Identity Crisis?: The Nation-state, Nationality, Regionalism, Language and Religion

Neil Summerton

The breakdown of Soviet hegemony in eastern Europe, and the fall of the Berlin Wall, was welcomed with enthusiasm and some naivety as opening a new era of peace and prosperity free from the tension of the Cold War. The perturbations in many parts of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union since then came as a bitter surprise to some. Those with memories and some knowledge of the history of these areas over the last two centuries may perhaps have been less surprised. At the same time, it has become evident that intense national and regional loyalties persist in many western European areas, and the project of European federalism labours somewhat. In the New World, ancient distinctions between the principal linguistic and historical communities cause Canada to tremble chronically on the edge of schism. Against this background, the purpose of this article is to explore attitudes to the nation-state and national identity in Europe, particularly in the last two centuries, with the aim of illuminating current tensions, and to make some comments from a theological perspective.

The nation-state

With the help of the Enlightenment, early nineteenth-century European Romanticism gave to the world a powerful tool for political and social organization – the nation-state in its modern form.[1] True to the Romantic ideal, the notion was that the limits and legitimacy of territorial government in any particular case should be set by collective *feelings* of popular mutual identity. Where a (substantial?) majority of inhabitants in a particular location felt a sense of common identity, there were the makings of nationhood, and therefore of a viable state. This notion chimed well with liberal democratic ideals about the proper source of the legitimacy of power, and with the related notions of self-determination (that the people should decide the limits and character of their government) and non-intervention (that external powers had no right to interfere within the boundaries of a nation-state commanding the support of its people).

From our vantage point, we can see that this subjective sense of national identity was based, from case to case, on a bundle of factors, the most significant being – for the moment, in no particular order of importance – common language; common cultural experience, frequently including shared religion; common historical experience; common myths about that historical experience (sometimes of actual or perceived persecution); common genetic stock; and feelings of historic association with particular territory, leading on occasion to territorial claims.[2] Not all these factors were necessarily present in each case, or present to the same degree. But some were clearly of great significance in almost all cases. For example, despite the tendency of some of cosmopolitan bent to argue otherwise, shared and distinct language has usually been perceived as central to national identity – to the point that where it has been absent, as in the case of Ireland, nationalists have sometimes felt it necessary to try to revive the historic language.

Religion, on the other hand, appears to have been a less essential component in some places than in others. Clearly, it has been of vital significance on both sides of the divide in Ireland, between all three sides among the South Slavs, and possibly elsewhere in the Orthodox world. Protestantism became a significant factor in British identity between 1600 and 1850; and, for some at least, Catholicism was the *sine qua non* of being a loyal Spaniard in the nineteenth century.[3] By contrast, in, for example, The Netherlands and Germany, national identity came quite early in the nineteenth century to transcend religious divisions, while the earlier principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* ensured accidentally rather than centrally that Lutheranism was a unifying factor in the Scandinavian states, though subsequently it may have become a defining characteristic for Finns, Swedes, Norwegians and Danes. By now, almost everywhere in western Europe (in effect in most of the formerly Catholic and Protestant areas of Europe), religion has become a tertiary, if not negligible, factor in forming a sense of national identity.[4] (There may here be something different in the character of modern western Catholicism compared with eastern Orthodoxy.)

Shared cultural and historical experience, including attachment to traditional governmental and other institutions, may be accidental in most cases but was and is clearly an important factor in establishing shared identity. Witness modern Scottish nationalism; the British, or rather the English, myth about a free Saxon peasantry giving birth to common law liberties and Parliament (never mind that it was a Norman nobility that extracted them from an Angevin and a Plantagenet

king respectively!); or the German interpretation of their role as defender of Europe against the barbarian Slavs and Turks. And in the Darwinian period, perceptions of common genetic stock went through a phase of being held to be important in defining national identity everywhere in Europe, not just in Germany.

