

Knjiga je odličen pastoralni priročnik za duhovnike, diakone in druge pastoralne delavce. To ni knjiga, ki jo vzameš v roke in prebereš – to je priročnik, lahko bi rekli celo molitvenik, ki ga lahko vedno znova jemljemo v roke in uporabljamo. Knjiga bi lahko bila tudi ‚dar župnije‘ ob prijavi pogreba. Upokojeni mariborski nadškof msgr. dr. Marjan Turnšek je zapisal, da lahko knjiga posamezniku pomaga globlje dojeti lastno žalovanje ali žalovanje drugih, ovredno-

ti marsikatero splošno mnenje o odnosu do rajnih, daje pa tudi konkretna izhodišča za osebno in skupinsko pomoč pri žalovanju. V pastoralnem smislu je pomenljiva spodbuda za ustanavljanje skupin žalujočih po župnijah, ki naj bi postale del redne pastorale. Tako lahko upamo, da bo knjiga na področju pastorale žalujočih prinesla tudi kakšen konkreten premik.

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Tom Wright and Michael F. Bird. *Jesus and the Powers: Christian Political Witness in an Age of Totalitarian Terror and Dysfunctional Democracies*. London: SPCK, 2024. 185 pp. ISBN 978-0310162247.

“We have recognised that the world we live in now is at a moment of social and economic turmoil, with new imperial powers rising and democratic nations tearing themselves apart. In such a combustible world, we need to think about political theology, both theory and practice, more acutely than since the Second World War.” (Wright and Bird 2024, 175) This is what N. T. Wright and M. F. Bird say in the conclusions of their recent book, *Jesus and the Powers*, whose relevance is particularly justified in an international war context (Ukraine, Gaza) that invites the academic world and the public authorities to re-think the foundations on which our political regimes are based. Certainly, “the 2020s appear to be the most precarious and perilous time in human history since the 1930s /.../ now, we have the ad-

ditional nightmarish prospect of nuclear war” (5). In this vein, the diagnosis of the problem is aggravated, as the authors say, by the rise of new empires and the weakening of Western democratic nations. The empires in question are, first and foremost, Russia and China. Of the former, it is noted that “despite hopes that Russia might become westernised, it seems that Russia remains what it has been ever since the seventeenth century: a military dictatorship” (3–4). Of the latter, it is stated that “China’s economic rise did not lead to its democratic liberalisation; rather, the country turned into a wealthy and predatory superpower that runs a technological surveillance state” (3). For its part, the internal breakdown of Western democracies is giving rise to a new danger within these democracies: “our danger is the slow and steady accession of a soft-authoritarianism under the guise of being ‘progressive’ /.../ a state seeks to regulate as much of the individual’s beliefs, convictions, conscience and religion as possible /.../ constant surveillance and deliberate over-

regulation.” (136–137) Along these lines, Wright and Bird argue that the erosion of liberal-democratic regimes is largely due to their very essence, provided by Enlightenment thought: “in post-Enlightenment Europe and America, ‘religion’ was *by definition* separated off from everything else.” (70) Now, in our “progressive” and post-modern (anti-liberal and authoritarian) context, “religion is permitted, but it is either a state-approved religion, or else, and more to the point, politics is the religion” (140).

In the light of the above, *Jesus and the Powers* tries to offer ways out of our current situation of international crisis, especially through the aforementioned ‘political theology’ and, more specifically, a Christian political theology: “we believe that the Church’s answer to the global crises of our day is, in sum, the kingdom of God /.../. Our working hypothesis is that the kingdom of God is not *from* this world, but it is emphatically *for* this world. The Church’s kingdom-vocation is not only what it says to the world, but is also what the Church *does within and for* the sake of the world.” (7) Christ’s message and the Church’s mission are not mainly linked to a “purely spiritual entity” (35), but rather “the Bible is a book utterly immersed in empire. Its stories are set in the midst of the great empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon /.../ then finally the Roman Empire.” (10) Therefore, biblical values, and especially those of the New Testament, imply the regeneration of the world already in History and not only in the afterlife: “in every age, every church has had to discern what it meant then and there to say that Jesus has ‘all authority’ not only ‘in heaven’

but also ‘on earth’ /.../ balancing sacred and secular.” (97) Thus, the intertwining of the natural and the supernatural realms makes it impossible to relegate the religious question to the private sphere or to life after death and urges us to admit its political embodiment: “what are these ‘powers’ /.../ they are both /.../ ‘earthly’ and /.../ ‘heavenly’ or ‘supernatural’ /.../. We perceive them through the lens of modern Western thought, in which a great gulf stands between the present world /.../ and any other, whether we call it ‘heavenly’ /.../ or anything else.” (51) It is precisely this balance between the sacred and the civil that is now to be calibrated, in a particularly unstable context where the “powers” are supplanting God and are making inroads in both new empires and old democracies: “what we believe in is a theo-political gospel that declares that Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not.” (38) This does not mean, however, that a return to a theocratic system is called for: “we are no fans of theocracy /.../ but if you want to change the game you need skin in the game. The people who change history must make history /.../ How do you build for the kingdom [of God] in an age of empire, where totalitarians tyrannise and our democracies appear dysfunctional /.../ is not a purely religious question.” (37)

According to the authors, the salvation of the Enlightenment project must involve reconsidering the inclusion of the public influence of the Christian religion in the world of democracies. Indeed, despite criticisms, Wright and Bird’s commitment to the liberal regime, born of the Enlightenment, is explicit: “liberal democracy and confident pluralism constitute a form of gover-

nment and political philosophy that gives us the best opportunity to love God and to love our neighbour.” (178) However, as has been said, for such a ‘political philosophy’ to have a positive return, it needs to be imbued with the spirit of a Christian political theology, with a public outreach: “to engage in that kind of holistic mission will require /.../ doing some public theology /.../. If it is obviously unwise to make politics one’s religion, it is no less foolish to think that the life of faith has nothing to do with our political discourse and its legislative chambers.” (100) Liberalism and Christianity can and should be twinned: “the common good is not in /.../ shared goals as banal as ‘live and let live’. Authority is from God to the State and meets with the consensus of the people.” (156) And it is precisely the contribution of Christianity that can bring solidity to liberal democracy: “the problem with state authority from below-and this is proving to be the key vulnerability of liberal democracies to-

day-is that they must be rooted in some kind of consensus.” (155) With regard to this, the special legitimacy of Christianity as a source of a political theology capable of providing such a necessary consensus lies in the quality of the values it promotes: “there would never be human rights as self-evident truths without scriptural notions of the ‘image of God’ and the command to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ as it was interpreted in Christian societies.” (167)

In conclusion, on the one hand, *Jesus and the Powers* offers a diagnosis of the grave international political situation, linked to the rise of new empires and the crisis of the Enlightenmentstyle liberal democratic regimes. On the other hand, it puts forward a possible solution, which involves strengthening liberal democracies by including elements of reflection and action drawn from Christianity that can be incorporated into the public sphere by means of a certain political theology.

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