

BOOK REVIEWS

The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology, by John Milbank.
Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009. xxii + 382 pp. pb. \$44.00.
ISBN 978-1-60608-162-4.

Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission,
by Nathan Kerr. Theopolitical Visions, vol. 2. Eugene, OR:
Cascade Books, 2009. xv + 206 pp. pb. \$32.99.
ISBN 978-1-60608-199-0.

*Everything in Sacred: Spiritual Exegesis in the Political Theology of
Henri de Lubac*, by Bryan C. Hollon. Theopolitical Visions, Vol. 3.
Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009. x + 214 pp. pb. \$24.00. ISBN
978-1-55635-857-9.

Triple book review by Amos Yong

Wipf and Stock Publishers, of which Cascade Books is one of two academic imprints, has come on like gang-busters in the world of theological publishing in the last decade. Their new book series, Theopolitical Visions, is just one of the many ventures into contemporary “hot topics” that are moving this Eugene, Oregon-based operation from the “backwoods” (of the Pacific Northwest of the USA!) to the center of the theological academy. This triple review will comment briefly on the second and third volumes in this new series while also remarking on the work of another major contemporary theologian (instead of on Theopolitical Visions’ inaugural volume, *Christianity, Democracy, and the Radical Ordinary: Conversations between a Radical Democrat and a Christian*, by Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles, released in January, 2008).

The book I am beginning this review with, *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology*, shows that the emergence of Wipf and Stock can be attributed at least in part to its ability to attract some of today’s most prominent theologians as authors. John Milbank, is of Radical Orthodoxy fame, is being heralded by some as the most important theological thinker of the present generation. Like a number

of his other books, *The Future of Love* is a collection of eighteen previously published essays and together “they constitute a fragmentary political theology, written from a British perspective” (p. ix). There are six parts to the book (each with three essays): on theology and English culture (with discussions of Coleridge as a political theologian, and Matthew Arnold and John Henry Newman as theologians of culture); theology and British politics (on nineteenth century British Christian socialism, late capitalism in Britain, and the contemporary crisis of religious socialism); responses to reviews of Milbank’s groundbreaking *Theology and Social Theory* (1990); contemporary political theology (on sovereignty, empire, and terror, on political liberalism, and on the “marketing” and “management-shaped church”); theology and pluralism (on interreligious dialogue, theology and the university, and the relationship between faith and reason, between theology and philosophy); and theopolitical agendas (on what Milbank calls “postmodern critical Augustinianism” – note that much of Milbank’s constructive proposals involve a retrieval and re-reading of Augustine – a philosophy and theology of the gift, and an interpretation of Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*). While the title of the book as a whole seems to have derived from the final essay, those familiar with Milbank’s wider project will discern that the theme of love is interwoven throughout the Milbankian corpus, particularly in terms of what it means for the church to live as the faithful people of God in the world. *The Future of Love* provides various “fragmentary” glimpses of how such a politics of love cashes out vis-à-vis the social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions of at least the British and Anglo-American (Milbank lived in the USA for a number of years while teaching at the University of Virginia) contexts.

Perhaps coinciding with getting Milbank under contract, the editors at Wipf and Stock launched the Theopolitical Visions series under the editorship leadership of D. Stephen Long, himself a former contributor to the Radical Orthodoxy series (published by Routledge) and an established scholar. Volumes 2 and 3 of this series are both revisions of dissertations – Kerr’s written at Vanderbilt University under Paul DeHart and Hollon’s at Baylor University under Barry Harvey. They are very different books, perhaps anticipating the wide

ranging character of future books in this series, but certainly a testimony to the breadth of ideas that the folk at Wipf and Stock seek to promulgate.