Over time and from place to place, the importance of these differing factors in establishing a sense of common identity varies. The case of the United States is interesting in this respect: its Enlightenment ideals and dependence on immigration deliberately excluded religion and genetics as sources of identity, throwing it back on to a common language (I believe the oath of citizenship has still to be taken in English, *i.e.* American), and on to commitment to the Enlightenment liberties enshrined in the Constitution, to Enlightenment economics (*i.e.* capitalism), and to the governmental processes and institutions of the founding fathers.

The high hopes of nineteenth-century liberalism were only partly fulfilled. The nation-state, coupled with a much expanded role for governments capable of much enhanced rational bureaucratic efficiency, has proved itself capable of bestowing upon its subjects considerable blessings not feasible in earlier years. Moreover, the mechanism has proved eminently exportable in the twentieth century, the model being adopted across the globe so that now the United Nations comprises some 185 nation-states, each with the characteristic trappings of nationhood – flags, anthems, military forces, *etc.* The process has not been without its difficulties, if only because in many cases the territorial extent of those states has been determined by the accidents of history, such as the limits of colonial occupation, or by the decisions of outside powers (as in the case of the Versailles conference's activities in eastern Europe in 1919). The result has frequently been boundaries bearing no relation to factors such as underlying sentiments of collective identity and national coherence. Here are the seeds of internal tension and conflict. This has been brought into sharp focus in recent years in eastern Europe, but has long been present, for example, in colonial Africa where tribal identity frequently transcends loyalty to the jurisdictional state, while Belgium is an example of the questionable efforts of the Congresses of Vienna and London to fabricate states with an eye to the balance between the great powers rather than regard for emerging feelings of identity.[5] The resulting instability has often had the effect of drawing more coherent nation-states into conflict with one another.

Quite apart from this source of instability, the merits of the nation-state as a way of organizing human society were called into serious question in the first part of the twentieth century by conflicts whose savagery was palpably heightened by the intense sense of national identity felt at every level in European society. It is not too much to assert that the phenomenon of total war in the early twentieth century was made possible not only by technological change, industrialization and a new bureaucratic efficiency, but by the popular motivation resulting from nationalism. One consequence of the traumatic experience of total war was a sharp contrary reaction in public opinion in the shape of a new willingness to see the development of international institutions and international law with the aim of containing the worst excesses of the nation-state.

Those who had been far-seeing in the latter years of the nineteenth century to some extent anticipated this consequence of a Europe of democratic nation-states, and promoted both international arbitration and international conventions (such as those associated with The Hague and Geneva) as mechanisms of containment.[6] These continued to be developed after the First World War, but at the same time international security mechanisms such as the League of Nations and subsequently the United Nations, and a variety of regional organizations, came into being with a fundamental objective of peacekeeping and peacemaking between nation-states. In parallel, too, growing international trade and other forms of international communication encouraged the development of bilateral and multilateral agreements between states whose effect was to attenuate the principle of the absolute sovereignty (in respect of external power of decision) of nation-states. I say the *principle* of absolute sovereignty because, *pace* the views of some politicians, in practice the sovereignty of nation-states is rarely, if ever, absolute: at the least, nation-states usually find it convenient to enter international agreements for mutual benefit which entail collective working and at least minimal collective institutions to give effect to the agreements, *e.g.* with respect to practical matters like navigation or air traffic control. International agreements can, of course, be renounced unilaterally, with or without consequences; to that extent, national sovereignty is indeed absolute; but while they remain in force, the sovereign state has attenuated its absolute freedom of decision.[7] Inter-war examples are the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization. Since 1945, however, the pace has increasingly quickened, so that we are now faced with a bewildering array of bilateral and multilateral agreements and international institutions dealing not only with trade, development and transport, but transboundary environmental impacts and international criminal activities. In virtually all cases, the effect is to limit the sovereign freedom of manoeuvre and decision of the individual state, typically on a voluntary basis.

