist school is right to assert that the same constant truths of faith can and should be propositionally expressed in different cultural settings and that the ‘absolute faith’ (its unchanging universal truth) is universally

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present and may be propositionally expressed in different cultural embodiments.

In the first main part of this book (God and Society) I broadly take issue with what I regard as the curious and over-inflated ‘fondness for the particular’ (for difference, diversity, specificity, the concrete, the local) in western culture at the present time and its corresponding ‘hostility towards the universal’ (oneness, sameness, form), and I argue for a re-evaluation and rehabilitation of the ‘universal’. In chapter two, for example, I argue that the ‘finger’ of unity (of the ‘universal’) points to ‘particularity’ (and to ‘specificity’ or the ‘concrete’) as ‘its other’, its necessary correlative, complement, and completion, and I show how Richard Niebuhr and Michael Walzer succeed in seamlessly incorporating into their work the truths emphasised both by the (‘particularist’, ‘historicist’, ‘post-modern’) Ressourcement/culture school and the (‘universalist’, ‘supra-historical’, ‘modern’) Rahnerian/instrumentalist school. In chapter three I show how a proper understanding of the ‘universal/particular’ relation in ethics and politics helps us to better deal with and elucidate the key issue in Christian social ethics, namely, the extent and type (or nature) of the church’s responsibility for the proper ordering of society. I hold that we can gain very valuable assistance in dealing with this question by taking into account the full socio-political significance of the crucial ethical distinction between the ‘right/just’ and the ‘good’. I hold that in the ethical consciousness the ‘right/just’ (‘right’ used in the sense of ‘just’) primarily consists in our recognition of the value of persons, whereas the ‘good’ consists mainly in our endeavours to realise
values. Thus, when acting justly or when considering the requirements of justice, our primary concern is to act in conformity with our recognition or acknowledgement of the absolute value of persons as spiritual beings and the church has every right to speak its mind, whereas when it is a (mainly political) matter of realising value, in the form of the ‘common good’, the church, I suggest, needs to be considerably more circumspect, for we are dealing here with a delicate political version of von Balthasar’s ‘perichoresis of the transcendentals’ (not just truth, beauty and goodness, but also the values of liberty, independence and equality) and whilst church members would assuredly agree on value-based political objectives when pitched at a sufficiently high level of generality (helping the poor, liberating the oppressed, etc), they are liable to diverge in liberal, conservative and socialist directions as soon as practical policy measures are proposed to achieve such objectives and to realise the common good in a concrete sense.

In this chapter (chapter three) I adopt the kind of Rahnerian position that has been strongly criticised by John Milbank and I defend Rahner against Milbank’s criticism that he regards the ‘social’ as an ‘autonomous sphere which does not need to turn to theology for its self understanding’ and that, as employed by ‘Rahnerian integralists’, theological beliefs ‘tend to become but a faint regulative gloss upon Kantian ethics and a somewhat eclectic,

though basically Marxist, social theory’.\textsuperscript{12} Milbank holds that the French version of integralism (Blondel, de Lubac) properly ‘recognises the always finitely mediated character of participation in the supernatural’,\textsuperscript{13} whereas the German Rahnerian version fails to do so, but this is because he holds, erroneously as I shall argue, that there is an incompatibility between what he terms Blondel’s ‘supernatural pragmatism’ and Rahner’s ‘foundational praxis’.\textsuperscript{14} In this chapter (chapter three) I also argue that the conviction that Christians have a sacred duty to promote the wellbeing of society is broadly reflected in the writings of major Christian thinkers and theologians, not only in the case of mainstream Catholic social thought and the Reformed doctrine of ‘the Lordship of Christ over all’ but also, though to a lesser degree and with a strong realistic acknowledgement of the limitations imposed by our rebellious and sinful humanity, in the case of Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms.

