

James R. PRICE and Kenneth R. MELCHIN, *Spiritualizing Politics Without Politicizing Religion. The Example of Sargent Shriver*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2022, 16 × 23,5 cm, xiv-185 p., ISBN 978-1-4426-4252-2

Louis Roy, O.P.

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James R. PRICE and Kenneth R. MELCHIN, **Spiritualizing Politics Without Politicizing Religion. The Example of Sargent Shriver**. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2022, 16 × 23,5 cm, xiv-185 p., ISBN 978-1-4426-4252-2.

The two authors of that remarkable book display a fine understanding of both Sargent Shriver (1915–2011), a Catholic layman, and Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984), a Jesuit. At first sight, however, Shriver and Lonergan do not appear to have tackled the same issues. The former influenced American culture and politics, in particular by conceiving the famous “Peace Corps” program, which was successful in training and deploying young volunteers worldwide in order to provide development assistance; by contrast, the latter developed a very theoretical Catholic systematics, albeit one that carries consequences for social thinking. Nevertheless, Price and Melchin convincingly argue that these two inputs can come together in assisting our understanding of today’s cultural and social challenges.

Basing themselves on Shriver’s letters and on Lonergan’s writings, the authors give us a helpful grasp of the views of these two converging thinkers. In effect, both Shriver and Lonergan, who probably did not hear enough about one another to have opportunities of engaging the other’s contribution to Catholic thought, would agree with the stance expressed by the title of Price’s and Melchin’s book, *Spiritualizing Politics Without Politicizing Religion*.

The Preface details the practical questions that triggered the long collaboration between the two authors and with other people, and that led to the writing of their book.

Chapter 1 presents a short outline of both Shriver’s and Lonergan’s input; it sketches the bifurcation that brought about more and more entrenched oppositions in the United States since the 1950s concerning politics and religion; it also defines the challenge of moving beyond a focus on organized religious institutions to a focus on spiritual experiences from which shareable values and cares may ensue; it ends with an outline of the authors’ argument.

Chapter 2 illustrates Shriver’s vocation to the public life, his vision, his concrete actions, and the concrete events that incited Americans to get entrenched in opposing camps. By paying special attention to his speeches of the early 1960s, Chapter 3 concentrates on his ideas regarding the relations of spirituality and politics; that chapter presents the gist of Lonergan’s philosophy as applicable to social problems. Chapter 4 explains what Shriver did through his manifold commitments. Chapter 5 expounds many facts about the Peace Corps. And Chapter 6 takes stock of Shriver’s orientations and flexibly deduces their possibilities for the future.

This volume by Price and Melchin demonstrates that, for better or worse, politics and religion are interconnected. About this interconnection, readers will – or did, if they already read the book – appreciate several contributions offered in the book: historical data (from the eighteenth century onwards); analyses of the cultural factors that explain polarizations concerning the role of religion(s) in the city; a well-defined distinction between religion and politics; the rejection of the wall of separation that the European Enlightenment had erected between religion and politics; politics’ need for the ressourcement that inner religion can provide; and a legitimization of secular-ity, namely politics’ relative autonomy vis-à-vis institutionalized forms of religion.

All in all, Shriver's views are elucidated with the help of Lonergan's turn to interiority – that turn not amounting to self-enclosed examinations, but to a self-knowledge that can empower the adoption of judicious methods and of right actions in democratic nations.

Louis Roy, O.P.

*Faculty of Theology
Dominican University College
Ottawa*