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SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES IN THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH

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Karl Barth's contribution to theology was so enormous that much of his work is still insufficiently known. He wrote much, apart from *Church Dogmatics* and *The Epistle to the Romans*, that is still worthy of consideration. Such is his treatment of church and state.

He pursued a variety of interests, and his influence extended beyond theology. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Karl Barth was among the foremost of those Christians who resisted the attempt to subjugate the Evangelical Church to the state. Barth was one of the leading figures behind the stand taken by the German Confessing Church in its protest against Nazism, and was the principal draftsman of the Barmen Declaration of 1934.

Clearly these momentous events were not indifferent to the framing of Barth's theology. Barth retained a political influence at least until 1945, with his controversial ideas about the correct attitudes to adopt towards defeated Germany and towards the threat of Communism in post-war Europe. Yet Barth had never felt that his theology should be separate from his politics. In March 1939 he spoke in a series of Dutch cities and was requested not to talk about political issues, but countered by stating categorically that, "Wherever there is theological talk, it is always implicitly or explicitly political talk also."¹

While in his pastorate at Safenwil (1911-1921) Barth's thought became influenced by local industrial conditions. "Class warfare, which was going on in my parish, introduced me almost for the first time to the real problems of real life."² In a provocative lecture on "Jesus Christ and the Social Movement", Barth contrasted the Church's failure to deal with the social needs, with Jesus Christ as the partisan of the poor, and according to whom one "has to be a comrade to be a man at all." 'Comrade Pastor' Barth was led therefore, early in his career, to reflect on the Church's involvement in society.

Barth's growing disillusionment with the theological liberalism he had formerly espoused helped to develop a fresh theological stance. Barth began to stress the "transcendence of the world of the Bible, of God's world over the world of man". Under the terrible impression made by the First World War, Barth felt bound to break with the liberal theology of his day. The resultant second edition of *Romans* has been described as "the most powerful piece of theological writing of the twentieth century".³ In Barth's theology of crisis the Church is humanity's great achievement. It is "Israel", "religion", "law", "justification by works" par excellence. The Church is for Barth contrasted with the Gospel. Barth's doctrine of the Church, in *Romans*, is another way of presenting his main theme — the distinction and the relation of man through God's activity alone. Barth's involvement in and discussion with modern culture necessitated his consideration of contemporary social and political movements. Towards the end of the 1920s Barth criticised the attitude of the German Evangelical Church. "For the first time it had found its own feet in independence from the state, it developed a remarkably pompous self-importance which did not seem to be matched by the content and profundity of its preaching."⁴ The relationship of Church and State was forcing itself to the fore in contemporary issues. Barth's concern to direct the challenge of the Gospel to the roots of man's social and political structures confronted the cultural developments of the 1930s, especially the National Socialist movement and Marxist socialism. He regarded Fascism as a religion from which "Christianity could expect only opposition", which presented an even greater temptation, "namely to conform to it."⁵

Whilst at Basle Barth came to the view that the Confessing Church had shown no awareness that to affirm the first commandment "under National Socialism was not just a 'religious' but also a political decision. It is a decision against a totalitarian state which as such cannot recognize any task, proclamation or other other than its own, nor acknowledge any other God than itself." He maintained that individual Christians must offer direct, political resistance to the Nazi state. In 1936 Barth, in Hungary as a guest of the Reformed Church there, lectured on church and state under the title, "People's Church, Free Church, Confessing Church". He argued that the state's authority derived from the reconciliation of Christ. The state has a clear function whether it fulfils this willingly, or not. In June 1938 Barth lectured in Brugg and Liestal offering a reconsideration of the theology of church and state. "Rechtfertigung und Recht", (Justification and Justice) is one of the two short works he wrote specifically on this subject. In English this work was published as "Church and State" while the second work is "The Christian Community and the Civil Community". The former was intended to give the Swiss people such clear information that they would not acquiesce in Germany's annexation of Austria.

"Church and State" in its English translation was published in May 1939, not a year after its first airing. With an introduction there are four separate sections entitled "The Church and State as they confront one another", "The Essence of the State", "The Significance of the State for the Church", and "The Service which the Church owes the State".