In the second main part of the book (God and Truth) I focus on truth, justice, goodness, common decency, unselfishness, integrity, etc, as values and virtues that belong to the whole of (our common) humanity. In the present postmodern climate, and especially in the light of Michel Foucault’s devastating critique of ‘Masters of Truth’ and totalistic (Truth-revealing) metanarratives, it has become increasingly difficult to seriously believe that anything is ‘good and true’ or any goals or social visions

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 209.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
worth striving for. Foucault took a strong stand against ‘Truth’ and warned us to be ever alert to what he called the ‘main danger’, by which he meant the latest ‘regime of truth’ expressing our personal or collective ‘will to power’ and parading itself socially, politically or culturally as a ‘regime of Truth’. Now when Foucault speaks in this way, what he has to say is not without precedent in the Christian tradition, especially when Christian writers are contemplating the contrast between (the holiness of) God and (the corruption of) humanity or when they are reflecting upon what we might call the social and political equivalent of the view that ‘free will avails for nothing but sinning’. Now, this Christian ‘point of contact’ with Foucault is real in one sense but illusory in another; it is real in the sense that all of us who believe in a ‘God who saves’ experience moments when we are acutely aware of the contrast between the holiness of God and our own sinfulness. However, it is illusory in the sense that for the ‘soul being saved’, it is the revelation of the majestic reality of God’s Truth (His infinite love, mercy and beauty) that reveals the full depths and ugliness of our conceit and sinfulness (the truth of our ‘egoity’ and the ‘worldly truths’ it engenders and defends) as a ‘contrast-effect’. In the case of Foucault, this contrast between our human truths and God’s absolute Truth is entirely absent; his human (worldly) truths stand alone, without any ‘constitutive’ divine counterpoint or divine criterion.

In the present intellectual climate, those who entertain a social vision of any kind (socialist, feminist etc) are liable to be accused of entertaining Truth-inspired totalistic ‘designs’ upon their fellow human beings. Against this back-
drop, I suggest in chapter four that the baby (Truth) has been recklessly thrown out with the bathwater (totalistic ideologies) and that we need to strenuously attempt to re-legitimise the quest for Truth. In this chapter I suggest that we need to keep the quest for Truth at the heart of our personal and ‘civic’ lives in the manner suggested by classical political theory. I also suggest that, as Christians, we should entertain an attitude of ‘ecumenical graciousness’ towards all Truth-metanarratives, and that we should be ‘servants’ rather than ‘masters’ of Truth as we pursue (both personally and collectively) our quest for ‘the right, the good and the true’. In chapter five, I argue that the ‘own self’ to which I personally wish to be true is spiritually connected to the ‘collective own self’ to which we, as a society, wish to be true, and that the state (the public spirit or the ‘collective own self of society’) requires of us as citizens that we seriously endeavour to pursue public policy measures that are ‘good and true’ or as good and true as the limits of our human powers will allow. We are required, indeed, to form a truly (that is ‘Truth-oriented’) deliberative democracy whose procedures allow the ‘collective own self of society’ the maximum freedom of expression and realisation. To be a temple of the Holy Spirit is a privilege of society as a ‘collective person’ or ‘body politic’ and not just a privilege of individuals and of the gathered community of believers, so that it is to the Holy Spirit that we are ultimately referring when we refer to the ‘public spirit’ or to the ‘collective own self’ of society. Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit that we serve in political life, though we are really, in a sense, only serving our selves (our true interests). In this chapter I suggest that, as
citizens, we must be seekers and servants of the Truth of our society, and then show that the relationship of public policy and the state (government) to Truth is inadequately portrayed by Walzer and Foucault but positively illuminated by Bernard Bosanquet. I hold that if Foucault, taken as representative of contemporary postmodernism, is the ‘theoretical problem’, then the ‘theoretical solution’ lies in the work of a theorist such as Bosanquet, taken as representative of traditional social philosophy and political theory and as a strong exponent of what I call ‘the ethical theory of the state’. I explore the Truth-oriented communitarianism of Bernard Bosanquet and show how it provides a theoretical complement to (or perhaps an unwelcome metaphysical fulfilment of) Michael Walzer’s communitarianism. In section (iii) of this chapter, I view the state as a form of what I call ‘ethico-political consciousness’, as a kind of ‘collective subject’ that pursues Truth in social and public life (the ‘social promptings’ of the Spirit) and that contributes thereby to what Barth refers to as ‘the fulfilment of the State’s own righteous purposes’.

