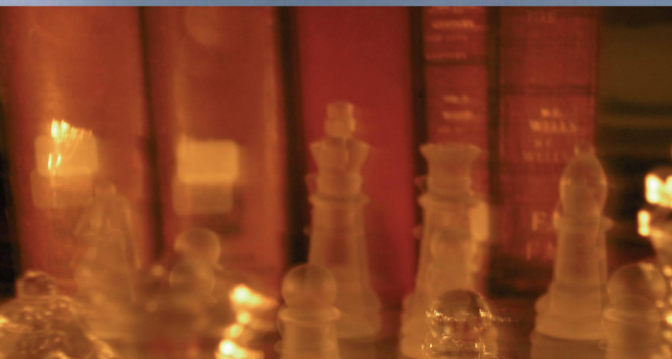


Religion and Political Thought

Edited and annotated by

Michael Hoelzl and **Graham Ward**



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In memory of Geoffrey Price

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General Introduction

There is no neutral position in a game of chess. The opening move is a bid for power on a level playing field. The hierarchy of figures (kings, queens, bishops, knights and pawns) is deployed in the desire to dominate. The very confrontational alignment of two kingdoms establishes a drama that will inevitably unfold. Even if, finally, there is only the exhaustion of stalemate. No wonder the game has been used in the past to train a military aristocracy in the art of war. But a war governed by rules. The world of chess is not a war of 'every man against every man' (Hobbes), because a well-defined social order and conventions govern social interaction. Clausewitz, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, could therefore still say 'war is a continuation of politics by other means'. In conventional warfare, as in chess, two distinct parties encounter each other. In the march, one against the other, there are stratagems, tricks, feints and decisions. As Miranda accuses Ferdinand in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*: 'Sweet lord, you play me false'. In chess, as in a medieval society, figures belong to specific classes with specific functions. Each side constitutes not only a differentiated social body but also a cosmological body. This is figured in the chess board itself as a common and mapped-out ground. This is the order of things; what came to be understood as 'natural law'. The battles that commence then are not simply between temporal powers. They take place within a religious context in which even the spiritual estate is a political player in temporal concerns. The function of religion was to guarantee the stability of this world-view and provided both a common knowledge of the right social order on earth, and the order of things in the next life.¹ This religious dimension is not limited to the moves made by 'bishops', for the order of the whole social world (from the pawn to the king) is governed by a religious world-view. Perhaps then it is not surprising that when the Reformation split Christendom and this cosmological order was torn apart it expressed itself in what we call the Wars of Religion. The 'chessboard' fissured, the common ground was rent apart and gave way to the random construction of trenches and no-man's-land. No rules

1. We would draw attention here to Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* in which, in the opening scenes, the knight on return from the crusades is summoned by Death, whom he invites to play chess on a wild and rocky beach. The allegory of the chess game, which continues throughout the film, dramatizes an interplay between the temporal order and the spiritual order in which Death too has to play according to the rules.

could then limit the use of violence, because each individual considered themselves to be king of their personal domain. The equality among players informed Hobbes' understanding of the natural condition of humankind.

The game of chess illustrates the long and abiding association between religion and politics, which this volume aims to explore and provide resources for further research. The profundity of this association is evident when we examine the twofold roots of political thought in the West.² For, on the one hand, there is the biblical tradition, and we will observe the continuation of this tradition right up to the nineteenth century. Both the Hebrew and the Christian Bibles provided sources for the *legitimation of power*; the exercise of political power was based upon biblical authority. While, on the other, there is the classical Greek tradition that has given us basic classificatory *concepts* in political science as well as a definition of the *political* itself. In the opening book of Aristotle's *Politics*, we find: '... it is evident that the state is a creation of nature and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature, and not by mere accident, is without a state, is either above humanity or below it . . .'.³ Therefore, the political condition of things is written into the constitution of what it means to be human. The social task is to create the best form of polity. Although modern understandings of democracy bear little direct relation to the classical Greek *polis*, nevertheless the category of democracy as defined in the context of Aristotle's typology of government remained a benchmark until the nineteenth century. But when we consider Hannah Arendt's return to the Aristotelian understanding of the nature of politics in *The Human Condition* (or Alasdair MacIntyre's in *After Virtue*), then we recognize the enduring significance of the classical Greek tradition. To return to an old similitude, the history of political thought is founded upon two cities – Jerusalem and Athens – such that its association with religion (the Judaeo-Christian and the Greek notion of the Good) cannot be ignored.

Religion and politics in the Scripture

If politics, as its name implies, is related to the city (*polis*) then, when examining the relationship between religion and politics in the Hebrew Bible we would have to return to the early chapters of Genesis. For Cain, the son of Adam and Eve and the slayer of his brother Abel, founded the *first* city 'which he named Enoch after his son' (Gen. 4.18). We know nothing of the political organization of this city, but the Hebrew Bible has been the source of inspiration for thinking through the right order of living in a community and the understanding of a community among other communities. This is a further meaning of the word 'politics'. For the *polis* is not only the city, but also the *community* of that city and its ethos.

2. There is of course another source for Western political thought. The heritage of Roman law has undeniably shaped our present understanding of politics in a legal sense. In this context we do not explicitly refer to this strand in political theory because we are primarily focusing on the history of ideas rather than the evolution of modern law.
3. Aristotle (1966), *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), I.2.