Barth introduced his subject by stating that 'Justification and Justice' indicated the question which he hoped to answer. "Is there a connection between the justification of the sinner through faith alone, completed once and for all by God through Jesus Christ, and the problem of justice, the problem of human law?"⁶

Thus Karl Barth (whose own life witnessed the conflicts which may easily exist between divine justification and civil justice) sought not to separate these two but make clear their connections. The reformers had demonstrated that both realities exist and that both are not in conflict. Yet for Barth the Reformers' consideration of this subject was incomplete. Neither Luther in "Of Wordly Authority", nor Calvin, in the final chapters of the "Institutes", showed how the two connect. Certainly the Reformers showed that authority and law rest on a particular 'ordination' of divine providence which is itself necessary because of unconquered sin but this does not satisfactorily meet the need. For Barth the basis and foundation of human law was crucial but was it justice or justification? "Or were they not secretly building on another foundation and in so doing... were they not actually either ignoring or misconstruing the fundamental truth of the Bible?"⁷

Barth considered what might have happened if no connection at all had been made between justice and justification. On the one hand, a highly spiritual church might be built, exclusively stressing the Kingdom of God, but refusing to enter into the sphere of human justice. On the other hand it might be possible to emphasise the problem of human law (retaining some general divine providence but free from the Reformers' linking of justice and justification) and to construct a secular church in which any 'God' would bear little relation to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in which the human justice proclaimed bore little resemblance to God's justice. Barth felt it was clear that since the Reformation both these possibilities ("Pietistic Sterility" and the "sterility of the Enlightenment") had been realized and some responsibility for this lay at the Reformers' door. To avoid "sterile and dangerous separations" between the "two realms" Barth went to the scriptures "in the intensity of our present situation." The basic teaching of the Church (i.e. the Reformed Church) on her relation to the State is reflected in Christ's execution by the State and its officials. The State, he described, was "one of those angelic powers of this age . . . always threatend by 'demonization', that is by the temptation of making itself an absolute".⁸

The Church Barth saw as the "actual community of the New Heaven and the New Earth, . . . and therefore in the realm of the State a foreign community." Yet even so "the solidarity of distress and death unites Christians with all men, and so also with those who wield political power." Though the Church may suffer persecution rather than participate in the deification of Caesar, yet it recognizes its responsibility for the State and Caesar, and so it prays for the State and its officials in all circumstances. Whereas others may point to the conflict between Church and State, Barth felt the "positive connection" between the two should be determined.

In his section on "The Church and the State as they Confront one another" Barth discussed Jesus' confrontation with Pilate. The Reformers understood this by reference to John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world". Yet for Barth this was unsatisfactory. From the encounter between Jesus and Pilate two outstanding points emerge — the State expressed itself in 'demonic' form as 'the power of the present age' and also the homelessness of the Church in this age was revealed. Had the world's rulers recognized God's wisdom then they would not have crucified Jesus (I Cor. 2:6f). In John 19:11 Jesus confirmed Pilate's claim to have 'power' over Him, and this power is neither "accidental" nor "presumptuous" but given "from above". If Pilate had released Jesus it would not necessarily have meant that he, and the State, had recognized Jesus' claim to be King. Indeed, the State is neutral as regards truth. However the release of Jesus "would have meant the legal granting of the right to preach justification". Pilate's use of power allowed "injustice to run its course". John sought to show that what occurred was "the only possible occurrence". Pilate always therefore was the "human created instrument of that justification of sinful man" completed for all through the crucifixion. Pilate's role was crucial. When Pilate took Jesus he declared the "solidarity of paganism with the sin of Israel, but in so doing also enters into the inheritance of the promise made to Israel".

A second truth to emerge from the Jesus/Pilate encounter is that, although the 'demonic' State may will evil, yet it may be constrained to do good. The State cannot refuse to render the service it is intended to render. Therefore it should always receive its due respect, and the New Testament requires its representatives should be treated honourably (Rom.13:1-8, 1 Peter 2:17).⁹

One further point should not be overlooked. Jesus was not condemned as an enemy of the State. Indeed the gospels agree that Pilate declared him innocent (Matt.27:19-24, Mk.15:14, Lk.23:14-15, 22, John 18:38, 19:4-6). His duty lay in acquitting Christ. The implication therefore is that the evangelists regard Pilate's refusal to grant such protection as a deviation from duty. Pilate crucified Jesus because he wished to satisfy the people (Mk.15:15). Jesus died not in accordance with the law of the State nor with justice but in "flagrant defiance of justice".

