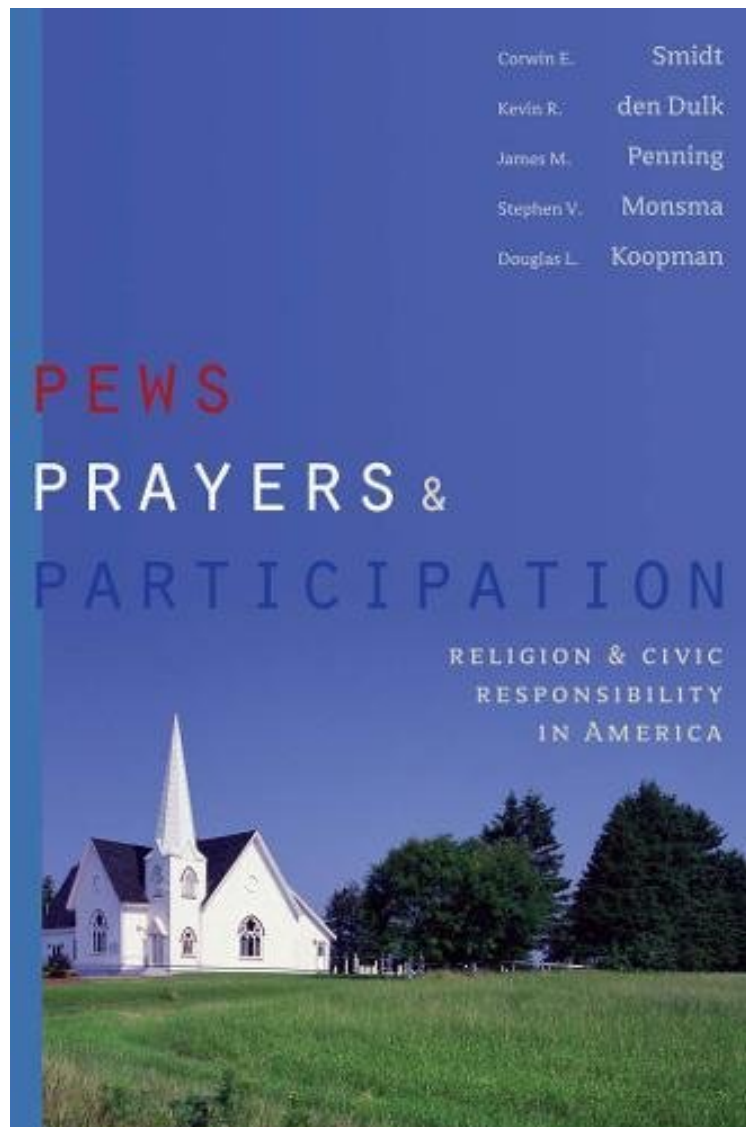


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Pews, Prayers, and Participation: Religion and Civic Responsibility in America (Religion and Politics)

Corwin E. Smidt

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#2731860 in Books Georgetown University Press 2008-11-12 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.02 x .67 x 5.98l, .98 #File Name: 1589012178272 pages | File size: 16.Mb

Corwin E. Smidt : Pews, Prayers, and Participation: Religion and Civic Responsibility in America (Religion and Politics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pews, Prayers, and Participation: Religion and Civic Responsibility in America (Religion and Politics):

Is the "private" experience of religion counterproductive to engagement in public life? Does the "public" experience of religion contribute anything distinctive to civic engagement? *Pews, Prayers, and Participation* offers a fresh approach to key questions about what role religion plays in fostering civic responsibility in contemporary American society. Written by five prominent scholars of religion and politics, led by Calvin College's Corwin Smidt, the book brilliantly articulates how religion shapes participation in a range of civic activities from behaviors (such as membership in voluntary associations, volunteering, and charitable contributions) to capacities (such as civic skills and knowledge), to virtues (such as law-abidingness, tolerance, and work ethic). In the course of their study the authors examine whether an individual exhibits a diminished, a privatized, a public, or an integrated form of religious expression, based on the individual's level of participation in both the public (worship) or private (prayer) dimensions of religious life. They question whether the privatization of religious life is counterproductive to engagement in public life, and they show that religion does indeed play a significant role in fostering civic responsibility across each of its particular facets. *Pews, Prayers, and Participation* is a bold and provocative clarion call to the continuing importance and changing nature of religion in American public life. It will be of particular interest to students and scholars of religion and politics, and culture and politics, as well as general readers with an interest in the impact of religion in the public sphere.

"A truly valuable (and in many ways definitive) treatment of this contentious subject. ... A powerful and sophisticated endorsement of religion as a positive force in American civic life. ... A splendidly researched volume that makes an important point within a unified and coherent theoretical framework. It is highly recommended." *Political Science Quarterly* "A solid book that brings new insights to bear on our knowledge of religion and civic life. It is a must-read for scholars and laypeople interested in this topic and is likely to be a particularly useful resource for undergraduate courses in the social science of religion given that it is highly accessible and contains a wealth of information and facts." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* "Pews, Prayers, and Participation is a comprehensive, clear-headed analysis of the relationship between religion and civic responsibility. Drawing on findings from multiple data sources and examining several aspects of civic responsibility, this volume provides a welcome synthesis of knowledge on this complex subject." Mark Chaves, professor of sociology, religion, and divinity, Duke University "A distinguished team of scholars provides compelling evidence for the pivotal contribution of religion to American civic life. Especially striking is the finding that the nature of religious commitment determines the degree of faith's public impact. This will be a major reference work for years to come." Allen Hertzke, professor of political science and director of religious studies, University of Oklahoma "Most debates about the place of religion in politics ultimately boil down to the question of whether religious values can improve the quality of civil society. Asking such a question poses a daunting challenge, but armed with an impressive array of survey data, this team of authors is more than up to the task. Rich, complex, and relevant, this book will be of interest to all who wonder whether religion's role in public life actually makes a difference in the world." Laura R. Olson, Clemson University "Many have speculated, theorized, and argued about the role of religion in fostering a healthy civic culture. Is it a help or hindrance? *Pews, Prayers, and Participation* has what this debate has largely lacked: evidence. Anyone interested in religion in the public square should read this book." David Campbell, John Cardinal O'Hara, CSC, associate professor of political science, University of Notre Dame "This is a superb book. It not only summarizes the evidence concerning the myriad ways that religion matters to civic life. It suggests new methods for studying the subject and practical ways to support sacred places that serve civic purposes. Well done!" John DiIulio Jr., Frederic Fox Leadership Professor of Politics, Religion and Civic Society, University of Pennsylvania About the Author Corwin E. Smidt is director of the Paul Henry Institute and a professor of political science at Calvin College. Kevin R. den Dulk is associate professor in the Department of Political Science at Grand Valley State University. James M. Penning is director of the Social Research Center and professor of political science at Calvin College. Stephen V. Monsma is a research fellow at the Paul Henry Institute at Calvin College and professor emeritus of political science at Pepperdine University. He is the author of many books, including most recently coauthored *Faith, Hope and Jobs: Welfare to Work in Los Angeles* which is also available from Georgetown University Press. Douglas L. Koopman is a professor of political science at Calvin College. Koopman coauthored *Of Little Faith: The Politics of George W. Bush's Faith-Based Proposals* which is also available from Georgetown University Press.