



The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies

By Stephen V. Monsma, J. Christopher Soper

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Now in a thoroughly revised and updated edition, this essential text offers a rigorous, systematic comparison of church-state relations in the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, and England. As successful and stable political democracies, these five countries share a commitment to protecting the religious rights of their citizens. Yet as the book demonstrates, each has taken substantially different approaches to resolving basic church-state questions. Stephen V. Monsma and J. Christopher Soper examine the historical roots of those differences and explain how each state addresses contemporary church-state issues. The authors judge each government's success in protecting the religious rights of its citizens using a framework based on the ideal of governmental neutrality or evenhandedness toward people of all faiths and of none.

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. Monsma and Soper conclude that the American conception of church-state separation, with its traditional emphasis on avoiding government establishment of religion, actually discriminates against religious groups by denying access to government services provided to other organizations. The authors persuasively argue 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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