Barth's judgement of the Pilate/Jesus encounter is that the 'demonic' State asserted itself too little not too much. It failed to be true to itself. Yet Pilate's misuse of power could not alter the fact that the power was really given "from above". Pilate's failure makes clear that real, human justice, exposing the true face of the State, would inevitably mean recognizing the right to proclaim divine justification.¹⁰

Barth's second section deals with the exegesis of Romans 13:1-7 and other Biblical passages relevant to "The Essence of the State". He remarked that (Rom. 13:1) indicates a group of angelic powers, "created, but invisible, spiritual and heavenly powers, which exercise a certain independence, and have a certain superior dignity, task and function, and exert a certain real influence." Barth suggested that the early church understood the State, the emperor, king or their representatives as such angelic powers. Pilate had power (*exousia*) to crucify or release Jesus. Clearly the State moved from being the defender of that law established by God's will and became . . . "dominated by the Dragon, demanding the worship of Caesar, making war on the Saints, blaspheming God." When the State crucified Jesus it became demonic. Therefore although Christ and the State may appear totally separate there is yet more to be said on "the beast of the abyss". Barth concluded that the rebellious angelic powers as Christ's resurrection and parousia makes clear will be forced into the service of Christ.¹¹

Through the Church rebel angelic powers shall see the mystery of salvation which will be revealed in the future (1 Peter 1:12). Here is no question of justification of the 'demons' or 'demonic forces'. Christ called back the angelic powers to their original order. Further rebellion, therefore, may only occur within Christ's order, according to creation, in the form of unwilling service to Christ's Kingdom, until even that unwillingness is broken down by Christ's resurrection and parousia. Obviously therefore the 'political angelic power', the State, belongs ultimately to Jesus Christ, and should serve Christ, and seek the justification of the sinner.

The New Testament shows that the State could show its neutral attitude towards truth and give the Church its real freedom. The Church's relations with the State are not uniformly dark but show "distinctions between one State and another, between the State of yesterday and the State of today." Barth even interpreted the gift of discerning the Spirits as bestowing on the Church a "most significant political relevance in preaching, in teaching, and in pastoral work".¹²

In Barth's third section, "The Significance of the State for the Church", he pointed out that Christians have always concentrated their hopes not in the present age but in that "which is to come". That Christians have "no continuing city here" (Hebs. 13:14) does separate the Church from the State but also, according to Barth, serves to unite them. New Testament language is political—Kingdom of God, of Heaven, King of this realm, Messiah and Kyrios. In Revelation 21 it is not the real church (*ekklesia*) but the real city which constitutes the new age, and established the "real heavenly State".¹³

Thus, Barth argued, the deification of the State is impossible because the true divinity of the heavenly Jerusalem cannot be attached to the earthly State. The opposite is also true. The State cannot be made a devil! Augustine was wrong to identify the *civitas terrana* with the *civitas Cain*. Every State, even the worst, possesses its destiny in that it will one day contribute to the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem.

That the early Christians objected to the earthly State means that this State has been too little (not too much) of a State for those seeking the true heavenly State. For Barth 1 Cor.6:1-6 is incomprehensible unless these Christians had seen in divine justification the true source of all human law. Because Christians have no "abiding city" on earth the Church is neither a State within nor above the State. Indeed it is an "establishment amongst strangers" where justification is preached. Although the Church cannot itself bring about the disclosure of the eternal law of Christ in this age, it nevertheless can and should proclaim it to the world.

