

Dr Sebastian MORELLO
Philosopher and Writer
The European Conservative

Conservatism and Grace: Is a secular society possible?

In his recent book *Conservatism and Grace* (Routledge, 2023), Sebastian Morello offers a detailed examination of the conservative case for religion by establishment. In the course of doing so, he argues that the conservative political tradition is rooted in an inescapably religious worldview, and in turn shows what the future of conservatism might be. Dr Morello draws from the thought of early conservatives, Edmund Burke and Joseph de Maistre, as he develops a foundational, highly personalistic argument for religion by establishment within the conservative tradition, and more broadly to unify the diverse commitments and objections of conservatives. Beyond the insights of the early conservatives, Dr Morello develops a case that also draws on Roger Scruton's personalism, the thought of Martin Buber, Andrew Pinsent, Robert Spaemann, and themes from contemporary theology and recent findings in the field of experimental psychology. The result is both an innovative and convincing case in favour of establishmentarian conservatism, as well as the role of religious ideas in our self-understanding as individuals and as a political community. At this conference, Dr Morello will present some of these topics and explore his scepticism towards 'secular conservatism' as both a coherent position and as a practical approach to politics and society.

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