



Public Pulpits: Methodists and Mainline Churches in the Moral Argument of Public Life

Steven M. Tipton

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Since the 2000 presidential election, debate over the role of religion in public life has followed a narrow course as pundits and politicians alike have focused on the influence wielded by conservative Christians. But what about more mainstream Christians? Here, Steven M. Tipton examines the political activities of Methodists and mainline churches in this groundbreaking investigation into a generation of denominational strife among church officials, lobbyists, and activists. The result is an unusually detailed and thoughtful account that upends common stereotypes while asking searching questions about the contested relationship between church and state.

Documenting a wide range of reactions to two radically different events—the invasion of Iraq and the creation of the faith-based initiatives program—Tipton charts the new terrain of religious and moral argument under the Bush administration from Pat Robertson to Jim Wallis. He then turns to the case of the United Methodist Church, of which President Bush is a member, to uncover the twentieth-century history of their political advocacy, culminating in current threats to split the Church between liberal peace-and-justice activists and crusaders for evangelical renewal. *Public Pulpits* balances the firsthand drama of this internal account with a meditative exploration of the wider social impact that mainline churches have had in a time of diverging fortunes and diminished dreams of progress.

An eminently fair-minded and ethically astute analysis of how churches keep moral issues alive in politics, *Public Pulpits* delves deep into mainline Protestant efforts to enlarge civic conscience and cast clearer light on the commonweal and offers a masterly overview of public religion in America.

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