The New Testament epistles demand that Christians behave towards the State as honourably as they behave towards all men. "Render to all their dues . . . Owe no man anything but love one another" (Rom.13:7-8). (See also 1 Tim.2:1, Titus 3:2, 1 Peter 5:17). Barth interpreted such passages in the light of 1 Tim 2:1-7 by which he understood: "Since it is our duty to pray for all men, so we should pray in particular for Kings and for all in authority, because it is only on the condition that such men exist that we can 'lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty' ".¹⁴

The Christian community needs such a quiet life because it needs "freedom in the realm of all men in order to exercise its function towards all men." Since this freedom is guaranteed only through the State's existence then the Church should guarantee that existence through its prayers. The Church should never forget that "prayer for the bearers of State authority belongs to the very essence of its own existence" for its proclamation is for all men. If a State should be come so perverted as to honour evil and to punish good then recall is only possible through the Church. Even in such circumstances the State should fulfil its function and respect the Church's freedom. The honour the State owes the Church then would be revealed in Christian suffering so that, in one way or another, the State must serve divine justification.

Thus Barth outlined a close relationship between Church and State yet maintaining a clear distinction between the two. The Church gathers its members through free decisions and does not gather all men in. It leaves that to God. But the State includes all men (and may hold them by force). "The State as State knows nothing of the Spirit, nothing of love, nothing of forgiveness." The Church cannot become a State and establish law by force but rather must preach justification. The State could only be an idolatrous church; the church only a clerical state.

Some commentators regard ecclesiastical law as the great sin of the primitive church. But the idealized church of the first century, moved freely by the Spirit, without its own laws, never really existed. (1 Cor.14:33, 1 Cor.12-14) Yet ecclesiastical authority is spiritual and to Barth the legal order endorsed by the apostles has an inherent compelling quality. The New Testament sees the State as an outpost or annexe of the Christian community. It is in a sense, included within the ecclesiastical order. Just as the Church assumes a political aspect so also the State contains a certain ecclesiastical character.

The Church/State relationship is further treated in Rom.13:1 "be subject to the governing authorities". The verb, "be subject to", is a specifically Christian exhortation, according to Barth, meaning that the order in which Christians have to prove their obedience to God includes their relation (subjection) to governing secular authorities. In Rom. 13 the ruler of the State is described as "the minister of God" (13:4) and state officials as "God's ministers".(13:6) Clearly such persons stand "within the saved order".¹⁵

His fourth section deals with "The Service Which the Church owes to the State". Firstly intercession is the most intimate service owed by the Church. Christians are called to pray for all, especially for those in authority (1 Tim.2). Thus the Church reminds the State of its limits, and reminds itself of its own freedom. This service must be given without asking if the State will reciprocate. The "most brutally unjust State" still serves by increasing the Church's responsibility to it.¹⁶

Barth considered the exhortation, "be subject to" (Rom.13) in this light. True subjection is not obsequious but is such due to any official. Christians should expect the best from the State – i.e. "that it will grant legal protection to the free preaching of justification" but should be prepared, if necessary, "to carry this preaching into practice by suffering injustice instead of receiving justice". If Christians opposed State power and refused the request decreed by God, they would deserve condemnation.

Such respect from the Church must not be separated from the priestly function of the Church. It may be passive and limited yet need not imply approval of the State's undertakings. Matt.22:21 insists that Christians render Caesar those things that are Caesar's – i.e. his due, not as a good or bad Caesar, but simply as Caesar. Likewise Christians must render to God that which is God's. Subjection in a situation will consist in Christians being the victims of the State, of oppression of preaching unable to co-operate and obliged to express disapproval. "All this will be done, not **against** the State, but as the Church's service **for** the State!"¹⁷

Christians would become enemies of any State threatening their freedom if they did not resist. Even Jesus would have been "an enemy of the State" if He had not called King Herod a fox (Luke 13:32). Christians would become hypocrites in their intercession for the State if they acquiesced in such perversion of power.

Therefore Barth outlined a mutual guarantee between the two realms of Church and State. Outside the Church there is no basic understanding of those reasons which give the State legitimacy and make its existence necessary. Everywhere else the State may be called into question. Barth then returned to his Christological theme for in the Church's view the State's authority is included in the authority of Lord Jesus. Therefore the State is both served and preserved by the Church. Traditional Christian views on the Church/State issue teach rightly that only from the view of sinful man can respect be given to the State (its laws, taxes etc.) because this provides "the only protection against sophisms and excuses of man". The State can neither establish nor protect true human law (i.e. freedom for preaching justification) unless it receives its due from the Church.

