Ulrich Meier has concentrated on the theme of the citizen and citizenship in the context of the late medieval European city. In so doing he has produced a highly useful work which synthesizes existing research while adding some insights of his own. As far as I know, there is no other book that attempts to bring together modern scholarship on this topic, which marks a peculiarly European contribution to the political thought of city life.

Meier's book is divided into three parts: "the theology of the city"; "citizen' and 'city' in late medieval political philosophy"; and "the concept of citizen and city government in the learned law of the Middle Ages." He has therefore chosen to divide his treatment of his subject according to late medieval academic disciplines. This has resulted in sections of unequal length. The shortest, that on theology, is of particular interest and shows how Biblical imagery, as for instance that of "the city on a hill" and "the city in heaven," was used to present the city as a model for Christian brotherly cooperation in the pursuit of peace. The larger section on philosophy covers ground which has been the most worked over by historians of political thought. Here Meier has made good use of Flüeler's recent work on the medieval reception of Aristotle's political ideas. The final, and longest, section deals with juristic thought; its length, according to Meier, reflects the volume of research in this area in the last generation of historians—that this is where the cutting edge of research has mainly been evident.

Although Meier treats theological, philosophical, and juristic languages separately, he does find themes that go across subject boundaries. He makes clear both that late medieval concepts of the citizen owed much
to those of the ancient world, and that there were great differences between cities and citizens of the Middle Ages and antiquity: that citizenship rested on a different economic and social basis in the two eras. What comes through as Meier's main point is that what characterized late medieval citizens as a whole was legal and political participation, rather than the exercise of governmental powers, which was enjoyed by only some of them. He elaborates this view in an extensive treatment of the notions of active and passive citizenship, as shown for instance in the distinction between exercising the offices of government on the one hand, and the right to elect to office and the enjoyment of citizen rights at law on the other. Because of its slave-based economy, ancient Athens could afford the direct political and legal participation of a mass of relatively indigent citizens; whereas in late medieval cities only a relatively restricted number of families had the resources to take on the duties of office—the bulk of the citizen body merely elected others to govern. The medieval citizen was characterised by the legal rights he or (to a much lesser extent) she enjoyed and, in the case of part of the male population, the capacity to choose others to rule. Meier is particularly good on the question of the grades of citizen.

In his treatment of juristic questions, Meier of necessity considers the relationship between cities and the emperor. This is a much worked-over topic. He distinguishes between autonomous cities (recognising an imperial overlordship) and independent ones. His perception is that, so far as the practicalities of a city's political and legal life were concerned, it made no difference whether a city was autonomous or independent—that so far as the content of citizenship was concerned, conditions were much the same in either case. That is to say, the kind of life that was led did not differ.

Perhaps Meier's most important contribution as regards juristic sources relates to his treatment of the Bartolist idea of the citia sibi princeps (the city which is its own emperor). His argument, contrary to much scholarly opinion, is that this was not a claim to sovereignty for the independent city. Meier is careful to point out that the notion of the citia sibi princeps was not in itself anti-imperial. He might have found it useful at this point to refer to the notion of a hierarchy of sovereignty. Sovereignty for late medieval jurists was not a cut-and-dried concept: just as there were grades of citizen there were grades of sovereignty. The presentation of the citia sibi princeps idea as being reconcilable with an acceptance of imperial authority is, of course, not new, because the formula is an expression of a city's jurisdictional claims within a legal