A Framework for Analysis of Church and State Issues

A course entitled Religion and the State raises an immediate question as to the field of inquiry. If we assume, for the purposes of this inquiry, that there are two grounds for authority in the world today that are mutually exclusive, viz. secular/temporal and spiritual/religious, then the spiritual and religious has been losing ground in the West to secular society since the time of the French Revolution and perhaps since the seventeenth century when religious skepticism and ideas of religious toleration became current. In place of religion, political concerns with individual rights, the rule of law, and the power of the state came to the forefront. Ideologies, particularly that of Communism, but also anarchism, liberalism, some forms of conservatism, and capitalism, eschewed a religious dimension. These developments were supported by the changing intellectual environment of Europe in the nineteenth century, where Darwinism, Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God, Freud’s explorations of the unconscious, and the rise of modern science pushed religion increasingly out of the intellectual realm and decreased the need for religious explanations of natural phenomena. Although sociologists, such as Max Weber, continued to examine religion and society, they did so from a distance, trying to explain a past phenomenon in social-political terms that had relevance to the rising power of the West but was no longer a live issue. The result was, that by the 1960s and 1970s, most western intellectuals and academics overlooked and did not feel the need to be concerned with the role of religion in the state or in 20th-century society. They tended to see the religious struggles in Ireland, the Middle East, and India as vestigial elements of society that would disappear as modernization took over. Therefore, they were unprepared for the upsurge of religious activity around the world toward the end of the 20th century.
The tensions between the religious right and the State in the U.S., the internationalization of Islam, the growth of evangelical Christianity in Latin America and elsewhere, the Iranian Revolution, the Arab Spring, the rise of ISIS, the popularity of Liberation Theology, the downfall of the Soviet Union and the rise of religion in Russia, the struggle in China over an organized meditative movement and the practice of Christianity, have brought the issue of church-state relations once more to the forefront of concern for politicians, political scientists, sociologists, and political activists, to name a few. Historians, in contrast, were a bit less swept away by the secularism of the 20th century and have continued to document the dynamics of what seem like irreducible elements in society—the dynamic between spiritual and material impulses and the tendency of humans to organize themselves both politically and religiously. Historians, however, tend to devote their time to documenting this dynamic at different times and in different circumstances, producing “factual” accounts and explaining reasons for particular historical twists and turns. They rarely get involved in present problem-solving, in trying to predict events, or in normative questions such as “What should the proper relationship be between Church and State, the spiritual and the material?”

At present there is no grand synthesis of these late 20th/early 21st century dynamics. No new Max Weber or Karl Marx has yet emerged, and many of the latest theorists (e.g. Foucault, Derrida, Habermas) do not address this issue. Whether such a framework will emerge or not, either among western intellectuals or in other intellectual climes, it is impossible to work or think productively within a framework that it is not grounded in understanding the early and continuing efforts to structure the juncture where religious and political organizations and values meet. In these spheres, past authority becomes a basis for present principles and actions. Without understanding past authority and past experience, one cannot deepen one’s understanding of present circumstances and consider wisely the present possibilities for action and reflection.

This course focuses on several major strands in western society through the medieval and modern eras: the shifting fields of temporal and spiritual power and authority, the role of religion in legitimating state authority, the rise of toleration, and the formation of Europe as a persecuting society.

This course is a Doyle Seminar, part of the Doyle Engaging Difference Program, a campus-wide curricular initiative, and gives faculty the opportunity to enhance the student research component of upper-level seminars that address questions of national, social, cultural, religious, moral, and other forms of difference. The Doyle seminars are intended to deepen student learning about diversity and difference through enhanced research opportunities, interaction with thought leaders, and dialogue with the Georgetown community and beyond.

As a Doyle Seminar, you have access to a TA, Rachel Palmer, who will be available to consult with you on your research paper as it evolves through the semester. Her contact information is: rap85@georgetown.edu. Because it is
now a Doyle Seminar, we are able to pay a small stipend for faculty with whom you may wish to consult with regard to your research paper.

Required Texts (available at the bookstore and on reserve at the library)

- Brian Tierney, *Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300*
- R.I. Moore, *Formation of a Persecuting Society, 2nd edition*
- Joseph Canning, *Ideas of Power in the Late Middle Ages*
- Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*
- Dante, *Monarchy*
- Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- Luther: Selected Political Writings, ed. J. M. Porter
- R.H. Bainton, *Hunted Heretic*
- John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*
- Voltaire, *Treatise on Toleration*
- Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*
- David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*
- Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*
- Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers? The Religious Right in America*
- R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* is available in the bookstore under History 007.

Grades

The grades for this course will consist of a discussion grade (40%), a grade for an in-class report (20%) and a final paper (40%). Discussion is encouraged at all times!

Paper

A 15-20 page paper, on a topic of your own choosing, is expected at the end of the class. A tentative topic and bibliography should be handed just after the Columbus Day break. You may range rather widely in your choice of topic and global context. I will set up meetings with everyone individually throughout February. Papers that have been written in the past for this class include a study of Nil Sorskii, a sixteenth-century Russian monk and polemicist, a study of the church-state implications of Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s ministry, a study of the role of the papacy in the rise of Solidarity and the decline of Communism in Eastern Europe, a study of the role of Catholicism in 21st century Philippines, and a study of Christian reconstructionist movements in modern America. Topics can range far beyond the content of class readings and discussion.

