



**EDUCATION & FORMATION  
CHURCH AND STATE  
JANUARY 28 - FEBRUARY 11**

You are familiar with the advice: “Avoid the subjects of religion and politics in polite conversation.” Either subject, on its own, is potentially inflammatory. If you were foolish enough to combine both subjects in one conversation, the result would not be potential inflammation, but guaranteed combustion.

Well, this winter in a three-week Adult E&F series, we will try to discuss both subjects in a non-combustible manner. We will look at what the bible says about the role of the state. We will consider why the state is a hard subject for clear thinking for even the most thoughtful Christian. Finally, we’ll consider the state of the state.

This will be a great class, on an important and timely subject, and we’ve lined up a great teaching team.

I hope to see you there.

Warmly,

David

**JANUARY 28  
THE ROLE OF THE STATE  
Speaker: Julia Shaw**

**FEBRUARY 4  
THE ALLURE OF THE STATE  
Speaker: Dr. Joseph Hartman**

**FEBRUARY 11  
THE STATE OF THE STATE  
Speaker: Dr. Brad Littlejohn**

## THE ROLE OF THE STATE

Romans 13: Government is ordained by God to punish evil and reward good. We are to honor appropriately the government with our calm obedience.

The Roman Empire, the "Best Regime" and the American Republic

The Enduring Tension between the "Good Man" and the "Good Citizen"

## THE ALLURE OF THE STATE: POLITICS IN THE TWO CITIES

*Although there are very many great peoples throughout the world, living under different customs in religion and morality and distinguished by a complex variety of languages, arms, and dress, it is still true that there have come into being only two main divisions, as we may call them, in human society: and we are justified in following the lead of our Scriptures and calling them two cities. There is, in fact, one city of men who choose to live by the standard of the flesh, another of those who choose to live by the standard of the spirit.*

—Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIV, ch. 1

### I. CLASSICAL THOUGHT: Justice and Political Life

- A. The Importance of Political Life (*πολιτεία* or *res publica*, later *Romanitas*)
- B. Political Life Makes Justice Possible
- C. Implications of the Classical Position—Justice Resides in the πόλις

### II. AUGUSTINE'S REPUDIATION OF THE CLASSICAL WORLD: The Two Cities

- A. The Historical Moment: Rome has just been sacked (410 A.D.). The pagans blame the Christians, and the Christians wonder what has gone wrong with Rome.
- B. Augustine's Critique of Classical Conception of Justice
- C. What Are the Two Cities?
  1. *Civitas Terrena* (Earthly City): The City whose founder is man and whose citizens live by the Flesh (*libido dominandi*).
  2. *Civitas Dei* (City of God): That City whose founder is Christ and whose citizens live by the Spirit (*caritas*). Phil. 3:19-20—*Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven.*
- D. What is the Relationship Between the Two Cities?
  1. The Cities are Intermingled
  2. No Dual Citizenship: Citizens of the City of God are *pilgrims* in the Earthly City.
- E. What are the Ethics of the Two Cities? In the Earthly City, the self is loved, exalted and served and others are humbled. In the City of God, the self is humbled and God is loved, exalted, and served, which eventuates in love and service of neighbor.

### III. IMPLICATIONS OF THE AUGUSTINIAN POSITION: Chastened by Reality, Nourished by Hope

- A. A Politics of Limits
  1. Rejection of Classical Model
  2. Anti-ideological
  3. Rejection of Modern Narratives of Progress and Political Perfectionism
  4. But—Not a License for Withdrawal or Quietism: Emphasis on Peace Rather than Justice or Glory
- B. Relativization of Earthly Kingdoms, Principalities and Powers: Augustine refuses the mythology of the state as either divine or demonic.
- C. Relativization of Earthly Values: All human values and norms remain subordinate to and subject to the Gospel and the judgment of God.

*It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.*

—Psalm 118:8-9

## THE STATE OF THE STATE

### Three Things to Consider About the State

We live in a “liberal democratic nation-state.” That’s not normal. What does it mean?

- 1) The Modern nation-state is a modern invention
- 2) Democracy is overrated, but should not be underrated
- 3) The peril and promise of liberalism

### Three Ways We Should Respond

- 1) Faithful Presence in a post-Christian society  
*1 Peter 2:11-12: “I urge you as sojourners and exiles...Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable”*
- 2) Freedom from fear as the foundation of Christian politics  
*1 Peter 2:16-17: “Live as people who are free....Fear God. Honor the emperor.”*
- 3) Embracing suffering without embracing powerlessness  
*1 Peter 2:18: “Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.” /  
1 Cor. 7:21: “Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.”*