From the story of Cain to the covenants made by God with first Noah, then Abraham, then Jacob and, finally, Moses; from the exile into Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, to the return to the Promised Land, the division of the kingdoms, the fall of the northern kingdom and the deportation into Babylon; from the return under the Persian monarchs of Ezra, the rebuilding of the Temple, the conquest of Alexander and the Maccabean revolts, to the destruction of the second Temple under Tiberius and the Jewish diaspora – the religious and the political are indissociable. In the Hebrew Bible, as O'Donovan makes clear in his own exposition of the roots of political theology, we 'rediscover politics not as a self-enclosed field of human endeavour but as the theatre of the divine self-disclosure; to rediscover God as the one who exercises rule.'⁴ Furthermore, the Hebrew Bible is not simply a compilation of narratives in which religion is a political force, it also contains influential reflections on the nature of government. As distinct from the Greek tradition, this nature of government, and the just organization of society it advocated, was directly related to the belief in the one God, YHWH.

With a view to the selected classical passages we have chosen, four aspects of the relationship between religion and politics in the Hebrew Bible become pertinent. These are kingship, equality, justice and covenant.⁵ The first category, *kingship*, concerns the question of the best form of government; while the next two categories (equality and justice) constitute norms for social life; and the covenant between God and His chosen people, the final category, is the foundational principle of both kingship and the norms for social life. Covenant and kingship had a profound and continuing influence on political theory, as the examples in this book demonstrate. We will return to this. For the moment we will briefly treat equality and justice as they are given expression in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

The basis for *equality* in the Hebrew Bible is the place of each human being before God. Genesis 1.27: 'so God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them'. Whatever disputes have been fought over the story of Eve coming from the rib of Adam, in this verse there is no hierarchy between male and female; unlike in the classical Greek accounts.⁶ For the moment, one further aspect of this equality should be noted. We are all equally images of God, but, according to the Hebrew Bible, we are all equally the children of Adam and Eve. We will observe how the proto-democratic thinking of Luther and the fully democratic thinking of Paine are both indebted to these two biblical notions of equality: the first being theological and the second genetic.

4. O. O'Donovan (1999), *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 2.
5. It is undeniable that in the Hebrew Bible rules for social policy are explicitly named and related to theology, which we have not included here, e.g. the *ius talionis* or the institution of the 'year of the jubilee'. These, and other, theologico-juridical regulations are outlined in detail in Lev. 24.20 and Lev. 25.8–55. The influence of some of these regulations are still present today. For example *lex talionis* is still practised in certain countries of the world and the year of the jubilee (the fiftieth year in which all debts were forgiven and slaves freed) remains inspirational for those combating Third World debts.
6. See Aristotle, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, I.2.

The New Testament talks about the foundations of equality in a different manner. St Paul, writing to the community in Galatia, transforms and extends the universalism of human beings made in the image of God. 'For through faith you are all sons of God in union with Christ Jesus. Baptised into union with him, you have all put on Christ as a garment. There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3.28). Jesus Christ, as the second Adam, transcends all differences of ethnicity, class and gender.⁷ Luther will base his notion of equality upon this Christian interpretation; whereas Paine will found his notion of equality upon a literal understanding of the Hebrew Bible's depiction of all humankind as being the children of Adam.

The understanding of *social justice* has its background in the writings of the Hebrew prophets like Amos. The call is on behalf of the poor, the widowed and the orphaned; and is pitched against 'you who grind the destitute and plunder the humble' (Amos 8.4). In the Book of Nehemiah there is a telling story that demonstrates the nature of justice in the Hebrew Bible. Nehemiah has been chosen by the Persian king to lead many of the deported Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls and the Temple. But the Jews who have returned later complain to Nehemiah that they are being exploited and oppressed by the Jews who remained in the land throughout the Babylonian exile. Nehemiah summons these people to him and demands that they 'Restore to them [the Jews who have returned], this very day, their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the interest on the money, grain, wine, and oil that you have extracted from them' (Nehemiah 5.11). The failure to do so will bring the curse of Nehemiah upon them: 'May God shake out everyone from house and from property who does not perform this promise' (Nehemiah 5.13). If there is any significant difference about the New Testament understanding of social justice, then it is in the emphasis upon love as *caritas*. 'You have learned that they were told, "Love your neighbour, hate your enemy". But what I tell you is this: Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors, only so can you be children of your Heavenly father, who makes his sun rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the honest and the dishonest' (Matthew 5.45). Here, as with the New Testament understanding of equality, there is an extension beyond the ethnic borders of a specific people. Justice is to be done to all, even the unjust, the alien and the enemy.

To summarize: compared to a modern understanding of the principles of right sociality, equality and justice, the biblical traditions cannot be divorced from God. If we take the Ten Commandments as illustrative here, the last seven relate specifically to norms for human behaviour. But they cannot be understood without reference to the first three commandments which concern right relations with God Himself. God is the source and measure for equality and justice; their realization cannot be achieved by human endeavour alone. A distinction between the sacred and the secular would not make sense. Furthermore, we do not find

7. See A. Badiou (2003), *St Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press). For Badiou, Paul is a paradigmatic figure for the first universal and absolute religion. He introduces, as Badiou calls it, the first 'universal singularity'.

in either the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament any notion of freedom in the modern understanding of this term. Freedom, in the biblical tradition, is only achieved through a deepening obedience to God. Freedom as being a self-governing rational agent, making informed choices without necessarily referring to the will of God, is entirely alien to such orthodoxy. We will see a continuation of this biblical tradition, which is simultaneously a criticism of modernity, in the conservative and counter-revolutionary writings of Joseph de Maistre and, more recently, with John Milbank.⁸

The most contentious biblical category is *kingship*. The reason for the contention in the Hebrew Bible lies in the two forms of government outlined in the Pentateuch and the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. The early form of Israel's political organization appears to be a confederacy of what is symbolically referred to as the Twelve Tribes. These were governed first by an oligarchy of elders and then a single judge. The transition from Samuel as judge over Israel to Saul as the first anointed king is not without fierce resistance. Appeal is made to God to intervene when Israel demands of Samuel that he appoints them a king like the other nations around them. For God is the true and only king over his people, Samuel argues. The concession made to Israel is hedged about with descriptions of future sufferings and oppressions.