Kerr, a theologian at Trevecca Nazarene University, argues in successive central chapters that Troeltsch, Barth, Hauerwas, and Yoder, respectively “represent the eclipse, re-emergence, failure, and promise of Christian apocalyptic within the narrative of twentieth-century theopolitical encounters with the modern philosophical problematic of historicism” (pp. 17-18). The broad conceptual terrain covered means that there is no attempt to provide any exhaustive treatment of these theologians; rather, the challenge of historicism for christology and ecclesiology shapes the discussion. Thus Troeltsch’s immanentistic historicism is corrected if only in part by Barth’s apocalyptic christocentrism, although Kerr argues that the residual idealism in the latter requires further intervention. Hauerwas’s retrieval of Barth is helpful but in the end unsuccessful because his notion of the church-as-*polis* is defined by an anti-liberal agenda and thus becomes more a strategy for ecclesial survival than it is generative of a sufficiently missiological posture. So it is Yoder’s doxological and yet concrete christological expansion of Barth that enables a consideration of the church in exilic and diasporic terms and an underwriting of Kerr’s own ecclesiological and “apocalyptic politics of mission” (the title of the final chapter). In short, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic* is ultimately after a missiologically-shaped theopolitics or political theology which is informed by the historical and eschatological Christ who breaks into and thereby enables the redemption of the church’s witness in the world.

Whereas Kerr covers the breadth of twentieth century theology in search for twenty-first century theopolitical answers, Hollon’s argument is more focused, using Henri de Lubac’s *Nouvelle théologie* proposals to engage and further the unfinished projects of postliberalism and Radical Orthodoxy respectively. If the postliberals seek a retrieval of the Bible’s narrative identity of Jesus, they remain locked “within the world of the text” (so to speak); and if Milbank connects christology to soteriology and ecclesiology, the historical identity of Jesus is itself evacuated of substantive theological (and

christological) content that can speak the word of judgment on the church (not to mention the world). Hollon's solution? This theologian at Malone College in Canton, Ohio (affiliated historically with the Evangelical Friends Church), recommends the spiritual exegesis of de Lubac as an antidote: to complement the narrative hermeneutics of the postliberals so as to provide not only historical but also cosmic and even contemporary theopolitical perspective on the one hand, and to provide the deeper engagement with scripture lacking in Radical Orthodoxy and contribute to its quest for a "fully Christianised [i.e., christological] ontology." In short, de Lubac's spiritual exegesis especially of the scriptural traditions, following the patristic theologians, not only mediates the reality of Christ to the contemporary church but enables the church to participate in Spirit's work of ushering in the rule and reign of the trinitarian God.

Space constraints require the foregoing limited descriptions and prevent us from extended criticisms of the three books under review. Milbank's *The Future of Love* continues to provide tantalizing hints of his political theology and accompanying theology of the gift (the latter being the major project with which he is currently occupied), but its genre as a set of collected essays means that his own systematic political theology will have to await future articulation. Kerr's proposals are acknowledged to be heavily indebted to Yoder, in many respects barely go beyond where Yoder had left off, and actually are finally more about revitalizing a missiological ecclesiology than about a missiological and/or ecclesiological theology of the political (I would actually recommend, in this regard, Alain Epp Weaver's *States of Exile: Visions of Diaspora, Witness, and Return* published by Herald Press [2008], for those looking for a more creative extrapolation and extensive expansion of Yoder's ideas for political theology). Finally, Hollon's interpretation of de Lubac provides a helpful counterpoint to the arguments in Milbank's last book – *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) – but the resulting accomplishments of *Everything Is Sacred* are much more in the arena of theology of culture and theology of history than in political theology (which is not to say that there isn't much to learn in Hollon's very illuminating discussion, in part I of his

book, about the debates in sacramental ecclesiology between the advocates of the *Nouvelle théologie* and the neoscholastic and neo-Thomist theologians during the middle war and post-World War II years on the Continent).

If these initial volumes of Theopolitical Visions are any indication (and here I include the Hauerwas and Coles volumes that is not reviewed but which I mentioned above), then, the trajectory of the discussion in political theology appears to be primarily in the ecclesiological direction. Interestingly, here the contrast between the proposals of Milbank, a Brit and Anglican, and Kerr and Hollon (both linked to the Believer's Church tradition in some way) are more stark: the former's theopolitical vision is not only ecclesiological but much more concretely social, economic, cultural, and political, while the latter two Americans place much more emphasis on the church's political task and contribution being decisively dependent on the church maintaining a faithful witness to the gospel. Perhaps the separation of church and state in the North American context has itself shaped the theopolitical vision of those attempting to rethink a theology of the political after 9-11, in which case, the results may be discernible less in the arena formally defined as political theology (which parameters are no doubt shifting in part due to the present conversation) and more in the domain traditionally called ecclesiology. All the more reason, then, for American publishers like Wipf and Stock (and its imprints) to involve Brits like Milbank in the discussion, and perhaps along the way European scholars thinking about theopolitical matters will also be informed – maybe even positively influenced in some way – by some of the ecclesiological considerations of their American counterparts.