Internationalism has been manifested not simply by way of the familiar mechanisms of international law, agreements and institutions. It is not too far-fetched to argue that, notwithstanding the Stalinist concept of Communism in a single country, one of the historically significant ideals of Communism was internationalism. That significance is underlined by its ability to contain and even submerge longstanding national and regional identities for a lengthy period, admittedly in part through force of arms, for example in the Soviet Union, in China and in Yugoslavia. It is too simple to dismiss Communism merely as a form of imperialism.

A further step could be to argue that the expansionary threat implicit in this Communist internationalism called into being defensive alliances, a side-effect of which was further to attenuate national sovereignty for the nation-states involved. The Gaullist withdrawal from the NATO command structure might perhaps be characterized as a nationalist reaction against this (in which linguistic and cultural, but not religious, definitions of identity were very much to the fore, in counterpoint to the dominant language and culture of the Alliance).

All three motors of internationalism may be discerned in the development of the European Community between 1950 and 1989 – containment of potentially destructive national rivalries within western Europe; the construction of a further bulwark against the rival internationalism of the Soviet bloc; the need for international economic co-operation in the interests of economic development in the face of the industrial strength of the USA, Japan and, more lately, the newly-industrializing countries. But many human beings do not find it easy to live with the attenuation of identity implicit in internationalism, particularly in an age in which the development of air and electronic communication has led to the dominance of one culture, if not to a cultural standardization.[8] Psychologically, human beings crave identity, and strive for means of differentiating themselves in order to establish a sense of identity. National identity is an obvious and durable refuge from the anomie of internationalism. Indeed, where a standardized national culture seems oppressive and boring, there appear to be strong attractions in emphasizing regional and local identity even more than national identity, especially where the national government is perceived as failing to deliver the same level of benefits as is enjoyed by the remainder of the country concerned.

This is all the more so where the external threat is removed. It smacks of Greek tragedy that, at the very moment that the leaders of the European Community chose to make a decisive move towards European federalism and ultimately Union, the Soviet threat should have been removed, leaving the various peoples of Europe free to risk differentiating themselves by way of their historical identities and myths about themselves. At any rate, in the first part of the 1990s, in many parts of the European Community the thrust towards unitary institutions manifestly threatened to outstrip the development of a popular sense of European identity as a substitute for national identity. A result is the current emphasis on the concept of subsidiarity,[9] which is, for some, often code for national and even regional self-determination. Similar sentiments were much more powerfully expressed in eastern Europe and on the fringes of the former Soviet Union with the removal of the internationalizing or imperial power. For the moment, in Europe, it appears that national and regional sentiment is often much more enduring and appealing to demos than is internationalism.[10]

Some theological reflections

Why should commitments to national identity be so enduring when rationality points to the illogicalities and risks to which it gives rise, and to the benefits of international intercourse and agreement? What commentary does biblical revelation offer on these conflicting issues? Literature in English setting out a biblical theology of temporal collective identity is comparatively modest, especially from within the evangelical tradition. William Storrar's work is notable here.[11] I am less certain than Storrar, following Karl Barth, that Genesis 10 is to be interpreted as a positive affirmation of nationhood as a temporal providential provision. It seems to me that the chapter should be read as parallel to the first part of chapter 11 (I agree of course that when human organizations and associations have a governmental character, they should be considered in the light of the providential status given by Scripture to human government). More seriously, I am less certain than Storrar that the nations, *qua* nations, have a place in the *redeemed* creation, as distinct from being represented through those who have been 'purchased . . . for God from every tribe and language and people and nation' (Rev. 5:10; see also 7:9). The nations will finally recognize Christ's lordship, but it does not follow that all will be redeemed. Care needs to be taken, it seems to me, not to build too firm a doctrine on this point on the evidently symbolic language of Revelation 21 and 22.[12] A close examination, however, shows that, arguably, issues of language, land, 'state' religion, and collective and individual identity lie close to the heart of the biblical description of the human predicament – not surprisingly, since the Judaeo-Christian word seeks to draw universally applicable truth from concrete historical experience. It may be argued that, according to the Scriptures, a fundamental human problem in a fallen world is humanity's sense of loss of identity, security and land.[13] Humanity is turned out of (rather, has in effect turned itself out of) a God-given land in which there is pleasure and plenty (Gn. 2:8-16; 3:22-24). It has become 'a fugitive and a wanderer' cursed to unfruitful territory and insecurity (Gn. 4:12, 14),[14] cut off from the true source of its identity – relationship with its Creator (Gn. 4:14: 'Behold, thou hast driven me this day away from the ground; and from thy face I shall be hidden'). The result is existential suicidal *Angst* – 'My punishment is greater than I can bear' (Gn. 4:13).

