



Interpreting the Free Exercise of Religion: The Constitution and American Pluralism

By *Bette Novit Evans*

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A generation ago, all of the big questions concerning religious freedom in America seemed to have been resolved. At the very least, the lines of division between proponents of a wall of separation between church and state and advocates of religious accommodation seemed clearly drawn. Since then, increasing religious diversity and changing functions of government have raised new questions about what it means to allow the free exercise of religion. In this book, Bette Novit Evans explores the contemporary understandings of this First Amendment guarantee in all of its complexity and ambiguity. Evans situates constitutional arguments about free exercise within the context of theological and sociological insights about American religious experience. She surveys and evaluates several of the most well considered approaches to religious freedom and applies them to contemporary legal controversies, examining problems in defining religion and claims concerning the autonomy of religious institutions. Her conclusions about religious liberty are embedded in an appreciation of American pluralism: the guarantee of religious freedom, she argues, can be understood as an instrument for fostering alternative sources of meaning within a pluralistic political community.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Evans (political science, Creighton Univ., Nebraska) sets out to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of contemporary jurisprudence regarding the Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment. The author assumes the reader's familiarity with the landmark cases and relevant legal history. She cites Locke, Jefferson, Madison, Burke, and de Tocqueville, as well as such modern political theorists as Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Peter Berger, and she situates that account in the American political and religious landscape. Using this background, she comments on recent cases involving the Sanctuary movement, public funding in public or private schools run by religious communities, and an Air Force officer's right to wear religiously mandated attire. Evans advocates pluralism as a compromise between liberal individualism and communitarianism. Religious freedom, she shows, can make room for alternative sources of meaning within a diverse, cohesive, and vital civil society. A thoughtful work for academic collections. —John R. Leech, Brooklyn, Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Review

[I]ncisive and commanding analysis.

"American Studies"

A well-argued and civil contribution to the never-ending debate about religion and public life.

"First Things"

"Her original and thoughtful argument draws on important sources and issues in constitutional law.

Donald A. Downs, University of Wisconsin-Madison"

[Those curious] how a secular government and multi-faith society can accommodate competing religious claims will doubtless find the book engaging.

"Free Inquiry"

"Evans's work is the more impressive because it so carefully and persistently integrates descriptive and normative considerations.

"Franklin I. Gamwell, University of Chicago"

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A well-argued and civil contribution to the never-ending debate about religion and public life.--*First Things*

Evans examines the development of the Court's jurisprudence during the twentieth century and particularly during recent decades and demonstrates how difficult the task of constructing a uniform and consistent policy has proved to be. Her incisive and commanding analysis ends with a plea for a pluralist approach.--*American Studies*

Evans raises provocative questions, and those interested in how a secular government and multi-faith society can accommodate competing religious claims will doubtless find the book engaging.--*Free Inquiry*

An immensely well-informed and nuanced treatment of the full range of recent Free Exercise problems, Evans's work is the more impressive because it so carefully and persistently integrates descriptive and normative considerations. This is an engaging and important contribution to the current discussion.--Franklin I. Gamwell, University of Chicago

Evans fills a need in the literature and the law, especially in these times of ferment in the Supreme Court's and the polity's thinking about the two religion clauses of the First Amendment. Her original and thoughtful argument draws on important sources and issues in constitutional law, political theory, and the political science of interest groups. The author knows the landscape of this subtle and hard land.--Donald A. Downs, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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This Interpreting the Free Exercise of Religion: The Constitution and American Pluralism book is not really ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book is actually information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper you

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