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**Nicholas Newman, *The Political Works of Remigius Dei Girolami*.  
Belleville, IL: St. Dominic's Media, 2018.**

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Reviewed by Samuel C. C. Bunch

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It is certainly no secret that we citizens of the United States are a people fiercely divided into political factions. It is no more a secret that many of the controversies of our day are bound up in questions regarding the proper relationship between the moral precepts of religion and the laws of the states. Considered in this light, it is easy to understand why Nicholas Newman's study and translation of several of the works of Remigius Dei Girolami might be seen as a timely and relevant contribution to both historical scholarship and public intellectual discourse.

Newman provides, in the opening pages, a concise and effective introduction to the Investiture Crisis, explaining how the question of whether the supreme temporal authority (in the form of the Holy Roman Emperor) or the supreme spiritual authority (in the form of the Roman Catholic Pope) is greater than the other in earthly affairs had produced an extremely volatile political situation.

Newman places readers in the context of a city of Florence riven by violence and controversy, which is itself a part of the larger Italian peninsula that has also been riven by violence between its various states, and throughout the book reiterates this historical context as necessary to understanding the works of Dei Girolami, who was both a citizen of Florence who sought the common good of the city's people and a Dominican friar loyal to the Catholic Church and the Roman Pontiff.

Newman's central claim appears to be that Dei Girolami's purpose—healing the political divisions and their destructive consequences for the city of Florence—which the friar would have

witnessed firsthand during the late 1200s and early 1300s, is advanced by utilizing a philosophical framework which emphasizes the common good and repeatedly calling attention to the damage to the polity caused by the neglect of the common good, particularly the goods of peace and justice.

The relationship between Dei Girolami's works on the common good, peace, and justice is brought to the fore by Newman when he addresses the scholarly debate over which of the works preceded and influenced the others. He takes the position that Dei Girolami's work on the common good was written first, and his case for that position is well argued.

Perhaps more interestingly to lay readers, his introductions help in understanding how Dei Girolami viewed peace and justice in light of the common good. One of the lines from Newman's translation of Dei Girolami's sermons on the topic of peace is an excellent example of the rich material Newman is drawing upon: "injustice does not permit peace to be kept."

Current-day activists who chant, "No justice, no peace!" would probably be surprised to learn that a Dominican friar writing in the 1300s had already argued that justice is a prerequisite for peace. It is also worth noting that Dei Girolami's lengthy arguments, many based on classical philosophy and reasoning by analogy from nature and demonstrating that the common good is more important than certain individual goods, could well appeal just as strongly to secular critics of capitalism and consumerism as they do to Catholic integralists.

Fortunately, this brief volume is written in a style accessible to scholars and to educated layfolk. Scholars of history and political science who cannot read Latin may greatly appreciate the new English translation of Dei Girolami's works and Newman's citation-heavy introductions to those works. The book-loving political activists seeking to contextualize current controversies will find much food for thought on the relationship among the common good, the church, and the states. Catholics trying to find a way to reason clearly about the common good and peace and justice as a response to

contemporary crises might discover that they are both challenged and reassured by Dei Girolami's own efforts to accomplish the same.

*Samuel C. C. Bunch is currently working to enter the novitiate with the Eastern Province of the Order of Preachers and reading the works of Dominican authors past and present.*