Fallen humanity's characteristic response to this predicament is to build for itself a substitute identity and security, focused in its own autonomous culture and polity: 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad on the face of the whole earth' (Gn. 11:4). In the biblical account the consequence of that counterfeit venture is division by language, so that now identity and security will be sought in competing linguistically orientated collectivities. Typically, in the OT, this involves a sectarian (*i.e.* exclusive) religious commitment which is idolatrous in character – and which is contrasted with the commitment to Yahweh which is required of Israel (and in fact of all humanity), interestingly within the framework of a sovereignty treaty (covenant). As that covenant itself implies, this is not to argue that the biblical revelation does not see government based on national or communal units as a legitimate temporal function in human society. It is rather that in a fallen world human beings, in their search for lost identity and security, have a constant tendency to accord to their autonomous governmental/national/communal collectivity an idolatrous commitment, and human governors/leaders have a constant tendency to demand it (*cf.* the different portraits of government, people and power in the book of Daniel).

With this portrait of humanity excluded from the divine presence may be compared the condition of the restored humanity as gradually revealed in the Scriptures, culminating in the second Eden-Jerusalem of Isaiah 60, 65 and 66, Ezekiel 47 and Revelation 21 and 22. 'Internationalist' is scarcely an adequate description of this vision. The restored people is envisaged as a theistic community transcending, even abolishing, national or other collective distinctions: '. . . There cannot be Greek or Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all' (Col. 3:11). 'The dividing wall of hostility' between human collectivities has been broken down; 'one new man' has been created through the cross, 'bringing the hostility to an end' (Eph. 2:14-16). A single new land, indeed universe, is created (Rev. 21:1) into which the kings and nations of the earth bring their glory[15] (Is. 60:10-13; Rev. 21:24, 26) and in which the trees are for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2). It is to this new land that the Christian is irrevocably and transcendently committed (Heb. 13:14 – 'here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come'). Here is the Christian's true and transcending collective identity, even in this world.

That does not imply that human society and government do not have a legitimate temporary function and value in the NT understanding, nor that the new race created in Christ may not respect and take pleasure in the ties of family, community, city and country. The apostle Paul, for example, was proud (or at least made use) of his Roman citizenship (Acts 22:25-29), of his home town ('no mean city' – Acts 21:39), and of his education in the Jewish law schools (Acts 22:3). He also accepted the tribal and territorial divisions of humanity as God-given, if temporary and changing in character, while at the same time asserting humanity's essential unity in creation (Acts 17:24-26: 'The God who made the world and everything in it . . . [is] the Lord of heaven and earth . . . he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation . . .'). At the same time, however, these ties are subordinate to the higher commitment in the new community of faith. So he decisively condemns his former religious and social commitment which he regards (notwithstanding its sincerity of conviction) as having set itself up in exclusive and autonomous opposition to the living God (Rom. 9–11, Gal. *passim* and Phil. 3:3-11). For him, it had become in effect the same kind of fallen human mechanism for conferring the spurious identity and security as that offered by the idolatrous societies condemned in the OT. Similarly, for the writer to the Hebrews, the member of the new community of faith cannot draw ultimate and transcending identity and security from, or give exclusive commitment to, human society in that way: for the moment, the Christian is a pilgrim, a nomad, 'a stranger in a foreign land . . . looking forward to the city . . . whose architect and builder is God'. Christians are 'aliens and strangers on earth . . . looking for a country of their own . . . looking for a better country – a heavenly one' (Heb. 11:8-10, 13, 16, NIV). The goal is the (redeemed) 'internationalism' or, better, 'intercommunalism' of the prophetic visions. The future ideal (now but not yet) must condition current loyalties.