In this chapter (chapter five) I also argue that one of the most important ‘righteous purposes’ of the state is to preserve and support the (traditional) nuclear family as the basic unit of a single, unified society. We need to bear in mind that a liberal pluralist democratic society is still one society, a unity of differences which need to be constantly integrated and harmonised by a unifying will, and that it needs agreed-upon norms and a public philosophy or a

15. Community, State and Church: Three Essays (Gloucester Mass: Peter Smith, 1968), 171.
public orientation to the common good that is ‘consensus seeking’ and ‘consensus generating’. This is what I try to provide in my discussion of the traditional nuclear family as the basic unit of society and also in my discussion of the homosexual couple as a family, and what Richard John Neuhaus has in mind when he speaks of the need for Christians to develop a mediating language through which religious language dealing with ultimate things can be used to elucidate social and political issues. Just as all citizens in a liberal pluralist community must continue the ongoing quest for unity-in-diversity (for a unifying will that blends together ever changing and proliferating differences), so too they must continue the ongoing quest for a ‘public philosophy’ or for a philosophy that is as ‘public’ and common as possible. Christians, I will suggest, should be fully themselves in contributing to this quest. They should make a strong religiously grounded contribution to public philosophy and, in so doing, try to touch the ‘spiritual heart’ and deepest convictions of all citizens. In this chapter, my broad concern is the same as Habermas’s, namely to ‘ask which cognitive attitudes and normative expectations the liberal state must require its citizens—both believers and unbelievers—to put into practice in their dealings with each other’.16

In his The Desire of the Nations; Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology, Oliver O’Donovan has recently suggested that ‘classic liberalism’ is more sympathetic and

open than ‘[r]ecent reworkings of the tradition’\textsuperscript{17} to the idea of a Christian society, or at least to an acknowledgement that it is important for the members of a society to engage in a common quest for truth. Likewise, in a number of comments made following the presentation of a paper by Kenneth Grasso at the Ethics and Public Policy Centre in May 1995, a succession of speakers emphasised what they saw as the importance of ‘saving liberty from liberalism’. Grasso himself uses this expression. Sometimes, he says, ‘liberalism’ is used to mean a broad, practical political orientation in favour of the rule of law, limited government, constitutionalism, etc. and in this broad sense it predates modernity, whereas liberalism as a distinct political philosophy with a particular understanding of the individual and society and its own metaphysic, is a modern phenomenon, which, for the sake of clarity, he calls ‘modernist liberalism’.\textsuperscript{18} ‘The task today’, he says, ‘is to save liberty—and liberalism in the first sense of the term—from modernist liberalism’\textsuperscript{19}. Though not using this particular expression, it is clear that many of the speakers who commented on Grasso’s work were likewise concerned to ‘save liberty from liberalism’. Luis Lugo, for example states:

\textsuperscript{17} The Desire of the Nations; Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 221.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 139.
We no longer have the liberalism of John Locke, who borrowed deeply from Christian sources, including Catholic sources, through the French Calvinists. The problem is that liberalism has sort of exhausted the very sources that sustained it and has come to the view that it no longer needs them. But once it jettisons them, it realises that it has no way to justify itself. That’s what I see the Christian tradition doing: coming in to seek to rescue the best parts of liberalism from itself.\(^{20}\)

In a similar vein, Paul Marshall states:

I think that we allow liberals to claim credit for too much. One of the things that annoy me intensely about Rawls and Rorty—and there are many things—is their use of ‘us’ and ‘we’. They are claiming all the goodies of Western history and of a constitutional or a limited state and saying, ‘This is us, the Enlightenment and liberals, this is just our position’. They have no right to say that. The notion of ‘liberal’ as an expression is early nineteenth century. The notion of a constitutional order, of limited government, or a rule of law, vastly predates that. Liberalism is the product of

that, not the originator . . . It is trying to take something out of an older, Christian tradition of thinking about the state and make it independent. We should try to take this stuff back from the liberals by asking them to justify, in terms of liberal thought, where they think it originated.\textsuperscript{21}

Finally, Glenn Tinder states:

I think it may be a big mistake to make an enemy out of liberalism, in part because liberalism may be capable of being renovated. There are various kinds of liberalism. I wrote my master’s thesis on Bernard Bosanquet and my doctoral thesis on Thomas Hill Green, two people who are rarely mentioned any longer. Both give a very different tone to liberalism than is found in John Stuart Mill. When we talk about liberalism as the enemy, we tend to foreclose the possibility of a renovation of liberalism, and we also tend to blind ourselves to who our real enemy is. If I had to say who I think the enemy is, I would use words like ‘relativists,’ or maybe ‘nihilists,’ or ‘postmodernists,’ or ‘pragmatists’: Richard Rorty represents something that is extremely dan-

gerous. My sense is that liberalism has been devastated by this real enemy, whatever we call it, whether postmodernism or anti-foundationalism or something else. Our primary enemy may be metaphysical, and our primary response may have to be metaphysical.²²