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Biblical Prophets & Contemporary Environmental Ethics: Re-Reading Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah, by Hilary Marlow. Oxford University Press, 2009. xvi + 338 pp. hb. £65. ISBN 978-0-19-956905-2.

Reviewed by Stephen M. Vantassel

Environmental theology investigates religious teaching and its views on humanity's role in and treatment of the planet. Though a relatively new field in theology, it is garnering increased attention. Marlow, in her introduction, explains that impetus behind environmental theology stems from rising concerns about environmental degradation as well as a realization that facts are not sufficient to motivate action. Scientists and environmentalists are discovering the role values, including those from spirituality and religion, play in providing the necessary emotional soil in which the facts can grow into changed behavior. To put it bluntly, facts do not motivate the heart enough to change behavior. So for environmentalism to be successful, it needs to be wedded to a spiritual component.

Unfortunately, some, in line with the seminal article by Lynn White Jr. entitled "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" (*Science* 155 no. 3767 (1967): 1203-7, believe Christianity and even the Bible, denigrates nature as a place of hostility and danger in need of subduing. Marlow wants to know if this assessment of Christianity and Scripture is accurate. This text is her response to two questions. First, "Does the O.T. portray nature in negative terms as is often alleged?" Second, "How did Christianity's less than environmentally friendly view of nature arise?"

Marlow takes up the second question first by providing a splendid review of Christianity's ideas about creation by spotlighting key figures in each period of church history. She explains that up until the Reformation, the concern of the church was soteriology so creation was relegated to having only a functional role. The marginalization and domination of creation continued after the Reformation with increased assistance from rising individualism, Descartes' separation of science from religion, and the technology of the Industrial Revolution. Certainly, the rise of Romanticism provided a countervailing winds, but they were insufficient to stop the trajectory of Protestant hermeneutics.

Marlow's historical review refuses to be sidetracked into the debate over the essential cause of Protestant Christianity's marginalization of nature. She is much more interested in explaining how the Hegel's dichotomy of history and creation influenced the Biblical theology movement and continued to marginalize creation as a theological issue as exemplified in Von Rad's O.T. Theology. She finishes the section by surveying the rise of creation theology.

Chapter 3 delves into methodological questions concerning the task of ecological hermeneutics. Marlow reviews the accusations of patriarchal biases of the bible as well as the Earth Bible Project (EBP) and its 6 point hermeneutical stance. In irenic fashion, she finds the EBP stance problematic particularly in the area of application. Marlow identifies an unintended consequence in EBP's reader-focused hermeneutic that undermines EBP's goals. She says, "...for such a reader-led focus has the potential for creating an ever greater distance between the world of the Bible and that of contemporary society. This may have the effect of inviting rejection of the biblical text by those who consider it to be irrelevant in today's world, but it may encourage the rejection of concern for the environment by those for whom the Bible carries authority as sacred scripture." (p. 94).

The next three chapters contain Marlow's assessment of the creation theology of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah 1-39. She chose these books because they have been largely ignored by scholarship. Thankfully, Marlow approaches the books from a canonical perspective sparing readers the navel gazing speculation of source critics. Additionally, she finds looks for themes that span all three books rather than trying to construction a creation theology of Amos, and Hosea, and so on. The task of uncovering creation theology in these books involves careful investigation of how the non-human creation is portrayed in respect to the passages' use of figurative language, natural order, wisdom, cosmic themes, land, judgment and blessing. I suspect exegetes would do well to read these chapters if for nothing more than insight on this method of reconstructing the world-view of the authors. In the final chapter, Marlow endeavors to synthesize her findings into a more coherent whole. She believes these three prophetic writers understood humans to reside in the midst of an ecological triangle, with

God at the top, non-human creation and human community construction the other two corners. She concludes that the O.T. writers had a much richer view of the environment than many believe. Indeed Marlow finds elements of an instrumental view of nature in these passages but she also sees evidence the biblical writers saw intrinsic values in nature.

