



# Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics

*Robert Benne*



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In this book, Benne describes and analyzes the wrong ways to relate religion and politics and offers a better way.

Benne calls the two main bad ways of relating religion and politics “separationism” and “fusionism.” Secular separationists decry all involvement of religion in politics; religious separationists, on the other hand, advocate abstaining from politics in the name of religious purity. Fusionism comes in many types, but the type that most concerns Benne is the use of religion—in this case Christianity—for political ends, which turns religion into an instrument for purposes other than its own main reason for being. Rejecting these bad ways of relating religion and politics, Benne offers a better way that he calls critical engagement which derives from the Lutheran tradition, with a few tweaks to adapt the tradition to deal well with the new challenges of our present situation.

As Benne points out, “The question is not so much whether American religion will have political effects. It most definitely will. The more serious questions are: Should it? How should it?” In this book, Benne offers a clear and useful guide to a subject too often characterized by confusion and loud rhetoric.



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