Barth also dealt with the topical issue of swearing oaths of allegiance to the State. The Reformers found such oath-giving (based on Rom. 13:7) acceptable though Barth, citing Matt. 5:33f ("you shall not swear falsely"), was dissatisfied with their conclusions. No totalitarian oath claiming divine functions could be given to the State. Barth saw Hitler's State in exactly this setting. Christians, swearing such oaths, betray both the Church and its Lord. Barth noted the Reformers had given outright approval to military service as a bounden duty. The State "bears the sword" (Rom. 13) and as such participates in the "murderous nature of the present age". The Reformers were right for "human law needs the guarantee of human force". Barth even discussed possible Swiss defence sympathetically (and enlisted in the Swiss military reserve).¹⁸

A just State never demands love from its citizens but rather requires a "simple, resolute, and responsible attitude". When the State claims love it is becoming a Church, the Church a false god, and also an unjust State. An obvious gap in scriptural teaching is the absence of discussion of States where Christian citizens bear some responsibilities for the State. For Christians responsible involvement in political duty is essential (Rom. 13, 1 Tim. 2).

However can Christian service to the State end with prayer alone? Barth suggested Christians may need to reckon "with the possibility of revolution" . . . and "may have to 'overthrow with God' those rulers who do not follow the lines laid down by Christ". Indeed Barth concluded that democracy itself is a justifiable expansion of New Testament thought. By proclaiming divine justification in true scriptural preaching, teaching and sacraments the Church is, in creation, the force which founds and maintains the State.

Barth concluded that wherever freedom is recognized and where a true Church uses it correctly "we shall find a legitimate human authority and an equally legitimate human independence; tyranny on the one hand, and anarchy on the other, Fascism and Bolshevism alike, will be dethroned." This is the service the Church offers the State whereas it alone requires from the State nothing but freedom.¹⁹

Thus Barth's argument from exegesis saw a positive relationship between Church and State rather than one of opposites. His treatment of the subject was characteristically Christological. Barth's assertion that democracy most closely corresponded to the gospel was a judgement which later brought him into conflict with other theologians; and his criticism of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms was also keenly felt. For Barth the Kingdom of God, founded in Jesus Christ, comprehends all creation and must include the State. Thus the link between God's kingdom and the earthly State is real and vital.

Barth was at pains to trace the essential unity of all creation in Christ. For him the State was not the result of sin but "an order of divine grace". In 1946 Barth visited Germany and lectured there on several topics including "The Christian Community and the Civil Community". This lecture aroused considerable attention and a revised and enlarged version was published in English in 1954 in a collection, edited by R. Gregor Smith, *Against the Stream*.

Barth used the term, "community", to describe the "positive relationship and connexion" between both Christian and civil spheres, and to stress his concern with groups of humans. He saw the Christian community as the "commonalty of the people in one place, . . . called apart and gathered together as 'Christians' ". On the other hand the 'civil community' (the State) is the "commonalty of all the people in one place, under a constitutional system of government that is equally valid for and binding on them all, and which is defended and maintained by force".

The members of the civil community share no common awareness of their relationship to God. This community is moulded by neither faith, love nor hope. It has no creed and no gospel and needs physical force to secure its authority. The State has no safeguard against either neglecting or absolutising itself and thus destroying itself. The human community is much weaker, poorer and more exposed to danger in the State than in the Church.²⁰

Thus Barth again sought to demonstrate the unity of all men under Christ and to examine the apparent opposition between Church and State. However he began not from biblical exegesis but from the Barmen Declaration of 1934 (especially the fifth thesis). There the Christian community is seen in "the still unredeemed world". From a distance it is impossible to distinguish between a Christian and a non-Christian. The Church can become sterile and its love grow cold. Therefore the Church should not regard the civil community too superciliously. Even the word *ekklesia* is borrowed from the political sphere. The Christian community always exists as a *politeia* with definite authorities, patterns of community life and divisions of labour. Even the most "spiritually" ordered Church has its parallels with the State's offices. "The Christian community knows man as a sinner capable of releasing the destructive forces of chaos and nothingness which would bring human time to an end". The civil community thus protects human society from chaos. Borrowing from O. Cullman he described the Christian community as the inner circle within the wider circle, enjoying the protection of the civil authority.²¹

Barth emphasised that the State "is not a product of sin", but "a constant of the divine Providence in its actions against human sin". According to Barmen's thesis no. 5 the State provides for the establishment of law and (relatively) for freedom, peace and humanity. The State may be perverted yet cannot escape from God. So also the Christian community cannot become indifferent to its political responsibility.

