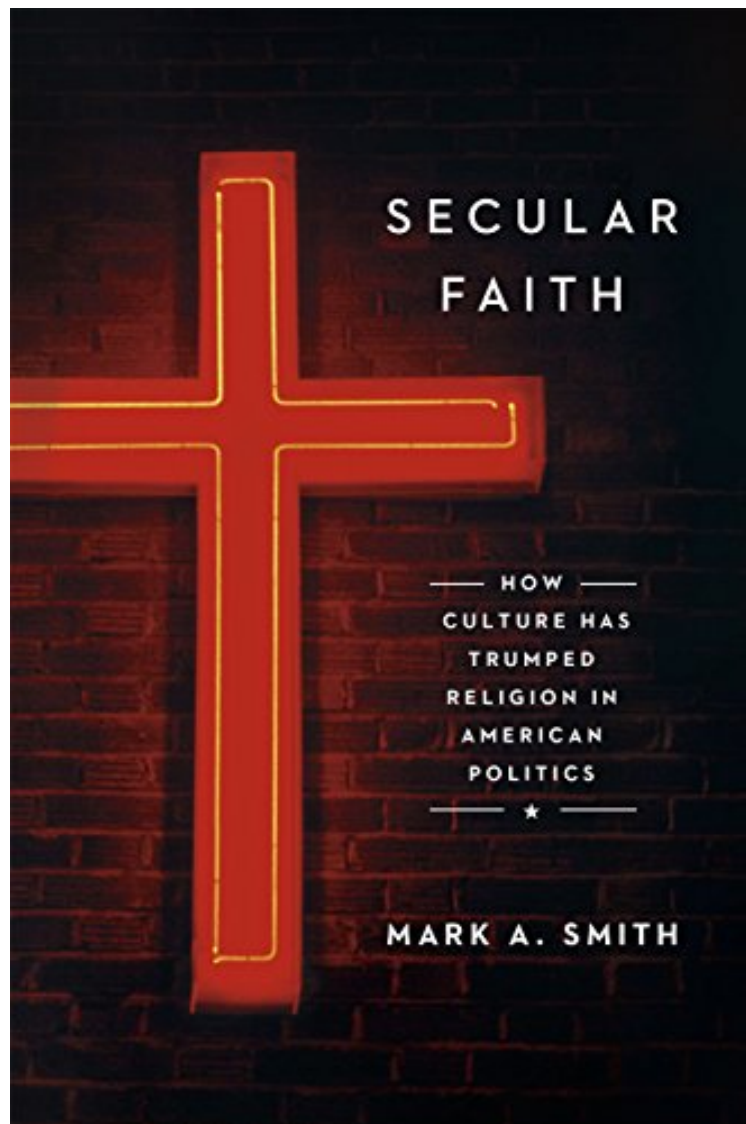


(Library ebook) Secular Faith: How Culture Has Trumped Religion in American Politics

Secular Faith: How Culture Has Trumped Religion in American Politics

Mark A. Smith

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Mark A. Smith : Secular Faith: How Culture Has Trumped Religion in American Politics before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Secular Faith: How Culture Has Trumped Religion in American Politics:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A masterful examination of the relationship between American

politics and religion

By JR in NM

This book is an informative and thoroughly engrossing analysis of the interplay between the secular and religious forces that shape American politics. Mark Smith carefully examines a variety of historical and contemporary topics to demonstrate that the so-called "culture wars," rather than being a singular and ominous feature of modern politics, are actually just the latest in a series of skirmishes that have arisen repeatedly throughout American history. Smith also shows that the battle lines between the combatants are not the static and entrenched positions that most people assume, but are in fact fluid and constantly evolving -- and are also consistently moving in a direction that is largely determined by the secular culture. Smith provides a lucid and compelling argument, presenting a wealth of information and detailed case studies that illuminate his broader themes across the full arc of American history. This book is a rarity in any field: it is not only accessible and direct enough to appeal to the novice, but also substantive and nuanced enough to inform and captivate those with a more seasoned background. Always well-written, impeccably researched, and unceasingly interesting, this is easily one of the most thought-provoking and rewarding books I have read in years. Whatever your political and religious beliefs, *Secular Faith* will change what you think -- and how you think -- about American politics and religion. Culture warriors, partisans, noncombatants, and observers alike would do well to read this book and absorb its lessons.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars

By Dr. F. H. Richard

very insightful and helpful.. Should be helpful to the church in doing ministry

Dr. Frederick H. Richard

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars

By em2

Very interesting book

When Pope Francis recently answered Who am I to judge? when asked about homosexuality, he ushered in a new era for the Catholic church. A decade ago, it would have been unthinkable for a pope to express tolerance for homosexuality. Yet shifts of this kind are actually common in the history of Christian groups. Within the United States, Christian leaders have regularly revised their teachings to match the beliefs and opinions gaining support among their members and larger society. Mark A. Smith provocatively argues that religion is not nearly the unchanging conservative influence in American politics that we have come to think it is. In fact, in the long run, religion is best understood as responding to changing political and cultural values rather than shaping them. Smith makes his case by charting five contentious issues in Americas history: slavery, divorce, homosexuality, abortion, and womens rights. For each, he shows how the political views of even the most conservative Christians evolved in the same direction as the rest of society perhaps not as swiftly, but always on the same arc. During periods of cultural transition, Christian leaders do resist prevailing values and behaviors, but those same leaders inevitably acquiesce often by reinterpreting the Bible if their positions become no longer tenable. Secular ideas and influences thereby shape the ways Christians read and interpret their scriptures. So powerful are the cultural and societal norms surrounding us that Christians in America today hold more in common morally and politically with their atheist neighbors than with the Christians of earlier centuries. In fact, the strongest predictors of peoples moral beliefs are not their religious commitments or lack thereof but rather when and where they were born. A thoroughly researched and ultimately hopeful book on the prospects for political harmony, *Secular Faith* demonstrates how, over the long run, boundaries of secular and religious cultures converge.

A beautifully written and richly substantive book that convincingly explodes conventional wisdom. On an array of issues, from slavery to divorce, homosexuality, and womens rights, Smiths exhaustive research clearly shows that the doctrines of Americas major religious traditions have shifted to conform with contemporary societal norms. Readers will learn much from this book even those who already consider themselves familiar with one or more of the issues it explores.