Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective

In 2000, religion became resurgent across the globe. In many countries religion is a powerful source of political mobilization, and in some it is a potent social cleavage. Some religions reinforce the state; others provide the space for resistance.

This book contains a series of detailed studies examining religion and politics in specific countries or regions. The cases include countries with one dominant religious tradition and countries with two or more competing traditions. They include Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, Hinduism, Shinto, and Buddhism. They include states in which religion and politics are closely linked and states with at least a low wall of separation between church and state.

The cases are organized by the type of religious marketplace, but they allow many other comparisons as well. We develop some generalizations from the cases and hope that they will be a fertile source of theorizing for others.

Ted Gerard Jelen is Professor and Chair of Political Science at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He is the author of To Serve God and Mammon: Church-State Relations in the United States and is the co-author (with Clyde Wilcox) of Public Attitudes on Church and State (1995).

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Comparative Perspective

The One, the Few, and the Many

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Preface

The idea for this book came when Clyde was invited to give a paper for the Japanese Political Science Association meeting on religion and politics in the United States. The conversations that ensued with many of the Japanese political scientists reminded us of the enormous international differences that exist in the relationship between religion and politics. Clyde’s enthusiasm and fascination with this experience was repeatedly conveyed to Ted, and it was not long before we were telling each other that the time was ripe for a systematic consideration of the issues raised by Clyde’s trip. It was in considering the Japanese case in relation to the United States that we began to plan a larger collection of essays. The fine work that we had read over the years by our colleagues in the Religion and Politics Organized Section of the APSA helped us refine our questions, and has inspired our thinking.

We have assembled an impressive group of scholars, who have provided us with excellent studies of religious politics in different regional and national settings. We regard the chapters in this book as sophisticated in the sense that each author is quite sensitive to the cultural contexts and nuances in which religious politics is practiced in a particular place. We also believe that these works are accessible to readers interested in the different ways in which the sacred and the secular interact, but who are not area specialists or experts in the content of particular religious traditions. We would suggest that our contributors have made religion and politics in non-Western settings slightly less esoteric or exotic, and have provided new ways of approaching religious politics in more familiar national contexts.

We have learned more in the process of producing this book than in any of our other projects. With several of our contributors we engaged in interesting dialogues as we sought to understand the complexities of the cases they were presenting. Like so many scholars who have gone before us, we have been reminded that “God is in the details” while
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engaged in the editorial process. We have been consistently surprised by unexpected similarities among different cases, and also by the necessity to revise conventional wisdom in response to the valuable insights provided by the contributors.

We thank our contributors for their patience when this project was delayed for a time after the death of Clyde’s mother.

This book would not have been possible without the help of many individuals. We would like to thank our editors at Cambridge for their support. Alex Holzman helped us shape the project and revise the book in response to the reviewer’s comments. Lewis Bateman and Michael Moscati helped shepherd the book through editorial production.

John Green and anonymous reviewers provided many helpful comments on the prospectus, and two anonymous reviewers read the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions for revision. Three of our contributors (Anthony Gill, Kenneth Wald, and J. Christopher Soper) helped us develop the introduction and concluding chapter. Rachel Goldberg and Ben Webster, both graduate students in the Georgetown Ph.D. program, helped proofread the manuscript and prepare it for submission.

Most importantly, we would like to thank our wives, Elizabeth Cook and Marthe Chandler, for advice, support, and (above all) patience.

This book is dedicated to Nikki, Ron, and Cori Rhode, and to Lucy and Jobie Haney, and to Bob and Betty Wilcox, who were there when Clyde needed them.