Barth maintained that the Church must remain the "inner circle of the Kingdom of Christ" and resist absorption into the civil community. Again the Christians must pray for the civil community. The civil power is binding on Christians although they are not blindly to obey. Examining Rom. 13:1 and 5 he states Christians are there urged to be "subordinate" to the civil community, not "subject" as Luther (and he) had put it. Clearly Barth had had second thoughts, changing his earlier translation from "subjection" to subordination.

Quite properly he discouraged politicians from establishing "Christian" political parties. Political forms and systems "do not bear the distinctive mark of revelation". Barth suggested the appropriate subordination for the Christian community to make is made by proclaiming the Gospel and distinguishing between the just and unjust State, "between order and caprice, between the State as described in Rom. 13 and the State as described in Rev. 13".

Christian decisions in the political sphere must refer not to some so-called 'natural' law but rather to Christ. If the Christian community were to base its political responsibility on the assumption that it was interested in natural laws, it would not alter the power of God to make good out of evil, as He "always does in the political order". Although the problems in which the Church shares are 'natural', secular and profane the norm by which the Church is guided is not at all 'natural'.

The Church cannot simply take the Kingdom of God into the political arena, but rather reminds men of God's Kingdom. In this Kingdom there is no legislature, executive etc. Here is no sin to reprove nor chaos to check.²²

Barth stated that the direction of Christian judgements in political affairs is not based on the analogical capacities of political organization. Rather the State exists as an allegory, or analogue to the Kingdom of God. As the State forms the outer circle, and the Church the inner circle, since both share a common centre, the state is capable of reflecting indirectly the truth of the Christian community. Barth's argument is questionable here. The State will far more likely make manifest 'natural' relative values and a tentative search for authority rather than reveal Christian truth. The latter is not its purpose.

The Church's political activity should always witness to Christ. The Church calls the State into co-responsibility before God. Barth reiterated his support for the "constitutional state" and "that twofold rule (no exemption from the full protection of the law)" for the Church. Barth's political opinions surfaced as he stated that the Church will choose between "the various socialistic possibilities (social-liberalism? co-operativism? syndicalism? free trade? moderate or radical Marxism?)" i.e. that movement from "which it can expect the greatest measure of social justice". Also the church will "withdraw from and oppose any out-and-out dictatorship such as the totalitarian State. The adult Christian can only wish to be an adult citizen, and he can only want his fellow citizens to live as adult human beings."²³

The Church is opposed to conventions such as the restriction of political freedoms of certain classes and races "but supremely that of women". Since the Church is aware of the variety of spiritual gifts it will recognize the need to separate the different powers (executive, legislative and judiciary). Again this is an unusual argument and allows Barth's own politics to wear a theological dressing. He suggested the Church is the "sworn enemy of all secret policies and secret diplomacy" because Christ is the light to destroy the "works of darkness". And again Barth saw the Church opposed to regimentation, controlling and censoring of public opinion "because the human word is capable of being the mouthpiece of this free Word of God". He also generalized from the Church's ecumenism that it will therefore resist all parochial politics. This whole argument is flimsily based, not grounded on scripture.

Again Barth justified the use of violence, and Christian support of State violence in extreme circumstances, by referring to God's anger (unlike His eternal mercy). He was well aware that these assertions were similar to many built on natural law but saw this as revealing the correct but partial insight of the State. "The real Church must be the model and prototype of the real State".

