



# **Moral Foundations of Constitutional Thought: Current Problems, Augustinian Prospects (Princeton Legacy Library)**

*Graham Walker*

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Graham Walker boldly recasts the debate over issues like constitutional interpretation and judicial review, and challenges contemporary thinking not only about specifically constitutional questions but also about liberalism, law, justice, and rights. Walker targets the "skeptical" moral nihilism of leading American judges and writers, on both the political left and right, charging that their premises undermine the authority of the Constitution, empty its moral words of any determinate meaning, and make nonsense of ostensibly normative theories. But he is even more worried about those who desire to conduct constitutional government by direct recourse to an authoritative moral truth. Augustine's political ethics, Walker argues, offers a solution--a way to embrace substantive goodness while relativizing its embodiment in politics and law.

Walker sees in Augustinian theory an understanding of the rule of law that prevents us from mistaking law for moral truth. Pointing out how the tensions in that theory resonate with the normative ambivalence of America's liberal constitutionalism, he shows that Augustine can provide successful but decidedly nonliberal grounds for the artifices and compromises characteristic of law in a liberal state.

Originally published in 1990.

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