



# **The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society (Moral Traditions series)**

*Robert Gascoigne*

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Western liberal societies are characterized by two stories: a positive story of freedom of conscience and the recognition of community and human rights, and a negative story of unrestrained freedom that leads to self-centeredness, vacuity, and the destructive compromise of human values. Can the Catholic Church play a more meaningful role in assisting liberal societies in telling their better story?

Australian ethicist Robert Gascoigne thinks it can. In *The Church and Secularity* he considers the meaning of secularity as a shared space for all citizens and asks how the Church can contribute to a sensitivity to and respect for human dignity and human rights. Drawing on Augustine's *City of God* and Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*, Gascoigne interprets the meaning of freedom in liberal societies through the lens of Augustine's "two loves," the love of God and neighbor and the love of self, and reveals how the two are connected to our contemporary experience.

*The Church and Secularity* argues that the Church can serve liberal societies in a positive way and that its own social identity, rooted in Eucharistic communities, must be bound up with the struggle for human rights and resistance to the commodification of the human in all its forms.

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