THE D’ARCY LECTURES 2021: COMMON GOOD: Theological, Philosophical, and Political Aspects

Lecture Five: Does Political Augustinianism Help?

US American Catholic controversies

Literature rejecting liberalism seems to offer a choice: theocracy or opt-out
Separation of Church and State abolished? Archbishop Chaput critical of John F. Kennedy
Revisit the concept pair: sacred – secular: Clarify secular as referring to a spectrum with many versions. Pope Benedict’s UN speech giving one terminus – the Pope Benedict Option


Emperor and Pirate: ‘In the absence of justice, what is power but organized crime?’
Definition of city and people in terms of justice: Rome was never a people, nor a city, because failed to give God what was due to God; failed in justice.

Contemporary versions of same challenge: A. MacIntyre, W. Cavanaugh

How respect both religion and secular rule? Mistaken to privilege one, instrumentalize other
Theocracy views the political through lens of religion
Civil Religion views religion through a political lens

Brian T. Trainor’s proposals

Augustine considers a second definition: a multitude united in love of same object
(distinguish love of God, love of self): City of God, vs earthly city
Distinguish cases of civitas terrena, the earthly city, the secular:
the city in history facing towards God /--/ the city in history facing away from God
Distinguish cases of City of God
City of God in the Parousia, in fulfilment /--/ City of God as pilgrim in history (‘Church’)

Distinguish forms of relationship: sacred – secular

Sacred reign – secular rule: secular rulers subject to higher standards (human rights)
religious law incorporated in secular law, by secular authorities, for purely secular reasons
Sacred reign – sacred rule: secular rules subject to religious authorities
religious law may be incorporated in secular law by religious authorities for religious reasons

Compatibility with Vatican II’s Gaudium et Spes

Parallel distinctions in the literature

Linda Woodhead: distinguish illiberal secularism and liberalism
John Rawls: distinguish secularism as comprehensive doctrine, and political liberalism
Cecile Laborde: Justificatory secularism vs comprehensive secularism. Correcting Rawls: ‘the state is secular so that citizens don’t have to be secular’

Michael J.S. Bruno, Political Augustinianism (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014)