

a just war. The study deals with biblical principles and the development of international law with its prohibition against aggression, which for McCoubrey is entirely consistent with a Christian position. However, the author favours the limited use of force currently permitted by international law as an expression of collective security against acts of aggression or self-defence authorised by the United Nations: where, 'notwithstanding international morality and law, military aggression does take place, a defensive military response may not only be unavoidable but may even be an ethical duty'. The essay gives a thorough overview of international law methods and describes the historical development of worldwide organisations on human rights. McCoubrey maintains that all those engaged in armed conflict, even those who consider the use of force to be an answer to an aggression, must be mindful of the enemy as brothers and sisters in Christ in need of pastoral care.

There is no doubt that this book is an important contribution to a Christian perspective on Human Rights. The different papers are clear and stimulating, with useful subject and biblical indices. Through its theme that the lack of connection between law and morality is a persistent danger, this book seeks to remind us that law divorced from moral considerations can be an instrument of fear and injustice. It also serves to stress the moral responsibility of Christians in the development of human rights. All the essays are very readable and enriched by treatment of the many biblical, historical, legal and political implications of the subjects dealt with. For this reason, this book is essential to enable readers to bring the complex array of issues discussed into sharper focus: they make a real attempt to identify Christian ideas which may function as standards by which to measure legal developments in the area of human rights. Nevertheless, one criticism of the volume is a neglect of sociological data, particularly in the context of the secularisation of society which may bring into question the realistic likelihood of strengthening the links between the scriptures and state law, a basic theme in the studies: religious goals are, after all, very different from those in the political and civil fields. For this reason, some readers may find the papers overly utopian. In sum, then, the editor and contributors are to be congratulated on an innovative achievement, a real stepping stone in a new, Christian approach to legal science.

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*RELIGION, POLITICS AND PEACE* edited by LEROY S. ROUNER, University of Notre Dame Press, 1999. xvii + 209 pp (hardback £ 23.95) ISBN 0-268-01664-X.

This collection of essays makes up volume 20 of the Boston University Studies in Philosophy and Religion under the general editorship of Leroy S. Rouner. The series has come to be characterised by the eminence of its authors and the readability of its style, and this volume is no exception. From a variety of perspectives, the essays seek to challenge the liberal assumption that religious diversity represents a threat to political stability and that religion should therefore be kept separate from public life.

In Part I, essays by Jürgen Moltmann, Jean Bethge Elshtain and Elie Wiesel consider the relevance of theological concepts for political reconciliation. Moltmann reflects on his own personal experience of forgiveness as a German prisoner-of-war and expands the ideas of confession, forgiveness and reconciliation in the context of a critique of Germany's attempts to come to terms with its own past both in 1945 and 1989. Elshtain takes up a similar theme in a broader setting, focusing finally on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Elie Wiesel writes movingly

of the ‘urgency of hope’—national and political hope—in the face of almost absolute despair for the Jewish people.

In Part II, ‘the politics of pluralism’, the multiculturalist debate begins to emerge. Biku Parekh sets out several good arguments for the relevance of religion to public life, but this is immediately qualified by Stephen Darwall’s elegant apologia for the move to secularism: it is only when we accept that political authority is not divine, but is rooted in the intrinsic moral authority of human beings, that religious toleration and liberty will be secure. Similarly, John Clayton and Ronald Thiemann, while valuing religious diversity, set out the need for common ethical ground between different religions and world views (which Clayton finds in the concept of human rights) if politics is to be possible.

Part III is loosely organised around the idea of peace. John Hick considers the theology of Ghandi, and Raimon Panikkar argues that a culture of peace can be found at the heart of all religions. In an essay that does not fit as comfortably with the others—calling the essay ‘Can we keep peace with nature?’ does not really make the connection—Stephanie Kaza looks at the relationship between Buddhism and environmentalism.

It is, of course, unfair to suppose that a collection of essays should have a single thesis, but to the extent that such a generalisation is possible, the implicit argument of most of these essays seems to be as follows: (1) politics is only possible against the background of a shared conception of truth and justice; (2) the modern state has constructed such a conception by excluding religious categories and concerns; (3) this is itself unjust, not least because common ethical ground can be found between different religions; and (4) the existence of common ground is theologically guaranteed by the fact that all religions are essentially directed to the same truth and can mutually benefit each other. The third point is of course true at some level, but arguably not true at the level of detail required by legal regulation. In spite of Parekh’s interesting (and necessarily controversial) attempt to sketch in a programme for common religious education in schools, the tendency of the multiculturalist argument is to create pockets of legitimate diversity (e.g. Islamic schools) rather than a new common ground. However, rooting all this in radical theological syncretism (Parekh, Thiemann, Hick and Panikkar) is deeply problematic. The challenge is how to create the space within a single political community for radical religious diversity, that is, for difference which does *not* see ‘the Other’ as valuable. If the syncretist thesis is correct, the problem is only a lack of theological enlightenment of those religious and non-religious believers crude enough to hang on to the exclusivity of their own faith. And the risk is that a political programme built upon such syncretism will be as oppressive to ordinary believers as the secular liberalism it seeks to supplant.

Dissatisfaction with the non-religious nature of public life is now a common theme in political thought. These essays represent a valuable and eminently readable contribution to the reworking of the secularist thesis which is currently taking place. However, more work is needed to show that the meta-political foundation adopted in several of the essays will bear the weight of the political and legal superstructure desired.

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