I am generally sympathetic to the views expressed by these writers²³ and in chapter six of this book I set myself the task of trying to save liberalism in one sense (the earlier form of ‘universal liberalism’) from liberalism in another sense (the more recent development of ‘particularist liberalism’). I argue that the attempt to justify the core institutions and cultural practices of ‘our way of life’

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²³ In my Justice and the State: On Liberal Organicism and the Foundations of Emancipatory Politics (Quebec: World Heritage Press, 1998), I present what I call a ‘liberal organicist’ defence of emancipatory politics; it is liberal in that it emphasises the freedom and dignity of each individual, assigning indeed to each person an absolute significance, but it is also organicist in that it holds that we are social beings, that our identity is formed (we are ‘who and what we are’) in and through our relations with others and through sharing in the life of wider totalities or forms (the family, kinship groups, the community). Liberal organicism needs to be clearly distinguished from any form of holism or organicism which regards the individual as merely an aspect of (alone ‘real’) social totalities and has nothing in common with any form of liberalism which holds that individuals are the ‘basic stuff’ of society and that ‘society’ is indeed no more than a term for designating the variety of external relations pertaining between a number of (alone ‘real’) individuals.
in terms of the values of our common humanity is not a ‘western prejudice’ but a universal, sound and wholesome ‘human prejudice’; it is one, moreover, that needs to be cultivated and properly (that is, critically) deployed, especially where ‘inter-civilisational’ matters are concerned. This involves the nurturing of what I call ‘universal politics’ or ‘universal criticism’, that is, a willingness on the part of a political community to subject its way of life and cultural practices to the critical judgment of the court of our common humanity (our ‘universal’ humanity). It is in the spirit of universal criticism, thus understood, that I defend ‘western’ (universal) liberalism against a variety of charges that have been directed against it, and argue that the kind of ‘universal’ liberal doctrine developed in the west and seen as indispensable to (Judaeo-Christian) western civilisation warrants serious consideration, not only by those already sympathetic to the liberal tradition but by everyone, including members of non-western Muslim societies often deemed to be ‘non-liberal’. I will also argue that we need to do our utmost to ensure that our use of the expression ‘our tradition’ or ‘our way of life’ should not be used as an instrument of closure or separation from our universal humanity (from ‘God-in-us-all’) and that the great disadvantage of the kind of ‘particularistic’ defences of liberalism presented by John Rawls, Joseph Raz and John Gray is that they do just that, regarding ‘our way of life’ as somehow self-justifying, as beyond the reach of universal criticism. I also argue that Samuel Huntington’s The Clash of Civilisations; Remaking
of World Order is susceptible to a similar kind of critique.\textsuperscript{24}

In part three of the book (Christ and State) we focus on the nature and role of the state. In chapter seven I argue that the kind of ethical-metaphysical theory of the state that we broadly associate with idealist political philosophy provides us with a theoretical account of the state that is both sound and insightful and that it is quite capable of withstanding the hostile criticisms to which it has been subjected in the twentieth century. According to this theory or approach, the state, as well as being a broad network of political and judicial institutions, is also, and more fundamentally and essentially, an ethical community or a ‘living ethical reality’ in whose name governments act and in whose name governments that fail to live up to their divinely ordained task of realising the public good (common interest) may be justly condemned. Another name for this ‘living ethical reality’, I contend, is the Holy Spirit or the ‘angelic presence’ of the Spirit in the socio-political realm. Having looked in this chapter at the state as the ‘own self’ of society as a ‘collective person’, I then look in chapter eight at Barth’s version of the ethical theory of the state and his understanding of the state as an ‘angelic power’ or presence. I argue that Barth rightly insists that the rebellious powers and principalities have been created in and for God, that they do not belong to themselves, and that from the first ‘they stand at the dis-

\textsuperscript{24} The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order (New York: Touchstone, 1997).
posal of Jesus Christ’. To the extent that these powers fall under the influence of ‘the hosts of spiritual darkness’ and attempt to exist in their own right and apart from God, they will be destroyed in their ‘separateness’, their bastardised form of existence, and re-integrated into God’s creation (or restored to their true point and purpose in Christ). I then suggest that when reflecting upon this ‘fading away’ of the principalities and powers (in the sense of the spiritual forces of darkness), it is helpful to think in terms of the ‘twin flows of salvation’ from God to humanity (creation) and from humanity (creation) to God.

