



The Secular State Under Siege: Religion and Politics in Europe and America

Christian Joppke

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Throughout human history, religion and politics have entertained the most intimate of connections as systems of authority regulating individuals and society. While the two have come apart through the process of secularization, secularism is challenged today by the return of public religion. This cogent analysis unravels the nature of the connection, disconnection, and attempted reconnection between religion and politics in the West.

In a comparison of Western Europe and North America, Christianity and Islam, Joppke advances far-reaching theoretical, historical, and comparative-political arguments. With respect to theory, it is argued that only a “substantive” concept of religion, as pertaining to the existence of supra-human powers, opens up the possibility of a historical-comparative perspective on religion. At the level of history, secularization is shown to be the distinct outcome of Latin Christianity itself. And at the level of comparative politics, the Christian Right in America which has attacked the “wall of separation” between religion and state and Islam in Europe with the controversial insistence on sharia law and other “illiberal” claims from some quarters are taken to be counterpart incarnations of public religion and challenges to the secular state.

This clearly argued, sweeping book will provide an invaluable framework for approaching an array of critical issues at the intersection of religion, law and politics for advanced students and researchers across the social sciences and legal studies, as well as for the interested public.

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