I believe Marlow has provided us with another helpful resource in the search to understand what Scripture might say about humans and the environment. Her review of Christian intellectual history and demonstration of a responsible approach to environmental hermeneutics are worthy of review by anyone interested in the topic. Seminary professors and instructors of senior undergraduate courses will find this text suitable for students. Marlow follows a clear outline and writes in understandable prose. I agree with her triangular model as it was similar to one that I constructed in *Dominion over Wildlife? An Environmental-Theology of Human-Wildlife Relations* (Wipf and Stock, 2009).

Despite my favorable opinion, the book lacked two elements. First, I was disappointed by the absence of practical application. , I would have liked to have seen a discussion of how to apply her findings in every day behavior. I suspect the lack of specific ideas stems from her belief that the prophetic writers adopted a more virtue-based notion of creation-ethics. I certainly concur. However, we must also remember that virtue-based ethics, at least as far as the Bible is concerned, still demands the specific rule of Dt. 6:4. Second, Marlow could have strengthened her piece by providing more attention to Evangelical biblical interpretation. While she encountered Evangelical thinkers as demonstrated by her bibliography, it is not at all clear that she took their findings as seriously as she did those who hold a lower view of Scripture. Nevertheless, readers should not allow these two weaknesses to diminish my hearty recommendation of this book.

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The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race, by Willie James Jennings. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010. 366 pp, hb. \$35.00. ISBN-13: 978-0-300-15211-1.

Reviewed by Timothy Lim Teck Ngern

The Christian Imagination laments the impact of western hegemony on the transmission, translation, and spread of Christianity in non-western soil with a view to recommend a program for theological construction imbued with racial and postcolonial sensibilities. Willie Jennings, associate professor at Duke Divinity School, argues his thesis by retrieving four historic east-west engagements at the political, sociological, economic, and religious fronts, and by showing that the spread of Christianity and the process of theologization in these regions (Venezuela, Peru, India, South Africa, Nigeria) rests on a western colonial paradigm, an unwitting common denominator. As a corollary, a misguided European view that the western white race is superior to all other races creeps into the historic spread and introduction of Christianity and Christian theology to these regions between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The upshot of his research is that the unexamined imperialistic paradigm (more blatant then and more subtle now) proves detrimental to Christian imagination. In this review, I summarize Jennings' retrieval before I proffer some trajectories that one may be expected after Jennings' contribution.

Jennings organizes his project in three parts. In Part 1, Jennings demonstrates how colonialism brings about a displacement of the natives' identities when the colonizers seized the land and subjugated native beliefs and practices with a supposed superior western ideology. He does so by retrieving history through the lens of Gomes Eanes de Azurara (or Zurara), a royal chronicler of Prince Henry of Portugal since 1444, and Jose de Acosta Porres (or Acosta), a Jesuit theologian to Peru and India from 1572 onwards. Central to part 1 however is not the historical accounts *per se* even though Jennings' impressive historiographical retrieval supports his argument on the overbearing relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. At the heart of part 1 is that a supersessionistic view – that Gentile Christian nations have replaced Israel as the elect of God – have unwittingly led western

Christianity on the pathway of not only displacing Israel as crucial to its theological pilgrimage, but also the displacement of other nations and peoples of color as insignificant when compared to themselves (the western colonizers, which often operated under the edict of their Christian nation leader) as the elect of God. The result is a hegemony that claims superiority and power to dominate and subjugate others for their own imperialistic avarice.