He [the king] will take your sons and make them serve in his chariots and with his cavalry, and will make them run before his chariot. Some he will appoint officers over units of a thousand and units of fifty. Others will plough his fields and reap his harvest; others again will make weapons of war and equipment for mounted troops. He will take your daughters for perfumers, cooks, and confectioners, and will seize the best of your cornfields, vineyards, and olive-yards, and give them to his lackeys. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage to give to his eunuchs and lackeys. Your slaves, both men and women, and the best of your cattle and your asses he will seize and put to his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks and you and yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out against the king whom you have chosen; but it will be too late, the Lord will not answer you. (1 Samuel 8.11–18).

On the other hand, even the Pentateuch refers to good kings – most particularly, Melchisedek, who in the New Testament is a foreshadow of the Messiah. This figure was both ruler and priest, bridging both Court and Temple. Saul, the first king anointed by Samuel, is abandoned by God, but, in his place, there arises David who again becomes an archetype for the coming Messiah. Solomon, David's son, becomes the embodiment of divine wisdom. With these two monarchs is instituted the notion of sacral kingship that conflates the temporal with the spiritual. The 'kingship' of Jesus Christ in the New Testament is explicitly related, in the genealogies of Matthew (1.1–17) and Luke (3.23–38) to both the Davidic and Solomonic monarchies. All later notions of the Divine Right of Kings will be based upon these royal archetypes.

8. See pp. 161–72 and pp. 225–36 in this volume.

With Jesus Christ the Hebrew Bible's ambivalent attitude to kingship finds its most dramatic development. In the Gospel's narrative reports of the trial, Jesus is brought face to face with imperial authority in the figure of Pontius Pilate.

Pilate . . . summoned Jesus. 'Are you the king of the Jews?' he asked. Jesus said, 'Is that your own idea, or have others suggested it to you?' 'What! Am I a Jew?' said Pilate. 'Your own nation and their chief priests have brought you before me. What have you done?' Jesus replied, 'My kingdom does not belong to this world. If it did, my followers would be fighting to save me from arrest by the Jews. My kingly authority comes from elsewhere.' 'You are a king, then?' said Pilate. Jesus answered, "'King" is your word.' (John 18.33–7)

The controversy of Jesus' kingship is emphasized throughout both the trial and the crucifixion narratives. For Pilate has Jesus flogged by the Romans and presented with a crown of thorns and royal cloaks and hailed ironically as 'King of the Jews' (John 19.2–3). A few lines later, when Jesus was crucified,

. . . Pilate wrote an inscription to be fastened to the cross; it read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews'. This inscription was read by many Jews. . . . Then the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate, 'You should not write "King of the Jews"; write, "He claimed to be king of the Jews."' Pilate replied, 'What I have written, I have written.' (John 19.19–22)

From this New Testament tradition will arise the distinction, and the debates, between the 'Kingdom of God' (and its authority) and the authority of terrestrial kingship. The tension between spiritual and temporal authority provokes a conflict of loyalties that the New Testament writings do not resolve. This is illustrated by the story of when the lawyers and chief priests came to Jesus and asked:

'Are we or are we not permitted to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor?' . . . [Jesus said] 'Show me a silver piece. Whose head does it bear, and whose inscription?' 'Caesar's', they replied. 'Very well then', he said, 'pay Caesar what is due to Caesar, and pay God what is due to God.' (Luke 19.22–5).

St Paul reiterates a similar principle of submission to temporal authority in his Letter to the Romans when he advises the Christians to discharge their obligations and pay both tax and toll (Rom. 13.7). But St Paul goes much further when he tells them:

Every person must submit to the supreme authorities. There is no authority but by act of God, and the existing authorities are instituted by Him; consequently anyone who rebels against authority is resisting a divine institution, and those who so resist have themselves to thank for the punishment they will receive . . . they are God's agents working for your good . . . they are God's agents of punishment. . . . The authorities are in God's service and to these duties they devote their energies. (Rom. 13.1–6)

This notion of unconditional obedience to temporal authority is at the heart of debates from Augustine to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Oscar Romero concerning whether it is right or wrong to resist and even overthrow tyrannical forms of government.

The implications of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament with respect to kingship and authority for later developments in Christian political thought are profound. In almost every text we have chosen, from Augustine to Luther, and even to Rousseau's *Social Contract*, the controversy of spiritual and temporal powers is evident.⁹

The last of the categories of particular significance here is covenant. Biblical commentators, working within the historical-critical school, inform us that 'covenant' comes from treaties made between suzerainties or rulers and their clients or people. These were written down and constituted a legally binding relationship. The so-called covenants with Noah, Abraham and Jacob were verbal promises exchanged between God and these figures who stood for their people. Only with Moses do we find written covenants made between God and the people of Israel. There are two such covenants. The first is in Exodus 34, where we can read that on Mount Horeb

The Lord said to Moses, 'Write these words down, because the covenant I make with you and with Israel is in these words.' Moses stayed there with the Lord forty days and forty nights, neither eating nor drinking, and wrote down the words of the covenant, the ten commandments . . . ' (Exodus 34.7–8).

The second covenant was an extended one given to Moses at Moab in order to compliment the first (Deuteronomy 28.29). What both these covenants regulate is a social order that is to be maintained through a right relation to God. As with the suzerainty treatises, two parties are involved here and make binding commitments one to the other. God promises to remain faithful in guiding and supporting His people and the people bind themselves to fulfilling God's commandments. The vertical axis of the God/people covenant facilitates a horizontal axis in which the people bind themselves legally and morally to one another. The Jewish law provides rules for the regulation of reciprocal duties, the exercise of which can be found in various places in the Hebrew Bible (for example, the Book of Ruth, chapter 4). Religion always shapes and produces social norms and a moral order.