In chapter nine, I draw attention to the fact that Barth developed his ethical or righteous theory of the state as a critical response to the emerging totalitarian regime in Germany, for too often the ethical theory of the state associated with Green and Bosanquet is seen as a sinister harbinger of totalitarian tendencies, whereas the truth is the very opposite. As in the case of Barth’s ethical/righteous theory of the state, the ethical theory of the state does not lead to, but stands firmly against and roundly condemns, totalitarian political ideologies. However, it has to be acknowledged that Bosanquet does make himself vulnerable to the charges of statism and anti-juristic moralism by his outright and, in my view, ill-considered rejection of the tradition of civil association, for it lends powerful practical and theoretical support to the juristic concern for justice and for solidly grounded individual rights. I argue

that, in order to avoid the charges of statism and totalitarianism, exponents of the ethical theory must do what Bosanquet failed to do and embrace the tradition of civil association as its true counterpart and completion.

Through the Scriptures, we are introduced to the idea that God (the Father) is somehow ‘really’ present (or is re-presented or has a ‘face’ or appearance/epiphany) in the world through his Son, Jesus Christ and we also have some idea what it might be like for God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, to be present in the church (as Christ’s body) or in the individual believer (as a temple of the Holy Spirit). However, we have very little idea—and an insignificant armoury of concepts to help us reflect upon and ascertain—what it might be like for God to be ‘indirectly present’ (again, being re-presented or having a ‘face’) in the political world of our experience through the state. The political theory of Thomas Hobbes can help us here, for he speaks in a very illuminating way of a ‘person’ of the state who is present in and through the collective will of those seeking peace and justice in good conscience, and when he does so, it certainly sounds as if he has in mind something like God’s ‘indirect presence’ in the civil realm or the political counterpart (or analogue) of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the gathered community of believers. Exponents of the ethical theory of the state hold that a common moral purpose or unifying will informs our lives as citizens but this ‘ethical unity of the state’, as we may call it, received perhaps its strongest, most intellectually daring and most articulate expression in the work of Thomas Hobbes. He figures prominently in this final part of the book (The Holy Spirit, Law and the State) be-
cause in articulating this notion of a ‘person’ of the state, he assigns a redemptive role to law and to the universally operative ‘spirit’ of both natural and civil law. Perhaps more than any other political philosopher, he exhibits a very fine and subtle understanding of the ennobling and constructive role of law and in this respect, as I point out in chapter ten, Hobbes is at one with Reinhold Niebuhr’s insistence that the civil laws of society, as ‘the servants and instruments of the spirit of brotherhood’, exercise a redeeming or uplifting influence on the citizen body. Hobbes is also illuminating and ‘ecumenically valuable’ because he is associated both with the (Catholic) natural law tradition and yet also with the (Protestant) Occamite, nominalist tendencies of the Reformation tradition and his work may thus serve, even today, as a bridge between the two.

Barth, of course, is well known for the antagonism he expressed towards the Catholic natural law tradition associated with Thomas Aquinas and towards the view that all persons, having been created in the image of God and with God’s law written on their hearts, have at least a natural foundation or divine compass that points to God, or a kind of ‘pathway to God’ in their souls. However, I suggest in chapter eleven that whilst Barth, in his earlier work, is clearly out of sympathy with these Catholic ‘natural law’ views both rhetorically and substantively, yet we find that in his later work he appears to be out of sympathy rhetorically rather than substantively. I hold that the natural law tradition is not only consistent with Barth’s later theology but may indeed be used to broadly support his ‘theological politics’ and more specifically, his
theological account of the state. In this chapter I also (i) look at the strained relationship between the ‘Catholic’ natural law tradition and ‘Protestant’ Reformation theology in general, (ii) indicate whilst doing so that precisely the same strain has arisen more recently within Catholic theology itself and then (iii) suggest that, in a similar vein, there is actually a basic compatibility between apparently contending positions held (over the centuries) between Catholic and Protestant thinkers and held (more recently) within Catholic theological circles. I hold that whilst law as ‘essence’ or ‘nature’ may certainly be characterised descriptively or ontologically (in the ‘Catholic’ manner) as ‘form’ as opposed to matter, yet it is also the ‘personal’ voice of God addressed (in the ‘Protestant’ manner) to existential (sinful and rebellious) human matter through essence/form. Law in its truest sense simply is ‘prescriptive form or essence’; it is the prescriptive claim exercised by the eternal and unfallen upon the temporal and fallen. The ‘prescriptive essence’, considered as prescriptive, is the voice of God as the mystical font of law entering our lives with authority; considered as essence, it is the uplifting Spirit constantly flowing through us and bringing our humanity to its proper fulfilment. Hobbes treats it as such, whereas Derrida regards it, not as ultimately emanating from its source in God at all, but from an originary or ‘foundational’ act of violence, as I show in the next chapter (chapter twelve).

