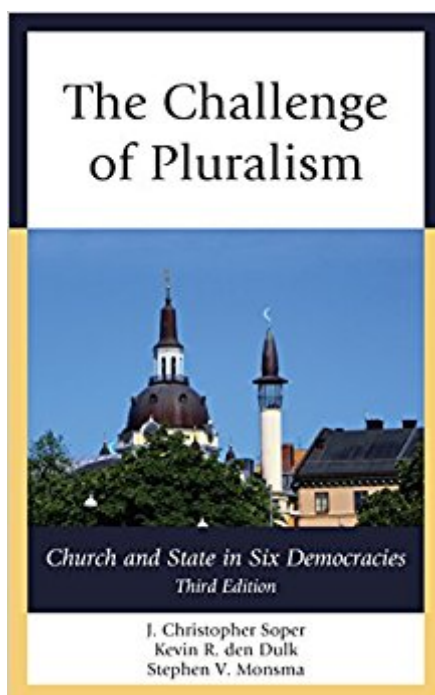


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The Challenge Of Pluralism: Church And State In Six Democracies



Synopsis

In a thoroughly revised and expanded edition that now includes France, this essential text offers a rigorous, systematic comparison of church-state relations in six Western nations: the United States, France, England, Germany, the Netherlands, and Australia. As successful and stable political democracies, these countries share a commitment to protecting the religious rights of their citizens. The book demonstrates, however, that each has taken substantially different approaches to resolving basic church-state questions. The authors examine both the historical roots of those differences and more recent conflicts over Islam and other religious minorities, explain how contemporary church-state issues are addressed, and provide a framework for assessing the success of each of the six states in protecting the religious rights of its citizens using a framework based on the ideal of governmental neutrality and evenhandedness toward people of all faiths and of none. Responding to the general confusion about the relationship between church and state in the West, this book offers a much-needed comparative analysis of a topic that is increasingly a source of political conflict. The authors argue that the US conception of church-state separation, with its emphasis on avoiding government establishment of religion, is unique among political democracies and discriminates against religious groups by denying religious organizations access to government services provided to other organizations. The authors persuasively conclude that the United States can learn a great deal from other Western nations in promoting religious neutrality and the free exercise of religion.

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Customer Reviews

When it was first published, *The Challenge of Pluralism* was one of the earliest and most detailed explorations of how Europe is dealing with its changing religious landscape amidst a history of state churches and secularization. With the increasing cultural presence of Islam being felt across the continent, this updated study of Europe's regulation of religion remains all the more relevant and important. (Anthony Gill, University of Washington and author of *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty*) The addition of a chapter on France is a wonderful feature of this new edition, showing students the full range of regimes of religion and state in established democracies. When I began lecturing on religion and politics in the 1970s, French audiences would smile indulgently at the crazy behavior of Americans in mixing religion and politics. On recent visits, they ask me anxiously for advice on how the United States has so successfully integrated its religious newcomers. This volume traces the changes in the legal position of religion over the decades and remains the gold standard of books on religion and state from a comparative perspective. (Kenneth Wald, University of Florida) The new edition of this important volume comes at a crucial time in discussions about managing the relationship between state and religion and protecting the rights of citizens, regardless of their religious, philosophical, or political allegiances. The book contains useful, practical, and easy-to-follow advice and recommendations on how to balance rights and interests of all groups fairly that is relevant for a variety of contexts. Most important, the book reminds us that these crucial questions of how to live well in pluralist societies are never fully answered or settled, that we should never become complacent and assume that our societies are as democratic and inclusive as they possibly can be, and that we should continually seek to improve the conditions for liberty of conscience for all and learn from the experiences of one another. (Erin Wilson, University of Groningen) In a thoroughly revised and expanded edition that now includes France, this essential text offers a rigorous, systematic comparison of church-state relations in the United States, France, the Netherlands, Australia, England, and Germany. The authors examine the historical roots and contemporary strategies of the different approaches each government has taken. Providing clarity on the little-understood, evolving relationship between church and state in the West, this book provides an invaluable comparative analysis of a topic that is increasingly a source of profound political and social conflict.

One of my favorite books on religion in public life. On a subject especially in need of light, insight, and balance, its very readable historical, legal, and comparative analyses are most enlightening and fair. I recommend it for college classes and as good reading for ordinary citizens. (Christian Smith,

director, Center for the Study of Religion and Society, University of Notre Dame)

This is a superb review of the contrast between the US and other Western democracies in the practice of using public funds for religious schools and social service agencies. It should contribute to a re-thinking of our legal and legislative bias toward separation of secular and religious approaches to delivering education and social services to our children and our needy.

Well-researched, understated and well presented.

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