Later, with the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel there is an eschatological vision of a new covenant. It would seem that covenantal relations need to be renewed and made more perfect. The new covenants of Jeremiah and Ezekiel arise because of new political situations. In Jeremiah God tells his people:

'I will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers . . . I will set my law within them and write it on their hearts; I will become their God and they shall become my people. No longer need they teach one another to know the Lord; all of them, high and low alike, shall know me', says the Lord, 'for I will forgive their wrongdoing and remember their sin no more'. (Jeremiah 31.31–4).

9. An interesting discussion of the symbolic impact of the dichotomy of the temporal and the spiritual on political theory can be found in E. Voegelin (1986), *Political Religions* (New York: Edward Mellen Press).

This inner covenant of the heart politically infers (and would require) major social reform. In Ezekiel, the new covenant is made in order to unify a people and build a single nation. Moreover, it will install one God and one mediating king who is also viewed as the shepherd of the people (Ezekiel 37.21–8). This messianic political constellation (one God, one ruler, one people) becomes the ideal Christian polity throughout the medieval period. It is still echoed in the sixteenth-century political scientist Jean Bodin's concept of sovereignty and the notion of *cuius regio eius religio* expressed at the peace treaty at Augsburg in 1630. Even contemporary understandings of being a 'nation under God' makes subtle appeal to this ideal.

In the New Testament, the covenant between God and a particular nation becomes universal through Jesus Christ. Christian theologians would debate for many centuries the way in which Christ was both mediator of this covenant and God Himself. Central to this notion of covenant is the liturgy of the Eucharist and the community it constitutes. St Paul, writing to the Church in Corinth, rehearses the founding institutional narrative:

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread and, after giving thanks to God, broke it and said: 'This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me.' In the same way, he took the cup after supper, and said: 'This cup is the *new covenant* sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.' (1 Corinthians 11.23–5, editors' italics)

This new covenant promulgates a new law: "I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples." (John 13.34–5) The reference to 'all' here was interpreted as a new universalism, inclusive of every people and nation. The early Christians defined the community this constituted as an *ecclesia* – adopting what was a Greek political term for an assembly. The social order of this community was founded upon love. How one understands an act of love is highly contestable, as the history of intra-Christian relationships demonstrates. With Augustine we will find that this love is employed in defining certain forms of social behaviour, moral norms and the quality of a community. That is why Augustine opposes the kingdom of God (governed by *amor dei* – love of God) to the terrestrial kingdom (governed by *amor sui* – love of self). It is important to observe with this new covenant that politics must not be understood either in a technical and bureaucratic sense, or in terms of juridical prescriptions. This new community is an ethical and spiritual one; it is not a society as such.

To summarize: the Hebrew and Christian Bibles have impacted upon political theory in numerous ways. We have drawn attention to four of the most important influences of the biblical tradition: kingship, equality, justice and covenant. Throughout the texts that follow attention should be paid to the different ways in which the Jewish and Christian Scriptures were used as: sources for legitimating the exercise of power; sources of visions for the perfect polity; and sources offering norms for social conduct.

The classical heritage

Compared with the influence of the Scripture on Western political theory, the influence of the classical tradition is much more circumscribed. For the texts we have included the importance of certain figures is indisputable. Augustine is evidently influenced by Plato and Cicero; Aquinas and Dante refer explicitly to Aristotle; and Machiavelli's account of religion and politics is designed as a commentary on the history of the Romans by the Latin historian Livy. But, by the time we come to the work of Rousseau (for whom Seneca is particularly important, among many other classical authors) we are already discerning a loss of common knowledge of the classical tradition. Even in his time Rousseau appears to be old-fashioned by building his argument with reference to these ancient resources. This is most evident when he borrows the term 'civil religion' from the Roman anti-quarian, polymath and philosopher Varro (116–27 BCE). In the context of the passages we have chosen for this volume and its aim to provide a student resource, it is sufficient to outline the impact of Plato and Aristotle on the development of political thought.

Plato developed the notion of the city as a community of souls. In his *Republic* he elaborated a vision of the perfect society governed by the form of the Good. The Good is a transcendent source from which politics, aesthetics, ethics and theology issue. Plato compares the Good, which is beyond Being, to the operation of the Divine. The ordering of the *polis* is to be governed by the soul in its contemplation of the Good. Ruled over by the philosopher king, Plato envisages a perfect society and form of government in which the ongoing education of the soul and its knowledge of the Good takes place. The importance of Plato's political writings can be seen in the patristic literature, and they underscore the central idea that by nature human beings are good and just. It is because of ignorance that corruption and social evil manifest themselves. By being educated as to their true nature, human beings can naturally create good and just social orders. For this reason education becomes fundamental in Plato's scheme for the training of those capable of governing well. Augustine transforms these thoughts in line with his doctrine of humans being originally sinful, but the Platonic influence is nevertheless clear. After Augustine, the utopia of Plato's perfect 'city' significantly influenced the ideal of Christian polity. The word 'utopia' (*ou-topos*) literally means 'no place'. So the speculative outline of the perfect city has no concrete manifestation. From early modernity, with Thomas More's *Utopia* and Francis Bacon's *Atlanta*, these utopian visions of a perfected society became a literary genre bordering on science fiction.

In the sixteenth century, the Italian Renaissance artist Raphael painted a fresco for the Vatican chambers in which he depicted the most celebrated classical thinkers, entitled *School of Athens*. One's perspective is directed in the painting to the foregrounded figures of Plato and Aristotle (portrayed as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci). Each is making a distinctive gesture which is characteristic of his philosophical position. While Plato, with a raised right arm, points one finger towards heaven, Aristotle extends his left arm and spreads his fingers as if he would

encompass all things beneath him. In contrast to Plato's speculative or even contemplative thinking, Aristotle is more concerned with concrete details and their causal relationship. It is for this reason that Aristotle's political thinking provides a set of categories and distinctions which have had a profound impact on those who rethought the art of governing after him. To borrow and amend a phrase by the philosopher Alfred Whitehead, one could say that all political science is a footnote to Aristotle.