True or legitimate political authority can have no truck with political violence, with the kind of murderous acts of foundational violence that established ‘European America’ and its laws (‘European Australia’ and its laws,
etc) and yet, in a sense, the violence of sin and the sin of violence are deeply embedded in our fallen nature. We see all around us (and in us) the grotesque inevitability of violence (or so it seems at times) in a fallen world, and we are aware of God’s absolute abhorrence of it, but we also know that God’s hatred of sin is matched by his love for the sinner and his hatred of the violence in each of us (our sin) by his love for the (violent) sinner. In the light of this, what is the status of governments instituted and laws enacted by violent conquerors? In this chapter I wish to suggest that when Jacques Derrida contends that the ultimate font or origin (what he calls the ‘mystical foundation of authority’) of law is an originary or ‘foundational’ act of violence, this is tantamount to saying that God’s blessing of a ‘violent’ people (what people is wholly innocent of violence?) implies God’s blessing of their violence. I argue that Derrida is mistaken in holding that the ultimate font of (legitimate) political authority is a ‘foundational’ act of violence and that Hobbes is correct in holding that the state, as the collectivised will to peace and as ‘authorised force’, is the very antithesis of the rampant violence of the state of nature and of the kind of originary or ‘foundational’ violence of which Derrida speaks. Hobbes was a ‘foundationalist’ in the entirely proper sense that he believed that it was possible to trace the authority of law to its source in the ‘person’ of the state and to God as the author of nature, but I suggest in this chapter that Derrida and, more recently, Jens Bartelson fall prey to a curious, one-sided narrow view of ‘foundationalism’. However, I also argue that Derrida is extremely helpful in drawing our attention to the violent foundations of political
regimes and that we should employ his insights to draw a distinction between the empirical, historical de facto origins (causes) of political regimes and the (universal) ethical grounds or reasons for regarding them as legitimate (de jure) or illegitimate, just or unjust.

I also suggest in this final chapter that, despite his rejection of metaphysics, Derrida is implicitly metaphysical in his treatment of justice. He holds that what he calls ‘impossible’ and ‘mad’ justice is a kind of epiphany in the mind of the critical ethical observer (a kind of ‘phenomenal’ appearance in the critical, focused mind of real, incalculable ‘noumenal’ justice) and he speaks in almost ‘Hegelian-Christian’ terms of deconstruction as the permanent, circulating movement of the spirit of justice in human history, ‘objectively’ going about its business well before it happened to be called ‘deconstruction’. Thus I suggest that the key reason for his apparent blindness to the presence of universal justice is that he calls it by another name (deconstruction). He asks us to banish from our minds the ghost of ‘calculable, rule-associated justice’ that induces in us a sense of illusory certainty and to allow instead the presence of ‘incalculable universal justice’, the mystical spirit of justice itself, to exercise a kind of sovereign freedom in our minds. This certainly resembles the way in which we Christians invite the Holy Spirit to be the sovereign lord of all aspects of our lives and thoughts. It comes, then, as no surprise to find that in using the language of deconstruction, Derrida is simply doing what the leading proponents of the Christian faith and western metaphysics, using the language of universalism (of reason, truth, justice and freedom), have always done. So
understood, even against his wishes (though his wishes in this regard are by no means clear), Derrida’s deconstructive (and divisive) wall of ‘universal suspicion and separation’ becomes instead both a bridge to, and an instrument of, the kind of common philosophical dialogue which Habermas and Ratzinger believe to be possible and which, I believe, their shared ‘Munich moment’ has indeed shown to be possible against all the odds.
Part One

Christ and Society