

# Foreward

Robert Dodaro

“Political Augustinianism,” the subject of the present volume by Father Michael Bruno, involves a chronological, analytical and comparative reading of twenty-five scholars whose writings span the period from the beginning of the twentieth century until today and who have treated Augustine’s political theology and ethics along with its relevance in the modern world. No treatment of this question has ever covered the breadth and provided the detailed analysis of the various positions assumed by these authors as has this effort by Michael Bruno. He provides a summary of the important theological and ethical considerations that each of these scholars incorporates into his interpretation of Augustine’s political thought. He also compares their positions, thus providing readers of this book with a careful, indispensable map detailing the principal points of a discussion that began 110 years ago in France, England and Germany, and which today has become an important conversation in the Catholic and Protestant communities of North America.

This book is both theological and historical; it traces and examines a century-long, focused conversation by scholars of Augustine concerning a controversial area of his thought and its modern theological applications. Giants in the field of Augustinian studies, such as Étienne Gilson, Henri-Irénée Marrou, Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Ramsey, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), Robert Markus, Rowan Williams and Oliver O'Donovan are studied in these pages in relation to the various hermeneutical approaches with which they and other scholars accommodated Augustine's thought to the political realities of their times. Hence, Michael Bruno's work can be read not only as a modern history of the scholarly treatment accorded to Augustine's political thought in itself, but as a commentary on the development of a large swathe of Catholic and Protestant political theologies through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Epochal geopolitical events, such as two World Wars, the "Cold War," the decolonization of over half of the globe, a series of international economic depressions and recessions, the global nuclear weapons race, the founding and development of the United Nations Organization, various human and civil rights movements and anti-discrimination campaigns, international terrorism and now the global reach of a violent form of Islamic fundamentalism, considered together with the Second Vatican Council have provided scholars with a modern context for various reappropriations of Augustine's thought in relation to Christianity and political theory, church and state, grace and political virtue. Michael Bruno's work demonstrates that these central themes in Augustine's political writings as found in the *City of God* as well as his letters to public officials and various sermons, have maintained their capacity to provide a foundation for Christian theological and political ethical reflection throughout the most turbulent events of modern political history.

Finally, the book is written with enormous clarity of expression; it is synthetic and analytic at the same time, and it is supported by an exceptionally broad survey of the relevant literature. Michael Bruno demonstrates a capability to express sober theological and historical judgments concerning the wide ranging survey of theological viewpoints he assembles in this work. Moreover, it must be unequivocally asserted that his work represents an original and vitally useful contribution to the ongoing debate within Catholic and Protestant circles concerning this topic.

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