We have already drawn attention to the importance of Aristotle's political anthropology, that is, his definition of a human being as a political animal. This definition was taken up by Aquinas almost seventeen hundred years later, as we will discover in the text included in this volume. Aquinas emphasized that the *political* animal is a *social* animal. What is significant for the development of political theory is that neither Aristotle nor Aquinas saw the relations between human beings in terms of 'contract'. For Aristotle, the identity of the social and political is founded upon ethics, on the one hand, and economics, on the other. The ethical is crucial because the telos or governing purpose of political action is to augment the common good. Unlike in Plato, the good is not a transcendent idea, beyond being, but an idea being worked out in the concreteness of action and living and the good for Aristotle is not related to a deity. This notion that political life is orientated towards maximizing the common good re-emerges with Aquinas, as we have said, but it also continues to be the fundamental doctrine for politics in Renaissance republics. This is illustrated by an inscription at the entrance to the Palace of the Prince in Dubrovnic, a town which was at that time influenced by Venice and Renaissance republicanism: *obliti privatoru[m] publica curate*. This translates as: Forget the private, care for the public. The public was understood to be the common good of the city and its citizens. In Renaissance England (and through to the mid-seventeenth century) this notion was enshrined in the concern for the 'common weal' or Commonwealth. The economic, for Aristotle, was crucial because doing politics was the business of those who could afford to spend time on public issues and fund public events. This economic dimension of political life has become dominant with the rise of political economy in the work of Ricardo, Smith and Marx (who is included among the classic texts chosen) and more recently with the advent of globalism and the resistance to it, evident in the essay by Althaus-Reid.

The common good, for Aristotle, is the basis for discerning between just and unjust forms of government. In the *Politics*, he outlines six types of government. Each is organized in sets of pairs. Monarchy is paired with tyranny; aristocracy with oligarchy; and polity with democracy. Monarchy is the rule of one; aristocracy is the rule of the few; and polity is the rule of the many – *in the interests of the social whole*. These forms of government constitute a typology of just political regimes. Their obverse are tyranny as the rule of one; oligarchy as the rule of few; and democracy as the rule of many – *in the interests of those who govern*. Aristotle is aware that this is a formal classification and in reality types of government can change. For example, monarchy can become tyranny and this, subsequently, may turn into a democracy. Moreover, real forms of government are always a contin-

gent mixture of different types of rule. For example, a democracy like the one in Athens was a mixture of aristocratic power and the rule of the many (that is, of those who were counted as citizens, i.e. neither slaves, nor women, nor people in commercial business). We can see from this form of democracy that it differs significantly from any modern understanding. The recognition that government never exists in its pure type, but is always composed of many different styles of exercising power, is foregrounded in the work of Rousseau.

The history of the relationship between religion and Western political thought draws substantially from both the biblical and the classical traditions, as we will see. Evidently, there are other religious traditions that are embedded in their own political cultures and which have developed their own characteristic style of religion and politics. Only since the nineteenth century has the Western world become interested in examining these other traditions in any depth.¹⁰ Islam has had a long history of involvement with the West, but other than its philosophical schools (see Introduction to Aquinas) it has had no impact upon the development of political theory in the West until the twentieth century.

Key topics in the history of Western religion and politics

Four major themes can be identified from the material we have selected that are representative of the relationship between religion and political thought in the West: a) the use of the body as both metaphor and analogy for the social; b) the divine legitimization of sovereignty; c) a functional approach in which religion is a tool for politics; and d) the religious character of political atheism.

a) *The body: from St Paul to Hobbes*

The most celebrated and influential passages that refer to the body as a political metaphor can be found in St Paul's letters (to the Romans, the Corinthians and the Church at Ephesus). The body being defined here in the first century CE is the body of Christ as the Christian Church. This was not simply the material body constituting a local *ekklesia*. For while each community was made up of various 'members', the community itself was also a 'member' of the universal body of Christ. The use of 'body' does not distinguish between the spiritual and the

10. Hegel was one of the first to systematically analyse the traditions of other faiths. But it was Max Weber (1978) who in his unfinished *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, 2 vols, eds Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press) and his works on the sociology of world religions, most ambitiously attempted to compare and identify common elements in the relationship between religion and politics. He endeavoured to take into account Buddhism, Hinduism, ancient Chinese and Egyptian religions as well as different sects of Christianity. For an examination of Islamic political thought see M. Watt (1988), *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press) and recently P. Crone (2005), *God's Rule – Government and Islam: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press). For Hinduism and political theory see Vishwanath Prasad Varma (1974), *Studies in Hindu Political Thought and its Metaphysical Foundations* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass) and, more recently, J. Zaros (2000), *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

material, at this point in history. For they interpenetrate each other in the Eucharist, where the historical body of Jesus Christ is extended into the sacramental notion of Christ's abiding presence. The material community is poised between the spiritual body of the resurrected Christ, on the one hand, and the sacramental body of Christ (in the Eucharist), on the other. So, when St Paul employs the 'body' as an image for the community, he is not simply arguing for a necessary and natural hierarchy. For, as he writes in his famous First Letter to the Corinthians:

For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body. . . . A body is not a single organ, but many. Suppose the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', it does belong to the body none the less. . . . But, in fact, God appointed each limb and organ to its own place in the body, as He chooses. If the whole were a single organ, there would not be a body at all; in fact, however, they are many different organs, but one body. Now you are Christ's body, and each of you a limb or organ of it. (1 Corinthians 12.12–27)