Course Schedule

Wednesday, September 2: i. Introduction and Early Christianity
ii. The Conversion of Constantine
Wednesday September 9:  i. Augustine’s City of God and City of Man
   ii. The Gelasian Doctrine and the Reign of Justinian
   Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought* 300-1450, chp. 1 (on Blackboard; recommended reading)

Wednesday, September 16: i. Carolingian Kingship, Empire and the Church
   Tierney, I, 2
   Einhard’s “Life of Charlemagne” (on Blackboard)
   *Song of Roland* (on Blackboard and available in the bookstore under History 007) Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought*, chp. 2 (On Blackboard—recommended reading)
   Report on Mathias Becher, *Charlemagne* (Kate Randazzo)

Wednesday, September 23: i. Gregorian Reform
   Tierney, I, 3-all of II
   *The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII* (selected letters on Blackboard)
   Paul of Bernreid’s Life of Pope Gregory VII (pp. 301-354, sections 58-110—on Blackboard)
   Ute Blumental, *The Early Councils of Pope Paschel II*

   ii. Papal Monarchy in the 13th century and Pope Boniface VIII
   Tierney, III, IV
   R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*

Wednesday, September 30:  i. Impact of Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Politics*/Dante’s *Monarchia*
   Dante, *Monarchy*; Reread Tierney, IV, 1, 2
   Canning, chps. 1-2

   ii. Various Viewpoints/Debates of the 14th and 15th centuries
   Marsilius of Padua
   Giles of Rome
   John of Paris
   William Ockham
   Conciliarism, e.g. Jean Gerson or Nicholas of Cusa
   Canning, chps. 3-6
Wednesday, October 7:  
i. The Renaissance: Machiavelli and the role of the Prince; 
Machiavelli’s God  
Machiavelli’s The Prince and Exhortation on Penance (on Blackboard)  

Reports: Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli: Billy Schuette  
Machiavelli as a Republican Thinker: Tancrède Fulconis  

ii. The Reformation and the Role of the State  
Luther’s Political Writings  
Luther: Selected Political Writings, ed. J. M. Porter  

Tentative paper topics and bibliography due Wednesday, October 14, after Fall Break  

Wednesday, October 14:  
i. Anabaptists and Unitarians/Michael Servetus and Calvin’s Geneva  
R.H. Bainton, Hunted Heretic  
Report: Goldmans, Out of the Flames: Tonisha Lewis  

ii. Witchcraft and witchcraft trials  
Selections from Malleus Maleficarum (on Blackboard)  
Report: Donald Martinez  

Wednesday, October 21:  The Rise of Toleration in Early Modern Europe: English ideas of liberty and religious toleration  
Perez Zagorin, How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West  
Report: Susan Mangaluz (book to be determined)  
English ideas of liberty and religious toleration  
John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration  

Wednesday, October 28:  
i. Freemasons  
Report: Margaret Jacob, Valerie Harrington  
Freemasons in America: Marie Beasley  

ii. Voltaire (the Calas Affair) and Lessing: The 18th century Enlightenment
Voltaire, *Treatise on Tolerance*
Reports: Voltaire, *Candide*; Daniel Kim
David Bien, *The Calas Affair*; Emily Kent

Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*

Wednesday, November 4: European Religious Heritage in the New World; The Founding Fathers
Butler, chps. 1-7

The US Constitution
David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*

Wednesday, November 11: Religion in mid-19th century America
Butler, chps. 8-9 and Conclusion
Report: Religion in the mid-19th century America (Melissa Lewis)

Wednesday, November 18: Fundamentalism and American Politics Today
Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers*? (Professors Haddad and Wilcox have been invited to make brief presentations to the class.)

Reports: Religion and the State: Jimmy Carter (Lauren Ward)
Ronald Reagan (Ileana de la Cruz)

Wednesday, November 25, December 2 and 9: Presentations of paper projects (15 minutes per presentation). (Pizza and sodas will be available during the break.)

You will be asked to make a presentation to the class of NOT more than 15 minutes on a topic of your choosing among the following possibilities or on a different topic that you might be interested in. With each topic there will be some, but not much, additional outside reading—usually only one book or article beyond what we are already reading in class. Suggested topics are listed below.

**Suggested topics**

- Images of Charlemagne: Einhard, *Notker’s Life of Charlemagne*, Song of Roland
- Pope Gregory VII and the Investiture Controversy
- Pope Innocent III
- Aristotle’s *Politics*
- Any one of the following: Marsilius of Padua
  - Giles of Rome
  - John of Paris
  - William Ockham
  - Conciliarism, e.g. Jean Gerson or Nicholas of Cusa
- Machiavelli as a Teacher of Evil? Pro
  - Con
Anabaptists
Unitarians
Jean Calvin
Calvin’s Geneva
Witches: real/dangerous/imaginary/benign?
John Locke’s views on government
Religious dangers to the state: Catholicism and Protestantism
Freemasons in Europe
Freemasons in America
The Calas Affair
Christian Origins of the US—pick one of the founding fathers? pro con

The First Great Awakening
The Second Great Awakening
Religion and the State: Jimmy Carter
Religion and the State: Ronald Reagan