Some implications and applications

Perhaps the most significant lesson of this biblical portrait should be to warn Christians to evaluate carefully the true nature and consequences of their religious commitments. At many times and places in human history, the religious commitment is the dominant sentiment – strange as that may seem in the secularized western Europe of today. Indeed, Scripture sees such a Christian commitment as mandatory. Thus, the early Christians sometimes described themselves as the 'third race', to distinguish themselves from Jews and Gentiles, or perhaps Romans and barbarians, or Romans and Greeks. This sense of dominant Christian commitment lived on in some form or other in both western and eastern Christianity at least until the Renaissance and Reformation, and for many groups was the central source of self-identity.

It may be argued that this was particularly so in the eastern forms of Christianity. So, for example, an historian can write of Christianity in the Sasanid Persian empire in the fifth and sixth centuries:

> Nothing has been said about national identity, and the reason for this is a simple one: such a concept (at least as we now understand it) never existed in Sasanid Iran, any more than it did in the Ottoman empire before the rise of nationalism. Across the border in the Roman empire, it is true, one can occasionally find a non-Chalcedonian writer like Jacob of Serugh (†521) speaking of 'us Rhomaioi', but this is only possible because the state is a Christian one. For Christians in Persia, on the other hand, their 'nation' was that of their religious community. As Wigram put it, 'religion was the determinant of nationality'.[16]

Western European commentators are therefore likely to make a grave error if they underestimate the centrality of religio-cultural identity in national identity throughout the Slav world, in Maronite and Uniate areas, and in areas where Armenian forms of Christianity are the norm. They had better not under-

estimate, either, the similar dominance of the religious element throughout the Islamic world in establishing sentiments of collective identity. (Incidentally, this may well turn out to be a politically significant factor in those western European communities which have recently acquired large Muslim minorities, as assimilation may be less rapid than for many other immigrant minorities.) Where the religious element is central to perceptions of identity and psychological security and the approach is shared by different communities in close proximity, as in Ireland, former Yugoslavia, the Lebanon and Nagorno-Karabakh, we should positively expect the mixture to be explosive.[17] Less obvious but nevertheless real are current tensions in Slovakia, Rumania and Russia, where the growth of Protestant groups is perceived as presenting a threat to fundamental collective identity.

In the light of biblical theology, it is legitimate to pose the question whether the religious commitment has not in the circumstances described become precisely that counterfeit source of human identity and security so sharply criticized by the apostle Paul in the letters to the Galatians and Philippians, against which he had to contend in the incidents recounted in the closing chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, and which was of course a central factor leading to the crucifixion of Jesus. In the absence of true faith and relationship with God, it is possible for the idea of the final triumph of Christianity itself to become the idolatrous ideology of a master race.

On the other hand there are serious risks that the secularized West will place too great hopes in the self-evident 'truths' of internationalism and syncretism as the basis for resolving problems of nationalist-religious conflict. The result will be to underestimate the force of national and regional identity in certain areas of the world and to be mystified when groups fail to behave 'sensibly', or to assume that the common people are simply being misled by evil leaders, when in fact those leaders are doing no more than to focus deeply-held popular sentiments. The Christian should at least be a realist in not expecting his or her biblical 'internationalist' or 'inter-communalist' ideal to be widely shared by society at large. In the absence of the deep inner resources which the Christian would argue can alone come from restored relationship with God in Christ (the 'reconciliation of all things' of Col. 1:20 (NIV)), human beings can be expected, at least from time to time and place to place, to take refuge in an idolatrous 'nationalist' commitment; or to become disorientated by anomie in the absence of a strong focus of collective identity; or to erect internationalism and syncretism into new sources of counterfeit identity.