Furthermore, in what is still contested to be St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, we find:

They [the people of God] are measured by His [God's] strength and the might He exerted in Christ when He raised him from the dead, when He *enthroned* his son at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all government and authority, all power and dominion, and any title of sovereignty. . . . He put everything in subjection beneath his feet, and appointed him [Christ] as supreme head to the Church, which is his body . . . (Ephesians 1.19–23, editors' italics)

These passages have been at the centre of a prolonged politics in the Christian world. Indeed, they have shaped the history of political life in the West, triggering schisms and initiating reformations. For the perspective of this volume, attention needs to be drawn to several controversial aspects in this teaching by St Paul. First, there is the matter of the ontological status of the Church. Is it *like* the single body of Christ or is it *actually* the body of Christ? To say something is *like* something is to offer a description of one thing in terms of another. To say something *is* something is to be prescriptive and make the claim that something is *the same* as something else. So what kind of claim is St Paul making here both for Christ and for the nature of the Church? Is the body being used as an illustration, or a description, of the social order? Second, if the Church *is* the body of Christ, and Christ is its head, then who *represents* the head of this body? Third, how does the community of the Church maintain its association with Christ? For St Paul, the renewal of the presence of Christ in the community takes place in the memorial celebration of the Eucharist, which is the actualization of the body of Christ. But the 'memorial' element here has raised numerous questions concerning the relationship between the actual crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the Last Supper, which inaugurated the new covenant in Christ (see above). Fourth, closely related to all these aspects, there is the question of who has the authority to define the nature of one's place within this community. St Paul only mentions how *God* chooses who will be a foot, an eye, a hand, etc., but who or what in any given society makes the actual decision about the choice

of one's role? In other words, given there is no hierarchy other than the head and the rest of the body, then who, among the various organs constituting this body, submits to the authority of whom? We might think that today class, gender, race and money play a decisive role in allocating social functions. But we should not forget that the charismatic qualities of a person are, by definition, a gift and not an achievement. And these play a profound role in obtaining hierarchical status, as Weber has convincingly argued.¹¹ One can see from this list of ambiguities how the body as a political metaphor was contested and rendered complex. One might also see how changes to the understanding of the body may affect this body-politics and its complexity.

In 1628 the Oxford scholar and close friend of Thomas Hobbes, William Harvey,¹² published his groundbreaking study *De motu cordis*. As Richard Sennett comments: 'Harvey launched a scientific revolution in the understanding of the body: its structure, its healthy state, and its relation to the soul. A new master image of the body took form.'¹³ This revolution of the understanding of the body affected not only medicine and physiology, but also political science and theology. We can measure the changes incurred by returning to Aristotle and Aquinas, for whom the soul was the moving force within the body, causing motion, appetite, desire and will.¹⁴ With Harvey, for the first time, the body is a self-regulating organism. There is no need to refer to any transcendent principle – like the soul in its relationship to the divine – to account for its maintenance and development. What Harvey did for the biological understanding of the body, Hobbes did for political science, Descartes did for philosophy and Rembrandt did with his painting, *The Anatomy Lessons of Dr Tulp*, for fine art. The body was now conceived purely in terms of its materiality. In his *Leviathan*, published in 1651, Hobbes writes:

Nature (the activity by which God hath made and governs the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an *artificial animal*. . . . Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of Nature, man. For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON WEALTH, or STATE (in Latin, CIVITAS), which is but an *artificial man*, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended.

What is new here can be appreciated with respect to three points. First, Hobbes is not referring in his account of the body to the classical passages by St Paul, but employs the mythological depiction of Leviathan, the sea monster described in the Book of Job. He continues using the Bible as a form of legitimation, but the idea of the state for him (employing this narrative) changes. It now becomes a reality in which *non est potestas super terram quae comparetur ei* (there is no power on earth that can be compared to it) (Job 41.33). This encapsulates the notion of

11. See M. Weber (1978), *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther Roth and Klaus Wittich (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press), vol. 1, pp. 212–301 and vol. 2, pp. 1111–57.

12. See A. P. Martinich (1999), *Hobbes. A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

13. R. Sennett (1996), *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (London: W.W. Norton and Company), p. 255.

14. See J. Le Goff (1989), *Head or Heart?: The Political Use of Body Metaphors in the Middle Ages* in Michael Feher (ed.), *Fragments for a History of the Body*, vol. 3 (New York: Zone Books), pp. 11–26.

absolute monarchy. Second, a distinction is now made between nature and art; art perfects ('and goes yet further') nature. So the natural body is inferior to the 'artificial man'. Besides this move towards a more materialistic politics, aligned with the advance of the physical sciences, the knowledge of government also changed. Prior to modernity, the concern with the soul was identical to the management of the body, physical and social.¹⁵ Now the management of the body, physically and spiritually, was a matter of social policy, that is of implementing specific regimes from above. Third, Hobbes is transferring notions of the body of Christ to the body of the state or the body of the king.

The ambiguity in St Paul's employment of 'body', between 'Christ is *like* a single body' and the 'Church, which *is* his body', is now resolved. For Hobbes, and those after him, the physiological and literal body is employed as a *metaphorical* map for analysing the social body. This use of the body as a metaphor for an agglomeration of single entities coming together as a unit continues up to the present day. The tradition is preserved in various modern languages that inflect the Latin *corporis* (body) and form contemporary terms like *corps medical* and *corps diplomatique* (in French), *Volkskörper* and *Körperschaft* (in German), and 'corporate identity' and 'corporation' (in English).

