tions of compassionate ministry to the poor in the early church through a consideration of the various motives for almsgiving: the extension of charity, the search for community, the practice of self-restraint, the desire for forgiveness, and the avoidance of judgment. In the last chapter, Robert Kitchen provides a description of how a particular Christian community practiced an ascetic approach to stewardship in the fourth century, by using Abraham and Zaccheus as biblical examples.

This volume constitutes a valuable resource for Christian scholars from all disciplines who are engaged in economic analysis in any way. The contributors clearly possess a comparative advantage in biblical interpretation (relative to their brethren in other fields of study), and have provided a great service to their colleagues by applying their expertise in a manner that does not reveal a predetermined position regarding the potential application of theological understanding to current matters of controversy.

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Politics for Christians: Statecraft as Soulcraft

Francis J. Beckwith

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010 (176 pages)

In this slim but ambitious volume, Baylor University professor of philosophy and church-state studies Francis J. Beckwith makes his contribution to the InterVarsity Press Christian Worldview Integration Series, of which he is coeditor. Offered for Christian college students seeking to relate their studies to their faith, the poignant arguments and copious references contained in these books will also be of use to scholars whose academic training did not systematically address the relationship among the methods and findings of their discipline, on the one hand, and the principles and teachings of religion, on the other. In this sense, these works are poised to advance integration in the classroom and in academic publishing as well as in dormitory halls.

The series preface, written by Beckwith and coeditor J. P. Moreland, advances a sevenfold defense of Christian integration. If the Bible's teachings are true, then these teachings, properly interpreted, ought to provide "an incredibly rich resource for doing work in [one's] academic field." Indeed, the holistic character of their vocation obligates Christians to realize this potential within their respective spheres of influence. Conversely, because Christians acknowledge God as the author of nature and reason, they are bound to seek the truths he reveals through the various scientific disciplines and to demonstrate the reasonableness of their faith wherever it is or can be questioned. The alternative—a sharp division between sacred and secular sources of knowledge—tends to reduce faith to a "blind act of will," implicitly paving the way for an antireligious worldview. Christian integration as participation in a war of ideas is therefore a vital part of that spiritual warfare to which Christians are called. Shaping the concepts by which human actions and lives

take their bearings, it also contributes to spiritual formation by strengthening the faith of believers and removing obstacles to the nascent faith of others. Finally, integration enables Christians to respond more adequately to intellectual attacks on Christ and his teachings.

The series preface ends by outlining three integrative tasks and five models for addressing integrative problems. The tasks consist in defending the faith from attack, polemically criticizing competing worldviews, and demonstrating the power of theistic solutions to the problems of a particular field. Problem-solving models include dissociating religious teachings from an academic issue, demonstrating the compatibility of religious and nonreligious claims, arguing that claims in one field support or undermine claims in another, showing how the claims in one field are presupposed by another, and illustrating how one field helps to develop or apply the principles of another. Through such means, the series calls on students and scholars to "recapture lost territory in [their] field of study for the cause of Christ."

In this vein, *Politics for Christians* seeks to elucidate, in introductory form, both the nature of contemporary government and politics and the obligations and rights of Christians within modern liberal democracies. Written in an ecumenical spirit, it presupposes the authority of Scripture; references the insights, successes, and mistakes of Christians in past ages; and acknowledges a legitimate diversity of opinion among believers while striving to advance certain theses about contemporary Christian citizenship. Without attempting to settle or even outline disputes about particular policy measures, Beckwith aims at persuading the reader of several propositions: that government both presupposes and helps to shape a set of ethical ideas that constitute the "moral ecology" of human life; that liberal democracy, properly understood, permits Christians to influence government in accordance with their religious beliefs, while their faith requires them to do so; and that liberal democracy presupposes a natural moral law, which can best be accounted for with reference to God as its author. In chapters covering the study of politics in general; the interrelation of liberal democracy and Christian citizenship; good and bad interpretations of the separation of church and state; secular liberalism and the neutral state; and the interconnection of God, natural rights, and the natural moral law, Beckwith advances a refutation of those who would bar religiously inspired beliefs from public discourse and establish a supposedly neutral but truly sectarian and antireligious political culture. He also demonstrates how political science can steer Christians away from a potentially harmful political naiveté, exemplified in such errors as the equation of charity for the poor with the modern welfare state, or the selection of political candidates based on creedal commitments rather than political qualifications.

This book abounds with sound arguments aimed at the heart of several of the most misleading doctrines frequently mesmerizing political commentators and paralyzing Christian citizens in our time. It is steeped in scholarship, rich in references, and routinely sheds light on particular items—from Christ's command to "render unto Caesar," to crucial Supreme Court precedents, to the latest skirmishes in our ongoing culture wars—admirably chosen for their ability to flesh out the general argument and to draw thinking citizens into a more profound engagement in meaningful political discourse.

Inevitably, a work this size will not address every relevant point or thoroughly treat each point it raises. Without departing from its introductory and timely character, however, *Politics for Christians* might have said more about the philosophical and religious roots of the issues it confronts, in addition to dominant or interesting contemporary accounts. Beckwith does well in demonstrating the speciousness of a metaphysically and morally neutral liberalism and in proving the threat it poses to religious liberty both theoretically and in practice. He also exposes certain self-contradictions of contemporary deniers of natural law as well as some of the weaknesses of any atheistic natural law theory. Yet, he lightly dismisses the connections that can and have been discovered between contemporary liberal positions, early modern political philosophy, and the "nonrelativist moral and political philosophies of John Locke" and others. Deeper questions about the relationship of Christianity to the history of political thought deserve greater emphasis even in the briefest of introductions. Also missing is any treatment of continuing debates about the nature and methodology of quantitative and qualitative social science, or any mention of the Catholic Church's century-old tradition of social thought aimed at applying the millennial wisdom of Christianity to the problems faced by modern citizens—addressed recently not only to Catholics or even to Christians alone but also to all men of good will.

Striking as well is the absence of any sustained reflection on the relationship between Christianity's internal governance and the influence it exerts on political society. Despite Beckwith's allusion to Christians' two millennia of political experience, he studiously avoids any thematic discussion of past historical models for the interaction of church and state or of fundamental revolutions in the structure of the Christian community, such as those brought about by the advent of Protestantism. Can the political significance of such matters be overstated? Beckwith's own treatment of radical church-state separationism, drawing on the work of Philip Hamburger, reveals how a concept once advanced in America by Protestants wary of Catholic influences has developed into a weapon wielded by secularists bent on suppressing the influence of Christianity altogether. Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ, on the night before he died, prayed to the Father for his followers, "that they may be made perfect in one; *and that the world may know that thou hast sent me*" (John 17:23 KJV, emphasis added). To what extent is the modern desire to divorce politics from Christian belief and morality attributable to the failure of Christians to preserve this divinely prescribed unity? From the standpoint of both religion and political science, this question ought to be at the center of any treatment of politics for Christians today.

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