



# Essays on Church, State, and Politics

*Christian Thomasius*

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The essays selected here for translation derive largely from Thomasius's work on *Staatskirchenrecht*, or the political jurisprudence of church law. These works, originating as disputations, theses, and pamphlets, were direct interventions in the unresolved issue of the political role of religion in Brandenburg-Prussia, a state in which a Calvinist dynasty ruled over a largely Lutheran population and nobility as well as a significant Catholic minority. In mandating limited religious toleration within the German states, the provisions of the Peace of Westphalia (1648) also provided the rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia with a way of keeping the powerful Lutheran church in check by guaranteeing a degree of religious freedom to non-Lutherans and thereby detaching the state from the most powerful territorial church. Thomasius's writings on church-state relations, many of them critical of the civil claims made by Lutheran theologians, are a direct response to this state of affairs. At the same time, owing to the depth of intellectual resources at his disposal, these works constitute a major contribution to the broader discussion of the relation between the religious and political spheres.

**Christian Thomasius** (1655–1728) was a German philosopher and legal theorist. He was a cofounder of the University of Halle, where he was also a professor.

**Ian Hunter** is Australian Professorial Fellow in the Centre for the History of European Discourses, University of Queensland.

**Frank Grunert** is a member of the Institute for Philosophy at the University of Giessen.

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