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Church, State, and Citizen: Christian Approaches to Political Engagement

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Christians are often portrayed as sharing the same political opinions and the same theological foundations for their actions. Yet, from the time of the early church, believers have held a variety of perspectives on the relationship between church and state and what constitutes legitimate political behavior for Christian citizens. Thoroughly Christian political beliefs run the gamut from disavowal of any political responsibility to a complete endorsement of government policies and the belief that the state has been divinely appointed. In Church, State, and Citizen, Sandra F. Joireman has gathered political scientists to examine the relationship between religion and politics as seen from within seven Christian traditions: Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, Evangelical and Pentecostal. In each chapter the historical and theological foundations of the tradition are described along with the beliefs regarding the appropriate role of the state and citizen. While all Christian traditions share certain beliefs about faith (e.g., human sin, salvation, Christ's atonement) and political life (e.g. limited government, human rights, the incompleteness and partiality of all political action) there are also profound differences. The authors discuss the contemporary implications of these beliefs both in the United States and in other areas of the world where Christianity is showing increasing vigor.

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