Finally Barth reminded his readers of the Fifth Thesis of the Barmen Declaration; "The Bible tells us that, in accordance with a Divine ordinance, the State has the task of providing for law and peace in the world that still awaits redemption, in which the Church stands..." Thus for Barth the link between Church and State is Christ himself. The State may have relative independence yet is under His kingly rule.²⁴

Barth in both "Church and State" and "The Christian Community and the Civil Community" carried the principle of analogy to extremes. The State is capable of reflecting an image of Christian truth, although this image is often distorted. The main difficulty most critics have found with Barth's political ethics is the apparent lack of control in his Biblical exposition and his analogies. Are the conclusions Barth draws from his analogies the only possible one? It seems doubtful.

From the Christological premise that God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ Barth drew the political conclusion that the Christian community should oppose all secret diplomacy and secret politics. Thieliicke mischievously suggested that from the principle of 'Messianic secret' one might conclude that the Christian community should favour strict secrecy in politics and diplomacy.²⁵ Barth's use of analogy enabled him to reach the conclusions he desired but for this very reason such analogies are suspect.

Critics have pointed out the formalism and artificiality of his analogical method but suggest these are symptoms of a more profound error, i.e. the unhistorical nature of the whole of Barth's theology and his concentration almost absolutely on God and refusal to countenance an understanding of man from any position other than that of God. In his political ethics Barth thus argues from heaven to earth paying little or no attention to political complexities. Barth shows no appreciation of the attempts Christians have made both to love God and to work for a just political order. Also it seems doubtful whether Barth's theological method is consistently applicable in the political sphere to demonstrate the profound unity between Church and State which he seeks to show.

In "Church and State" Barth began with the Jesus/Pilate encounter where is contained all the insight the gospel has about the State. Therefore although Pilate reveals a "gangster State" we may discern "in this concave mirror" the God-established, righteous State which can "as little as the right Church be completely set aside because it rests upon divine institution and appointment".²⁶ Barth thus convincingly and consistently demonstrated that Pilate's authority, misused as it may be, comes from God. His weakness however seems plain when (especially in "The Christian Community and the Civil Community") he tried to identify the righteous State with democracy or some form of socialism. He was later severely criticised by Brunner and others for failing to condemn East European Communist regimes.

Barth's desire to show the vital and essential connection between Church and State, especially when others were cowed by domineering political forces is to his credit. He was surely right to condemn the theology of those who acquiesced in the rise of Hitler and to see in Lutheran teaching the possibility of political quietism among German Protestants. Yet his argument does not explain why Catholics in Bavaria, for instance, and in Italy also, failed to resist Fascist pretensions. Barth recognized that Luther's drawing apart of the two kingdoms had obscured their basic unity. If he failed adequately to justify his own political bias by scriptural reference and allowed his human frailty to show, at least he and some few others faced the threat to theology and the church from political totalitarianism and explored the way forward.

1. Lecture given by Barth to students in Leiden, 27th February 1939, quoted by E. Busch *Karl Barth : His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (1976) p.292.
2. E. Busch *ibid.* 69
3. J. Bowden *Karl Barth* (1971) p. 42.
4. E. Busch *op.cit.* pp. 190-1.
5. *ibid.* p. 218.
6. K. Barth *Church and State* (1939) p.4
7. *ibid.* p.6
8. *ibid.* p. 9.
9. *ibid.* p. 18.
10. *ibid.* p. 21.
11. *ibid.* p. 21.
12. *ibid.* p. 25.
13. *ibid.* p. 32.
14. *ibid.* pp. 48, 49.
15. *ibid.* pp. 55, 58, 61.
16. *ibid.* p. 64.
17. *ibid.* p. 68.
18. *ibid.* pp. 71, 74, 76
19. *ibid.* pp. 84, 86
20. K. Barth *Against the Stream* ed. R. Gregor Smith (1954) pp. 15-17
21. *ibid.* p. 20 O. Cullman *Königsherrschaft Christi und Kirche im Neuen Testament* (1941)
22. *ibid.* pp. 22, 26, 28, 29, 31.
23. *ibid.* p. 37.
24. *ibid.* pp. 41, 42, 47.
25. H. Thielicke *Theologische Ethik* II 2, p. 452.
26. K. Barth *Dogmatics in Outline* (1966) pp. 110-13.