b) *The divine legitimization of sovereignty*

The second key topic concerns divine kingship. We discovered earlier the complexities concerning kingship in the Hebrew Bible as well as the question of the kingship of Jesus Christ. These questions take on a new relevance with the medieval debates over the subordination of temporal to spiritual power (and vice versa). After the Reformation and the Wars of Religion that followed, the nature of kingship was further challenged by, on the one hand, the raise of the nation state and, on the other, the development of government by parliament. Theories of absolute monarchy mark one extreme position, opposing theories of collective and representative government. What is at stake here is whether sovereign power is indivisible (as Jean Bodin has argued in his *Six Books on the Commonwealth*, 1576), or divisible and therefore shared and delegated (as James Harrington argued in his *Commonwealth of Oceania*, 1656). This is the old Aristotelian question of the best form of government: by one or by many. Theories of absolute monarchy took their legitimization from divine law; hence the Divine Right of Kings. We can see something of this emerging conflict with King James VI of Scotland being appointed King James I of England. Debates in Parliament in the early part of his reign focused on the kind of union there should be between Scotland and England and the state of the royal income. James petitioned Parliament for an annual income that would make him largely independent of Parliament.¹⁶ A struggle ensued in which James gave his famous 'Speech Before Parliament, March 21st, 1609'.

15. *Curia animarum* (care of souls) entailed *regimen animarum* (rules for the care of souls). More recently, this distinction has been re-examined in the late work of Michel Foucault.

16. G. Davies (1937), *The Early Stuarts 1603–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 12.

Interestingly, James makes appeal here to the metaphor of chess and the supreme position of the King:

Kings are justly called Gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth. For if you will consider the attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a king God hath power to create, or destroy, make or unmake at his pleasure, to give life or send death, to judge all, and to be judged nor accountable to none. To raise low things, and to make high things low at his pleasure, and to God are both soul and body due. And the like power have Kings: they make and unmake their subjects: they have power of raising, and casting down: of life and of death: judges over all their subjects, and in all causes, and yet accountable to none but God only. They have power to exalt low things, and abase high things, and make of their subjects like men at the chess. A pawn to take a bishop or a knight, and to cry up or down any of their subjects, as they do their money. And to the king is due both the affection of the soul, and the service of the body of his subjects . . .

James maintained his royal rank before Parliament (unlike his son, Charles I), but he did not win the battle for his royal prerogative. Furthermore, Parliament refused to grant the King's veto on certain subjects being discussed.

With the Divine Right of Kings, religion and political thought are again inseparable. The King derived his power from God to whom he was bound by a covenant. The King was both maker of the law and above the law, only accountable to God. But the King was crowned, and at his coronation he took an oath which also bound him to his people. The nature of the reciprocal duties of the King and his subjects became, increasingly, matter of contestation. From this struggle arose the distinctions between covenantal promise and contract, on the one hand, and the distinction between right and law, on the other. Covenant is related to right as contract is related to law. As Carl Schmitt at the beginning of the twentieth century observed in *Legality and Legitimacy*,¹⁷ these agonistic parallels between law and right, contract and covenant, elected parliament and sacral kingship and secular and spiritual authority haunted the development of modern politics.

c) *Religion as a tool for politics*

The doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings lingered on into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (in Prussia, the Habsburg Empire and Russia, for example), but predominantly the political theory of society was informed by the idea of a social contract. According to this mode of political thinking, society is consolidated on the basis of the mutual transferral of rights by its members. Equality, freedom and solidarity became the new catchwords that prepared the ground for a modern understanding of democratic polity. The role of religion was diminished to the extent that it withdrew from the public sphere and became a matter of personal conscience and moral education. Nevertheless, it maintained an important function in the building and sustaining of a democratic society. As the contemporary

17. C. Schmitt (2004), *Legality and Legitimacy*, trans. Jeffery Seitzer (Durham: Duke University Press).

theorist of constitutional law and member of the Supreme Court in Germany Ernst-Wolfgang Boekenfoerde has aptly stated: 'The livelihood of the liberal, secularized state depends on preconditions which itself cannot guarantee. That is the great risk the state took for the sake of freedom.'¹⁸ What are the preconditions at stake here? From a secular and liberal perspective it is the *task of religion*, and also the *legitimation* for its continuing existence, to foster certain values needed for the development of responsible citizenship. We can illustrate this supporting principle with reference to the world's first democracy. In his reflections on democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville observed: 'In the United States religion exercises but little influence upon the laws and upon the details of public opinion; but it directs the customs of the community, and, by regulating domestic life, it regulates the state'. Religion is portrayed here as both indispensable and strictly apolitical; it has become a *political tool*. This instrumental use of religion has a long history. We can find it explicitly in the work of the Renaissance diplomat, Niccolò Machiavelli, and most famously in Constantine's appeal to Christianity as the religion of the Empire. For both of these figures religion provides a cohesive force for a people. In the early twentieth century a sociological analysis of the function of religion as a generator for solidarity was undertaken by the French thinker Emil Durkheim. According to Durkheim, religion is the social cement.

Broadly speaking, two traditions of political thinking emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Both employed religion in a different manner. First, there were the liberal theorists (like Rousseau, Paine, Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill). These figures supported the Boekenfoerde axiom in which religion was understood positively. The apolitical nature of religion did not necessarily rest upon the developing secularization of the European mind – as Tocqueville demonstrated. Nevertheless secularism's notion of neutrality (that the government transcends any religion sectarianism or ideology) did foster principles such as *laïcité*. The privatization of religion as advocated in the tradition of liberalism harmonized with the internalization of religion by Protestantism, since Protestantism was always sceptical about the Church as a public institution and a political agent. On the other hand, the Catholic Church always insisted on its public and political role in society. It is not surprising, then, that the second political tradition that emerged at this time was associated with the Catholic faith. Conservatives (like de Maistre, Maurras and Schmitt) were all Catholics radically opposed to Protestantism, not simply on dogmatic grounds but because of the Protestant liberal agenda. Only after the Second World War, for example, did the Catholic Church recognize the legitimacy of democratic polity, for democracy was the political form of government that liberalism enshrined. The conservative tradition has a long history that includes figures such as Machiavelli and Hobbes. Two distinguishing characteristics are evident in this tradition: a) a negative anthropology – according to which human beings were sinful and would war against each other unless subservient to a supreme authority; they were unable to save themselves; b) the guarantee for the

