Sacred Foundations: The Religious and Medieval Roots of the European State. By **Anna Grzymała-Busse**. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023. xxi + 235 pp. $29.95 paperback.

Where and when does one locate the origins of European statehood? The question is an old one with more answers than Europe has states. In this insightful book, Anna Grzymała-Busse argues that modern state formation owes its genesis to the Christian church in the Middle Ages. Medieval states, she asserts, developed their means of governance by emulating ecclesiastical institutions and also by competing with them: a rivalry that eventually and perhaps ironically placed the modern state in a position of dominance over the church. As she explains, "Many of the distinct features of European state development—the multitude of sovereign statelets, rule of law, autonomous universities, and national representative assemblies—thus have sacred foundations: the powerful medieval church" (179). By making this argument for the "sacred foundations" of modern states, Grzymała-Busse also seeks to push back against a school of thought which argues that early modern warfare drove processes of state-building and centralization.

In a broad sense, Grzymała-Busse's claim is not a new or especially provocative one. Her argument for the religious foundations of modern secular political life reprises long-standing debates over the nature of "political theology" and "secularization," that is, the processes by which medieval religious concepts of sovereignty were transmuted into their modern iterations. Kantorowicz's classic work *The King's Two Bodies* leaps to mind. In less theoretical terms, twentieth-century scholars from John Figgis to Brian Tierney haver pursed a similar line of thought with a more institutional bent, by examining, for example, how late medieval conciliarism contributed to the emergence of consensus-based forms of constitutional governance before the modern age.

Grzymała-Busse revisits these questions with a political scientist's acumen and a data-driven methodology, producing charts and graphs to show historical patterns such as the spike in papal excommunications of political rulers that occurred during the medieval centuries. In terms of showing how medieval rulers emulated ecclesiastical institutions and organs of governance (for example, the deployment of legates, the utilization of church councils, fiscal innovations, careful record-keeping, the harnessing of canon and civil law, the promotion of universities that churned out clerical bureaucrats), she presents a convincing picture of how secular states learned from the best, so to speak, when it came to political centralization.

Her presentation of how "rivalry" between popes and rulers shaped the formation of modern statehood is less satisfying. "Fragmentation," she writes, "was a deliberate policy of the medieval papacy." By this, she means that successive popes during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries deliberately tried to break up the power of their main competitor for sovereignty over Christendom, the Holy Roman Empire. It is not clear to this reader that the papacy pursed such a policy. Certainly, at points, popes like Innocent IV opposed emperors like Frederick II with the entire weight of their office behind them (in Innocent's case, especially after he formally declared Frederick deposed from his imperial office in 1245). But one could just as easily point to instances where successive popes labored to end civil conflicts within Germany, tried to stabilize imperial rulers, and worked to protect their rights. Before he opposed Otto of Brunswick, for example,

Innocent III endeavored to secure his place on the imperial throne. After Frederick II's deposition, various popes searched for a suitable replacement emperor from William of Holland to Rudolf of Habsburg. "Fragmentation" happened due to various centrifugal forces in the empire. Sometimes popes tried to harness it; at other times, they attempted to contain it.

Indeed, the papacy's goal seemed less to diminish its imperial rival than to find the right kind of emperor: deferential (enough) to clerical prerogatives, offices, and properties, and respectful (enough) of the papacy's territorial sovereignty on the Italian peninsula. One might even question whether the medieval papacy really possessed any consistent strategy with regard to the power of empire. Yes, popes asserted and reasserted long-standing ideological claims about the superiority of priestly authority (*sacerdotium*) over royal or temporal rulership *(regnum*). At any given point, however, they also seemed willing to patch things up with kings and imperial rulers, turn a blind eye to their misdeeds, and even help them achieve their political aims—when it worked to the papacy's immediate or short-term advantage.

The book's presentation of uncompromising popes seeking political domination might stem in part from some of the older, out-of-date secondary literature consulted. Few if any experts on Innocent III would still describe him as a "notorious advocate of papal supremacy" (7), who—quoting Steven Ozment—"proclaimed and practiced a papal near theocracy" (27). As experts in medieval theology and canon law have shown, despite his occasionally eye-popping assertions of papal primacy, Innocent clearly recognized limitations to his sacred office's oversight of temporal affairs. Toward the end of her book, Grzymała-Busse herself helpfully acknowledges that the medieval rivalry between the church and temporal powers was meant to "delineate spheres of influence rather than eliminate any players. The conflict was about autonomy and jurisdiction, rather than mutual destruction" (178).

Regardless of these criticisms, Grzymała-Busse is to be applauded for her timely engagement with the religious origins of European statehood, which will no doubt appeal to interdisciplinary audiences beyond the field of medieval history. Toward the close of her book, as she revisits her critique of the premise that war lies at the center of state formation, she sounds a note of caution that we would all do well to heed. There is no doubt, she asserts, that states make war; the evidence that waging war made states remains ambiguous. On the other hand, as she also reminds us, there are ample and unmistakable signs that war can in fact unmake states.

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The Great Western Schism, 1378–1417: Performing Legitimacy, Performing Unity. By **Joëlle Rollo-Koster**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 420 pp. $125.00 hardcover.

The story of the Great Western Schism (1378–1417) is easily reduced to division of the Western church and efforts to restore unity. Joëlle Rollo-Koster looks wider, examining