In Part 2, Jennings narrates the change that took place in the heart of John William Colenso, an Anglican bishop sent to Durban, South Africa, and especially his later transformation when he translated the Bible to Zulu language, wrote biblical commentaries for the Zululan people, and performed ministry among the Zulu between 1854 and 1865. Consequent to Colenso's later acceptance of Zulu culture (which meant he no longer embraced a supersessionistic and imperialistic colonializer mentality), he was labeled a heretic by the Church of England. For Jennings, the account speaks of the tragedy of an imperialistic, ecclesiocentric view of the translation and transmission of the Christian faith, operating under the vision of an European cultural hegemony. To complement Colenso's account, Jennings designates a chapter on Olaudah Equiano (b. 1745)'s auto-biographical journey of a continent's invasion by western civilization. Jennings shows how Equiano struggled with his displaced identity both as a Christian and a former African slave in the slave-ship and slave-trade (endorsed by the Queen Elizabeth I). Equiano's encounters with his Christian masters reveal a Christian performance shaped by a European superiority vision. Jennings show how Equiano still lamented his peril even after he bought his own freedom (unusual for his time) because he could not escape his black identity in a white-dominated world! Jennings analyzes the problem of intimacy and belonging together, and of literacy and pedagogical instruction under a humanistic western hegemony, that sees the white race as superior when compared to the black in the two chapters of part 3.

We may say with Jennings that Alasdair MacIntyre's view that "theological reflection is quintessentially a traditioned enterprise" (pp. 68-69) is proven in all of Jennings' historical retrieval of western Christian civilization entering non-western soil. It is not just

Christianity but a cultural form of Christianity that encroached onto the foreign soil, argues Jennings.

In the remade world born of the colonialist moment, Christian possibilities of communion and cultural intimacy have been subverted to draw all peoples towards an existence marked by its telos [socially, economically, politically and even ecclesially] ... this perversion of space and communion draw from Christian logics pervade many parts of the world (p. 288).

Because Jennings locates his research in the late medieval to modern times when Christendom was still the center of Western life and thought, contemporary theologians would do well to pay attention to Jennings' analysis and examine their own works so as not to render a bad name to the future of Christian engagement with society.

Taking *The Christian Imagination* seriously, we may expect at least three scholarly trajectories. First, Jennings provides a solid case for reconstructing theology (against the grain of a western hegemonic perspective) so that Christian theology may remain true to its fundamental characteristic of a global God seeking intimacy and communion with a diverse humanity. I have however found the subtitle "Theology and the Origin of Race" rather misleading: Jennings does not attempt to offer a theology of the origin of race (although he did say something of the human race and civilization after Shem, Hem, and Japheth). It is *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford University Press, 2008) by J. Kameron Carter, one of Jennings' mentees and now colleague, that explores a theology of race, and in particular, a theological, historical and political re-reading of the Israelite and Christian identity as the earlier perpetuators of a 'western white' hegemonic Christian vision. While both Carter and Jennings obviously share the same vision for the future of theology, Jennings' interest (the book under review) rests more on theological imagination in light of race and political, economic, social, and ecclesial hegemonies (instead of a theology of the origin of race *per se* as the subtitle of Jennings' book suggests). We may even read Jennings as hinting at a prospect for human flourishing by means of a true Christian vision as a non-white

perspective. If Jennings' thesis is defensible, it should alter the future of theology and theological method, especially written from the western hemisphere. Perhaps, theological observers may look forward to a revisioning of global theology even beyond the imagination of William Dryness, et al.'s *Dictionary of Global Theology* (IVP Academic, 2008).

A discerning reader may wonder about my concern nevertheless about the indefensibility of Jennings' thesis. Part of my concern here lies in the none-white superiority that Jennings tried to show subtly. I am not decided as yet as to whether all kinds of theologization (process of theology, rather than theology itself) from white to non-white context reflect a western/white hegemonic ethos. I can see myself buying into Jennings' argument and the apparent reality of it working in western and non-western Christian context. But, I still think it too strong to make a generalization from Jennings' brilliant historical evaluation of cross-contextual realities, unless it is true that what is presenting itself is a cultural, white hegemonic Christianity entering other spaces - and in which the case, I would have to wonder how that may be demonstrated definitively. Also, while I see the value of postcolonial work, I think it too farfetched to decry postcoloniality as a better methodology. Thus I am undecided if the thesis is defensible.

Second, and in spite of my slight reservation, it is undeniable that Jennings opens up spaces for rewriting global history from the perspective of the margins and the underdogs. If Eugen Weber, a late professor of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), is right that history is inevitably written from the perspective of the powerful (see Weber's 52-volume lecture series on "The Western Tradition"), then, Jennings' historical-theological retrieval may be read as an attempt to recover the colonized's voices so as to provide a more accurate account of what transpired historically. Jennings' work, albeit centered on four retrievals from the late medieval and modern era, has by itself open up a vista for rewriting the history of human civilization in all its multi-faceted disciplines.

