



The Last Freedom: Religion from the Public School to the Public Square

Joseph P. Viteritti

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The presidency of George W. Bush has polarized the church-state debate as never before. The Far Right has been emboldened to use religion to govern, while the Far Left has redoubled its efforts to evict religion from public life entirely. Fewer people on the Right seem to respect the church-state separation, and fewer people on the Left seem to respect religion itself--still less its free exercise in any situation that is not absolutely private. In *The Last Freedom*, Joseph Viteritti argues that there is a basic tension between religion and democracy because religion often rejects compromise as a matter of principle while democracy requires compromise to thrive. In this readable, original, and provocative book, Viteritti argues that Americans must guard against debasing politics with either antireligious bigotry or religious zealotry. Drawing on politics, history, and law, he defines a new approach to the church-state question that protects the religious and the secular alike.

Challenging much conventional opinion, Viteritti argues that the courts have failed to adequately protect religious minorities, that the rights of the religious are under greater threat than those of the secular, and that democracy exacts greater compromises and sacrifices from the religious than it does from the secular. He takes up a wide range of controversies, including the pledge of allegiance, school prayer, school vouchers, evolution, abortion, stem-cell research, gay marriage, and religious displays on public property.

A fresh and surprising approach to the church-state question, *The Last Freedom* is squarely aimed at the wide center of the public that is frustrated with the extremes of both the Left and the Right.

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