Nor does it follow from the inter-communal vision of Scripture, and the undoubted evils that flow from an idolatrous sense of autonomous national identity, that the Christian is bound in this life to pursue an inflexible policy of internationalism against the claims of the nation-state or lower communities. That is so as a matter of both principle and practice. As just indicated, an autonomous internationalism is as capable of being idolatrous as nationalism, and is therefore capable of doing as much, if not more, evil. After all, Genesis 11 depicts man as *unitedly* seeking autonomously to build the perfect society: Scripture depicts the event as being precisely a *global* project. In a prophetic capacity, the Christian will oppose every effort at human organization and government (of whatever character – whether sub-nationalist, nationalist, federalist or internationalist) which seeks to take institutions beyond their God-given limits as temporal mechanisms. Practically, the Christian is entitled to support organizational projects at whatever level if they appear not to transgress those God-given limits, if they answer to the legitimate needs of the case, and if they meet the criteria of justice which Scripture so strongly requires with respect to civil government. The ultimate 'internationalist' vision of Scripture does not require an inflexible presumption in favour of internationalist solutions in this present age. It does, however, prescribe a bias towards promoting harmony, concert and *shalom* between communities and nations, based on the canons of divine justice, and a bias against so sharp an assertion of national and states' rights as to risk exciting hostility and an idolatrous xenophobia. Nor does the 'internationalist' vision call for the obliteration of local, regional and national distinctives; rather it allows warmth for kindred, tribe and community to flourish, so long as they do not become the locus of an idolatrous and exclusive assertion of separate identity.

But realism in a fallen world will also counsel that, insofar as we seek to formulate workable policies for 'the present evil age' (Gal. 1:4), internationalist projects (to the extent that they are desirable as a temporal measure in any particular set of circumstances) will need to work for widespread popular support. The pace of internationalist development will need to be moderate enough not to outstrip existing popular sentiments of collective commitment. Here there is wisdom in one aspect of the Catholic natural law tradition of subsidiarity: government which is perceived as being remote and unresponsive is also likely to be perceived as illegitimate. In a modern democracy, expressed through the electronic media, it is essential for stability and effective government to have at least a basic modicum of popular commitment to institutions. If the arguments in this paper are convincing, a reliable criterion to guide the application of a principle of subsidiarity would be whether competences are allocated for the time being to levels (whatever they may be) which command sufficient popular support. If they do not, the allocation is unlikely to endure for long. Among fallen human beings, feelings have more power than rationality – no wonder Romanticism has been such a powerful philosophy!

[1]It is true that in a limited number of places on the north-western seaboard of Europe (England, Scotland, the United Provinces, parts of France and perhaps Castile) something approximating to a co-terminousness of national feeling and the boundaries of unitary government did emerge at a somewhat earlier stage (*cf.* 'this sceptred isle', *etc.* (Shakespeare, *Richard II*)). But the product was a pale shadow of the nation-state which emerged in the nineteenth century with the fusion of Enlightenment rationalism, liberal democracy and Romanticism. Louis XIV was clear that '*L'État, c'est moi*'; the denizens of the nation-state are clear that 'the nation-state is us'. (See 'The shape of the world' in *The Economist*, 23 Dec. 1995 – 5 Jan. 1996, pp. 17–20.) To my mind, W. Storrar (*Scottish Identity: a Christian vision* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1990), pp. 9–24), probably over-stresses the popular nationalistic element in assertions of the independence of late-medieval Scotland. It is true that in many places in Europe at that time the secular power was anxious to establish its independence from the pan-European power of the papacy and that a related phenomenon was the assertion of the vernacular against papal Latin. But the relationship of national feeling to these phenomena and to governmental institutions was problematic: for example, the anti-clerical Germanism of the humanists had no implications for political organization, beyond the exclusion of papal power and influence; indeed it had to be tailored to political realities: 'Within the nationalism of the humanists there often existed regional elements, tending to a more detailed treatment and more fulsome praise of the author's regional *Stamm* and his background in historical topography. Commonly the patronage of some prince or city can be shown to have influenced such emphases'; '. . . we should in present terminology speak of Germanic rather than German nationalism . . . Many of these humanists . . . displayed what might be somewhat paradoxically called a pan-German cosmopolitanism . . .' (A.G. Dickens, *The German Nation and Martin Luther* (London: Fontana, 1976), pp. 39, 41).

