offers can evoke the dispositions we need to make the Catholic tradition become "woke" in these critical times.

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The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel. By Moshe Halbertal and Stephen Holmes. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017. xiii + 211 pages. $27.95.
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Halbertal and Holmes interpret 1–2 Samuel as the work of an astute political observer writing at the advent of ancient Israel's monarchy. The work of a single author of outstanding literary skill, the narratives are interwoven with political insights applicable to all political systems and forms (e.g., welfare states and liberal states, 167). The books of Samuel do not constitute a political treatise, manifesto, or agitprop, but rather the observations of someone familiar with royal circles who ultimately is ambivalent about centralized political power (162). This "fine-grained phenomenology of political power" (3) recognizes the social need for human sovereignty in ancient Israel while "focusing on sovereignty's dark sides" (166). The marshaling, subduing, and directing of military and social forms of power for the defense of the people quickly overwhelm and devour the inner natures of Saul, David, and Solomon as they turn this power against their own people, including their own families (149–50).

Sovereignty is characterized by a series of binaries: paranoia and overconfidence (chapter 2), entitlement and competition among royal heirs (chapter 3), moral obligation and political calculation (chapter 4), among other features (a summary list is found on 162). Halbertal and Holmes make their arguments by summarizing and commenting on pairs of stories that are emblematic of Israel's first kings. In chapter 1, Saul's rise to kingship (1 Sam 9–11) is contrasted with that of David (1 Sam 16; David's battle with Goliath, 1 Sam 17). Saul does not seek the kingship, yet once he is king, he goes to great lengths to retain his position. Maintaining sovereign power leads him to instrumentalize others, using them as agents to carry out commands aimed at preserving his power and position (chapters 2–3). Ends become means, and means become ends (32). The problem is that political power used this way always produces ambiguous results (62). David fares no better, as proved in the episode of Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam 11). Dynasties do not improve the situation, because heirs are characterized by both entitlement and competition. The rape of Tamar by Amnon, his

subsequent murder by Absalom's agents, and Absalom's rebellion against David are events that demonstrate this point (101–17). To make matters worse, paternal love is a debilitating characteristic for David when it comes to punishing Amnon and Absalom for their respective (mis)deeds. Sovereigns cannot be weakened by love of family. In the eventual contest over David's successor, Solomon's actions toward Adonijah (chapter 4) demonstrate the tensions and ambiguities between justifications and motivations for political actions.

The significant degree to which Halbertal and Holmes quote and summarize the biblical stories makes this book appropriate for readers unfamiliar with the Bible or scholarship on Samuel. It is useful for undergraduates if supplemented by other scholarly work, since Halbertal and Holmes are overly laudatory about the abilities of their reconstructed biblical author and too pessimistic about political power as represented in Samuel. Other views, more concerned with critical analysis of the topic, are needed. For example, what do Halbertal and Holmes mean by "political power" or "power" more generally? What sort of political theory informs this notion? This is especially important, since they think the insights about political power in Samuel "[illuminate] important features of every political order" (167). For them, power is something tangible that can be gained and lost, since it can be amassed and protected by sovereigns (67). This is a zero-sum understanding of political power, one I'm not convinced is shared by the author of Samuel. But then, Halbertal and Holmes hold a particularly modern notion of the author function, which is itself a sort of zero-sum game, since only single authors are in complete command of their materials (177; apparently authors wield sovereign-like power). Finally, little consideration is given to the role the deity plays in the narrative or how the deity affects political power. In Samuel, that role is significant.

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The Hidden and the Manifest: Essays in Theology and Metaphysics. By David Bentley Hart. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017. x + 358 pages. $42.00.
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This book collects scholarly essays published by David Hart over the past two decades, and adds three previously unpublished pieces. This brilliant book can be read in a number of ways, with rich insights to be gained in a number of intellectual domains. It should primarily be read as an introduction to Christian philosophy.