18. See E.-W. Boekenfoerde (1992), *Recht, Staat, Freiheit: Studien zur Rechtsphilosophie, Staatstheorie und Verfassungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp).

maintenance of a republic lay in the *fear* which could be aroused by that supreme authority. So contrary to the positive role religion played in governing in the liberal tradition, in the conservative tradition religion played a negative and delimiting role. For if the people feared God, this fear could be used to coerce obedience to a supreme political authority. The young Friedrich Engels intuitively recognized this theo-political principle of fear when he said: ‘The origins of the State and religion are the same: it is the fear of the people of themselves.’

What the two traditions, liberal and conservative, have in common is that both led to the development of what Foucault called biopolitics.¹⁹ With the notion of biopolitics Foucault drew attention to how governing power concerned itself with the regulation of biological life: establishing national concerns for health, for example. We saw above that Tocqueville viewed the family as the arena in which values were produced and nurtured. The family became seen as the fundamental unit in the constitution of the state. Foucault’s analysis of biopower and biopolitics facilitated an understanding of the relation between how the state governs and how the basic unit of the state, the family, is affected (by the regulation of sexuality, reproduction and diet, for example). It is significant that Foucault elaborates his analysis of biopower by studying pastoral practices as they developed in the Church (such as the obligation to confess and by doing this making oneself transparent).

d) *The religious character of political atheism*

In the wake of the Enlightenment, the new intellectual context fostering political science can be measured by a statement made by Dostoevsky: ‘Without God everything is permitted.’ Although the critique of religion is evident throughout the Enlightenment, represented by Kant,²⁰ Rousseau and Paine, none of these figures denied the existence of God. God remained the condition for the possibility of ethical and political conduct. In contrast to this, with Marx we enter a cultural condition in which the belief in God *prohibits* any possible change in society for the good. Atheism was not intrinsic to socialism (as the British Christian Socialists exemplify), but with Marx and Engels, and later with Stalin, in the realization of socialism as a political programme, religion had to be abandoned. With respect to this transformation, the text in this volume by Lenin presents a transition from the toleration to the rejection of the political role of religion. Marx begins by announcing that the critique of religion is the prerequisite of all critique. He states explicitly that, in Germany, the critique of religion is over and now a new agenda has been set. ‘Thus, the criticism of Heaven turns into the criticism of Earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of

19. See the Afterword by Michel Foucault in H. Dreyfus, and P. Rainbow (1982), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Harvester: New York), pp. 208–26, and J. Carrette (1999) *Religion and Culture by Michel Foucault* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 154–87.

20. See, for example, Kant’s famous essay ‘What is Enlightenment?’ in which he rejects any external authority and particularly the Church in the formation of moral conduct, but not the idea of the existence of God as such.

politics.’ Nevertheless, Marx’s ‘atheism’ and his account of political economy is couched in a religious terms. The Enlightenment Rights of Man, developed into a humanism for Marx in which social freedom lay in the overthrowing of thrones, dominions and oppressions; the raising up of the poor as described in Engels’ famous account of *The Social Conditions of the Working-Class People in England*. Thus Marx, when he writes that ‘*man is the highest essence for man* – hence, [there is] the *categoric imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, [and] abandoned’ (editors’ italics), calls for a new realization of a messianic formula already found in the Magnificat. ‘He has brought down monarchs from their throne, but the humble have been lifted high’ (Luke 1.52). Lenin embraces the secularization thesis understood in terms of the process of rationalization as the driving force of modernity (not unlike Max Weber’s thesis of the disenchantment of the world). He is convinced religion will naturally disappear over time so its present toleration is simply pragmatic. But the continuing critique of religion is challenged by a return to religion as an intellectual arsenal for critique itself. This becomes evident in the attack of Simone Weil on Lenin’s religious reductionism and her rediscovery of the spiritual roots of socialism in her own resistance to totalitarianism. Ironically, Schmitt recognizes (alongside Eric Voeglin), that totalitarianism was itself a surrogate religion. Refiguring a book title by Hannah Arendt, we sadly have to admit that the twentieth century proved that where totalitarianism gave birth to the banality of evil, the banality of religion gave birth to totalitarianism.

In the tradition of political thinkers like Weil and Schmitt, the awareness of religion as a source for criticizing corrupt forms of dominion is evident today in the theological interventions of Althaus-Reid, Manemann and Milbank. In fact, Žižek is most prominently a contemporary representation of a philosopher who demonstrates the continuing religious character of political atheism in his own work. Hence we can speak of different aspects of the religious nature of political atheism in a manner that connects with where we are today.

Of course, in the rich array of material presented in this volume, other themes are evident. We have drawn attention to just four: the use of the body as both metaphor and analogy for the social; the divine legitimation of sovereignty; a functional approach in which religion is a tool for politics; and the religious character of political atheism. These themes demonstrate the ongoing game between religion and politics. At stake in this game is the continuing quest for sovereign power. To change the nature of this game may well require different players. This is what Shakespeare conceived in the final scene of his final play, *The Tempest*. Here, two kingdoms face each other, the Kings of Naples (Alonso) stands alongside the Duke of Milan (Prospero) and observe the future of both their kingdoms in terms of a marriage between Alonso’s son, Ferdinand, and Prospero’s daughter, Miranda. These two are playing chess in Prospero’s cell.

Miranda: Sweet lord, you play me false.

Ferdinand: No, my dearest love, I would not for the world.

Miranda: Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, and I call it fair play . . .