[2]For a parallel description of the sources of modern nationhood and its relation to the state, see Nicholas Townsend, 'A race apart?', *Third Way*, March 1995, pp. 18–21.

[3]Frances Lannon, 'Modern Spain: the project of a national Catholicism', in Stuart Mews (ed.), *Religion and National Identity: Papers read at the nineteenth summer meeting and the twentieth winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1982), pp. 567–590.

[4]Clearly, it remains very significant in Ireland, Slovenia and Croatia (if the latter two countries may be regarded as western European) and has a residual importance in Scandinavia (fear for traditional religious culture was a factor in the 'no' vote in the Maastricht referenda in Denmark, for example). I doubt its significance now in Iberia and Italy. Greece must be grouped in eastern Europe in this respect – witness the severe legal constraints on public expressions of anything but Orthodox religion there (open-air preaching by Protestants can lead to arrest and prosecution in the courts).

[5]Religion was a factor in the creation of Belgium – notwithstanding common language with the northern Netherlands, the Flemings were unwilling in the 1930s to continue within a Netherlands in which Protestantism was politically dominant. They preferred instead to identify with their co-religionist Walloon neighbours, an approach which is being reversed now that culture and language are seen by the Flemings as being more significant sources of collective identity than is religion.

[6]See A.C.F. Beales, *The History of Peace: a Short Account of the Organized Movement for International Peace* (London, 1931); F.S.L. Lyon, *Internationalism in Europe 1815–1914* (Leyden, 1963); and N.W. Summerton, 'Dissenting attitudes to foreign relations, peace and war, 1840–1890', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 28, no. 2 (April 1977), pp. 151–178.

[7]*Pace* Maritain, I use 'sovereignty' in its common usage, *viz.* the power of autonomous political and, therefore, legal decision on behalf of a distinct body politic. Thus now in the United Kingdom, Parliament is sovereign in its

ability to make law which conditions the actions of institutions and individuals in the United Kingdom, but that sovereignty is attenuated in that it is, for example, bound to give specific effect to legislation made by the European Community under the provisions of the Treaty of Rome; *i.e.* it is not free either to fail to implement European legislation or to do something different. (See J. Maritain, *Man and the State* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1954), pp. 25–48, 178–179.)

[8]Internationalism can be seen as the politico-structural expression of ideals ranging from cosmopolitanism on the one hand (which emphasizes both the global identity of human beings as one race and universal citizenship, and sometimes vigorously rejects lesser identities based on national and cultural communities), to a more inter-communal approach giving greater weight to cultural and other differences between groups of human beings on the other. The *Zeitgeist* of early twentieth-century internationalism, with its roots in Enlightenment (and, in Britain, Nonconformist) liberalism, was very much of the former variety, even if the internationalist institutions to which it led could not for practical reasons be other than inter-'national' and inter-governmental in character (*e.g.* the League of Nations). In practice, there is much evidence that (fallen) human beings often find even the inter-communal version of internationalism too attenuating of their sense of emotional security and identity so that they seek refuge in their national or communal identities.