The rewriting of history carries with it serious implications for global politics, which is the third prospective impact of Jennings' work. Potentially, we may look forward to a recalibration of global politics, economics, and religions. Anthony Pagden, another UCLA

distinguished professor of political science and history, suggests that the east and the west have been struggling for 2,500 years (see *Worlds at War*, Random House, 2008), and often under the banners of politics, economics, and religions. In the same spirit, Jennings shows that where westernization enters non-western soil, it has created a “diseased social imagination” (pp. 6-7) with a set of political, economic, social, and religious hegemony that contravenes the “counter hegemonic reality” of true belonging together in a global world (pp. 266- 269). Considering Jennings’ work in light of Pagdenian perspective, one wonders if the present international relations and balance of powers in the aftermath of the two world wars, the cold war, “the axles of evil” (recalling the words of former US President George Bush), and the economic hegemonic rise of the Chinese economy is to lead to a brave new world order?

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The Contested Public Square: The Crisis of Christianity and Politics,
by Greg Forster. Downers Grove, ILL: IVP Academic, 2008.

280 pp. pb. \$24.00. 978-0-8308-2880-7.

Reviewed by Chan Woong Shin

Greg Forster’s *The Contested Public Square* is a highly accessible, engaging, and informative introduction to the history of Christian political thought within the Western tradition. Starting with the birth of both Christianity and (Western) philosophy, he covers the period of two and a half millennia leading to present days in about 250 pages: that is, in the author’s own terms, “roughly a decade per page” (p. 14). Thus, it is not hard to understand that the very nature of the enterprise will require both a selective choice of thinkers to be addressed and a limited treatment of their ideas. Forster’s cast of characters includes Peter, Paul, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, William of Ockham, Luther, Calvin, Locke, and Madison. Then, in contemporary

times, Barth, Niebuhr (Reinhold), and C. S. Lewis, among others. Although they are towering figures not only in the Christian political tradition, but in the history of Western thought in general, their selection is not based on their individual preeminence. Rather, Forster presents a genealogy of thought, which connects all the above thinkers and gives a coherent thesis to the book. Forster reveals, “I could not explain Madison without explaining Locke; I could not explain Locke without explaining Luther; I could not explain Luther without explaining Aquinas; and I could not explain Aquinas without explaining Augustine, Peter, Paul, Aristotle and Plato” (p. 14). And what ties them together is a system of thought called *natural law theory*.

In Chapters 1 and 2, Forster first explains how Christianity’s unique truth claims and its early encounters with the Roman Empire and pre-Christian philosophy had a lasting formative impact on the subsequent development of Christian political ideas. First, unlike many other religions in the world, Christianity claims that it is *the* absolute and all-encompassing truth. And similarly, it also claims that the Christian community is an *eternal* community, which defies comparison with any other social organizations on earth, including the state. These beliefs unavoidably led to the persecution of the church by the Roman Empire until the latter adopted the former as its official religion. In spite of the church’s utmost importance over the state and the reality of persecution, however, the New Testament authors like Peter and Paul teach their fellow believers to obey and even “honor” secular rulers, acknowledging their role as enforcers of justice. Yet, other than the argument for the God-given authority of the state, the Bible does not offer any kind of general theory of politics, leaving unanswered many important questions about the relationship between church and state. And it was philosophy that subsequent Christian thinkers turned to in order to tackle those intellectual problems. While fighting its dualism and other anti-Christian views, Christianity gradually absorbed many aspects of Greco-Roman philosophy and began to use it as a tool to engage with matters which the Bible did not specifically discuss—politics, for example— and with those who did

not believe in the Bible at all. That is why, as Forster argues, “Christian political thought owes as much to Plato as to Paul” (p. 61).

