



# The Religious Left and Church-State Relations

*Steven H. Shiffrin*

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In *The Religious Left and Church-State Relations*, noted constitutional law scholar Steven Shiffrin argues that the religious left, not the secular left, is best equipped to lead the battle against the religious right on questions of church and state in America today. Explaining that the chosen rhetoric of secular liberals is poorly equipped to argue against religious conservatives, Shiffrin shows that all progressives, religious and secular, must appeal to broader values promoting religious liberty. He demonstrates that the separation of church and state serves to protect religions from political manipulation while tight connections between church and state compromise the integrity of religious institutions.

Shiffrin discusses the pluralistic foundations of the religion clauses in the First Amendment and asserts that the clauses cannot be confined to the protection of liberty, equality, or equal liberty. He explores the constitutional framework of religious liberalism, applying it to controversial examples, including the Pledge of Allegiance, the government's use of religious symbols, the teaching of evolution in public schools, and school vouchers. Shiffrin examines how the approaches of secular liberalism toward church-state relations have been misguided philosophically and politically, and he illustrates why theological arguments hold an important democratic position--not in courtrooms or halls of government, but in the public dialogue. The book contends that the great issue of American religious politics is not whether religions should be supported at all, but how religions can best be strengthened and preserved.

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