[9]'Subsidiarity' is a technical term having its origins in the Thomist concepts employed in the papal encyclical of 1931, *Quadragesimo anno.* There, the use of the term was in the context of Fascist and Communist totalitarianism, on the one hand, and individualistic economic liberalism on the other – with perhaps a degree of *arrière pensée* towards an idealized peasant and guild culture. The 'subsidiary principle' referred to the importance of allowing institutions and associations (*e.g.* trade unions) both to moderate individualism and to subsist outside the control of the state. In the latter respect, it was undesirable that all institutions should be absorbed into the infrastructure of the state – indeed, there should be a preference against governmental action in favour of voluntary associative action, as a check on the growth of totalitarian government (*Quadragesimo anno*, ¶¶ 76–80: '... On account of the evil of "individualism" ... things have come to such a pass that the highly developed social life which once flourished in a variety of associations organically linked with each other, has been damaged and all but ruined, leaving thus virtually only individuals and the State ... owing to changed circumstances much that was formerly done by small groups can nowadays only be done by large associations. None the less, just as it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and commit to a group what private enterprise and industry can accomplish, so too it is an injustice, a grave evil and a disturbance of right order, for a larger and higher association to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower societies. This is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, unshaken and unchangeable ... The State therefore should leave to smaller groups the settlement of business of minor importance ... it will thus carry out with greater freedom, power and success the task belonging to it alone, because it alone can effectively accomplish these ... Let those in power, therefore, be convinced that the more faithfully this principle of subsidiary function be followed, and a graded hierarchical order exist between various associations, the greater will be both social authority and social efficiency, and the happier and more prosperous the condition of the commonwealth.') In recent debate within the European Union, however, the term arises in the context of discussion of whether uniform governmental requirements should be determined at Union level, at national level, or at regional or municipal level. 'Subsidiarity' is a requirement of the Treaty of Rome, as amended by the Treaty of Maastricht. There is scope for disagreement as to the meaning of the relevant reference (Article *3b*) – whether the criterion for determining the level at which action will be taken should be that of effectiveness or necessity. Centralists in the Union tend to favour the first interpretation, on the argument that uniform central requirements will be more effective across the Union as a whole, and those who prefer maximum devolution of freedom of decision, the second. The concept also tends to be seen through the lens of differing national experiences: in Germany, for example, it tends to be seen in the context of the chronic tension between the *Länder* and the Federal Government as to the ambit of the power of each.

[10]Lest it be thought that this is to look at recent events through expressly British eyes, it should be noted that a Norwegian referendum rejected the terms of the Maastricht Treaty, as also did the first Danish referendum, and that the French referendum succeeded only by a hair's breadth. Swedish popular opinion is sceptical about membership, as shown by the results of the elections to the European Parliament in September 1995. The concept of subsidiarity is a matter of lively political debate in Germany, partly as means of asserting the rights of the *Länder* against the German Federal Government. The more favourable attitudes towards the Community in the southern states may reflect the extent of economic assistance given to them under the Maastricht provisions.

[11]Storrar, *Scottish Identity*, pp. 110–136, 160–179, gives a more extended account than I can offer here.

[12]I recognize, however, that here my pre-millennial biblical socialization may be speaking, in contrast to Storrar's Calvinist a- or post-millennial socialization! For another extended evangelical consideration of nationhood, see O.R. Johnston, *Nationhood: towards a Christian perspective* (Oxford: Latimer House, 1980).

[13]The fundamental cause is, of course, separation from God by human sin – the loss of identity, security and land are the inevitable judgments that result from the rejection of God, as Genesis 3 and 4 make clear.

[14]Scriptural quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

[15]The meaning of this obviously symbolic language seems to be 'submit' (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:25-28).

[16]S.P. Brock, 'Christians in the Sasanian Empire: a case of divided loyalties', in Mews (ed.), *Religion and National Identity*, p. 12.

[17]For a regrettably prophetic analysis of the Yugoslav situation at the end of the 1970s, see 'Religion and national identity in Yugoslavia', in Mews (ed.), *Religion and National Identity*, pp. 591–607.