Forster gives a due credit to Augustine of Hippo as the first one who formalized a Christian response to fundamental political questions. Facing critics of Christianity in the wake of the sack of Rome in 410, Augustine developed his idea of Two Cities—the City of Man and the City of God—or “dual citizenship.” While maintaining that the difference between the two cities is insurmountable, he still argued that the members of both cities can work together for the earthly peace and that it is the duty of Christians to strive toward that end. Augustine based his argument for the possibility of peace and harmony between believers and non-believers on the existence of a God-given, universal moral law, which became one of the building blocks of natural law theory. Yet, its development as a systematic doctrine had to wait until the 13th century. Discussing the contributions of Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham to natural law thought, Forster offers a useful overview of its basic principles and biblical justifications (pp. 91-95).

The Reformation brought about a crisis like no other in Christian political philosophy and practice. By creating a lasting division within Christendom, it revealed a weak point in natural law theory: the question of lawful authority. Now both Catholic and Protestant princes claimed to be rightful rulers over their territories and this led to decades of fierce and bloody conflicts in Europe. In dealing with this religious and political crisis, both Luther’s neo-Augustinian approach and Calvin’s two-swords approach accelerated the process of separating church and state, which had already been implicit in earlier natural law thinking, but was not practiced during the Middle Ages. The policy of *cuius regio, eius religio*, which borrowed from both Luther’s and Calvin’s ideas, and its institutionalization through the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 eventually brought peace to the continent, but it was not a complete solution to the problem of right relationship between religion(s) and government within a political community. The lasting if not perfect solutions invented later in the Western history are known as “religious freedom” and “liberal democracy” and Forster’s hero in this part of the story is John Locke. Forster calls Locke “the most influential philosopher since Aquinas, if not since Augustine” (p.

179) and does a nice job in supporting his argument by persuasively showing how Locke's beliefs and ideas shaped the formation of the two crucial concepts in modern political theory. Readers will find it no surprise to discover that his previous book is about none other than Locke.¹

After discussing Locke's influence on the American founders and the latter's own contribution to the development of the idea of liberal democracy, Forster in his final chapter describes how various ideologies in the modern era, such as Romanticism, Marxism, Nietzscheism, and totalitarianism, have challenged liberal democracy and its underlying natural law ideas and how both non-Christian (Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill) and Christian (Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr) defenders of the former have also turned away from the latter for various reasons. Hence, "the crisis of Christianity and politics," which is the subtitle of the book. One of the exceptions to this trend Forster discusses is C. S. Lewis. (This choice looks somewhat odd considering the fact that he is primarily known as a Christian apologist and literary critic.) While Forster tries to remain silent about the best way forward through the current breakdown of consensus, readers will not have much difficulty recognizing that Lewis's steadfast defense of natural law is Forster's bet.

The book sometimes raises more questions than it answers and part of the reason seems to be a natural outcome of it being a short introductory text. However, some of the questions result from the author's strategy to subsume the whole history of Christian political thought under the single label of natural law theory. Drawing upon recent works of Stephen Grabill and David VanDrunen, for example, Forster paints Luther and Calvin as solid natural law thinkers, which is mostly convincing, yet still controversial. Aside from the correctness of calling one's ideas natural law theory, however, a further problem is with its usefulness: how much does it help us more fully understand one's ideas and their implications? As we move from the medieval thinkers to more modern ones, the amount of analytical purchase the

¹ Greg Forster, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

natural law frame has seems decreasing. Thus, it might be true that James Madison and Alexander Hamilton’s ideas were based on natural law thinking, but that does not explain much of the content of the whole new “science of politics” they devised. And maybe, it was none other than this new way of thinking about politics—the idea that men are capable of establishing good government from “reflection and choice”—that accelerated the secularization of modern political thought and the loss of faith in natural law. If that is the case, it is ironic because, as noted above, this book originally grew out of Forster’s attempt to interpret the American founders as natural law thinkers.

Despite this caveat, Forster’s book is highly recommended for an undergraduate course on religion and politics and for a general reader who is interested in the topic. Most of all, it is written so clearly and engagingly that it almost reads like a novel. Christians might find it more attractive since the book is based on the class notes that Forster used in his adult Sunday school classes. Also, the book has many sidebars in which major concepts, events, and persons are explained for those with no extensive knowledge on Western philosophy, theology, and history. Finally, the publisher’s website provides links to the online editions of many of the primary sources discussed in the book, which can be helpfully used by the readers who will certainly be provoked to know more.

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