

*The Contested Public Square*. By Greg Forster. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008. Pp. 254. \$24.00 (paper). ISBN: 9780830828807.

Greg Forster's *The Contested Public Square* identifies important strands of political philosophy in Christian thought. Christians have long had a complicated relationship with the state—with Christian approaches to politics ranging from total church-state unity (theonomy or theocracy) to withdrawal from public life, and nearly every approach in between. How can one religious tradition encompass all these political philosophies? Forster attempts to answer the question. Through an analysis of crucial flashpoints in Christian history, Forster attempts to tell a cohesive story about politics in the Christian tradition. The extent to which he is successful is up for debate; but the book is enjoyable, and the reader learns quite a bit.

Crucial to understanding Forster's approach to the history of Christian political thought is the church's understanding of itself as possessing the entire truth and of its community as eternal. This ecclesiological understanding influences, either directly or indirectly, every political understanding that grew out of the church. Whether the church advocated protection from persecution, developed a regime of natural law, or embraced modern understandings of religious toleration, it did so with the general understanding that the church is eternally existent and in possession of the truth.

Forster employs one especially helpful presentation strategy: using boxes separate from the main text to clarify the finer points of a concept or tradition. For example, in beginning his chapter on natural law, Forster draws the reader in with details of the lives of Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham. He knows he cannot dig too deeply into natural law, however, without giving the reader a fuller understanding of the scholastic tradition. In the space of a page and a half, Forster gives the reader enough of an overview of scholasticism that he or she can glean value from the general text without being too bogged down in historical minutiae.

If the book suffers from any defect, it is that Forster attempts to do too much in too small a space. Forster is aware of this difficulty, observing, "Christian political thought is far too enormous a subject for one book to cover completely; this book is only an introduction. Like any introduction to a subject, it has to leave out a lot of information because there is just no room to cram it all in" (16–17). The time period and number of sources covered is extraordinarily capacious. He opens his chapters with a discussion of Polycarp (ca. 155 CE) and early Christian responses to persecution; his final chapter discusses the thought of C. S. Lewis in the mid-twentieth century.

By the conclusion, however, Forster has provided the reader a good general account of the variety of Christian beliefs about the relationship between church and state. Readers with more knowledge of the subject may find Forster's work a bit too brief and superficial, but it is a useful introduction to the subject of Christian political philosophy for beginners.

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*Constitutional Theocracy*. By Ran Hirschl. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010. Pp. 314. \$49.00 (cloth). ISBN: 9780674048195.

Many today view "constitutional theocracy" as either a contradiction in terms or, at minimum, a deeply suspicious notion. In *Constitutional Theocracy*, Ran Hirschl, professor of law at the University of Toronto, gives a rich analysis of this modern phenomenon. He argues that this form of constitutionalism, combining the establishment of religion and some degree of religious