
This important study by Michael Bruno chronicles and critically assesses the contemporary return to Augustine of Hippo's thought on society and politics. Bruno's point of departure is the French work from which his book's title derives, Henri-Xavier Arquilliére's *L'austinizisme politique* (1933). As Bruno demonstrates, this work sparked a lively debate concerning both Augustine's understanding
of politics and the merits of Arquillière’s interpretation and development. The debate concerning “Political Augustinianism” exploded first in the French academy but soon underwent a “continental drift” toward the Anglo-American world, where it has maintained its vitality until today. This ongoing reflection, in light of both scholarly developments and social-civic dilemmas, suggests to Bruno that “the future prospects of Augustinian interpretation and the application of Augustine’s social and political vision are assured” (p. 13).

Bruno is a systematic theologian by training, and this background sets the agenda for his approach in Political Augustinianism. Nonetheless, with its interdisciplinary thematic and social-civic focus, Bruno’s book will also be of interest to students of diverse disciplines, including political science, patristics, intellectual history, ethics, and social and political philosophy, as well as those specializing in theology and religious studies. The book’s first four chapters are mainly historical narrative; the fifth and final substantive chapter is mainly constructive critical appraisal of various contemporary hermeneutical approaches to Augustine’s political thought.

The first chapter treats the interwar revival of Augustine’s political thought in France, reviewing works by Arquillière, Henri Marrou, and others. With the second chapter, we jump the pond to review the first wave of Anglo-American responses to the French debate on “political Augustinianism.” This chapter’s narrative centers on the work of Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Ramsey, Herbert Deane, and Ernest Fortin. Chapter three focuses especially on the thought of Robert Markus in his influential work Saeculum and John Milbank’s and Peter Kaufman’s spirited responses. Bruno continues in his fourth chapter to survey more recent scholarship on Augustine’s and Augustinian theories of political life and virtue. Important interlocutors here include James Wetzel, Mikka Ruokanen, Oliver O’Donovan, and Jean Bethke Elshtain. In the fifth chapter, Bruno takes up interpretive or hermeneutical issues, providing his own perspective more directly and at greater length than in earlier chapters.

A brief book review cannot do justice to Bruno’s history and analysis, so the interested reader would do well to read Political Augustinianism in its entirety. The story builds slowly yet steadily, with balanced presentations of diverse contemporary readings and applications of Augustine’s political thought building upon one another. The reader who perseveres beyond the opening chapters will see how worthwhile this careful construction was, as themes are returned to and developed at greater depth, and connections and dilemmas emerge that could not have come to light without the book’s initial interpretive studies. (In this regard, Political Augustinianism recalls the experience of reading a Dickens novel, where perseverance through opening chapters consisting chiefly of character description...
Journal of Church and State

proves essential for the reader to engage later in an enriching, engrossing story.) Whether or not one concurs with the author's conclusions, engaging his informed evaluations cannot but help the student of Augustine's thought to refine and broaden his or her understanding.

Bruno makes a critical argument to conclude his book: that Augustine should be read as encouraging statesmen and citizens to cultivate an ethical and religious unity of character, an authentic integrity of life, amidst political pressures that would bifurcate their persona into public and private, secular and religious selves. (From a philosophical standpoint, David Thunder makes a complementary case for ethical integrity in *Citizenship and the Pursuit of the Worthy Life.*). Here Bruno parts ways with those who read Augustine's politics as a neutral zone for mostly amoral action or as a "mixed" realm where moral and immoral actions alike should be undertaken for the public good. Bruno, together with Robert Dodaro and others, argues convincingly that this "neutral" or "mixed" ethical cum unethical reading of politics misrepresents Augustine's vision. Politics and politicians after the fall are certainly highly complex and also "mixed," in the sense that the ultimate battle between good and evil is being waged within each polity and indeed in each human soul. The disunity caused by sin, Augustine the theologian hopefully intimates, can be repaired by grace, if not entirely in this age. Although the statesman or citizen of such graced integrity may be rare, such persons can and do exist. The greatest service the church can offer political life, Bruno suggests, may well be to enlighten and support such citizens in their work toward healing social ills and performing public service.

Mary M. Keys
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

doi:10.1093/jcs/csv087
Advance Access publication October 26, 2015


Gilman's argument is impressive in both its breadth and detail. Engaging parallel trajectories of philosophical and theological thought, Gilman examines howWestern traditions have attended to