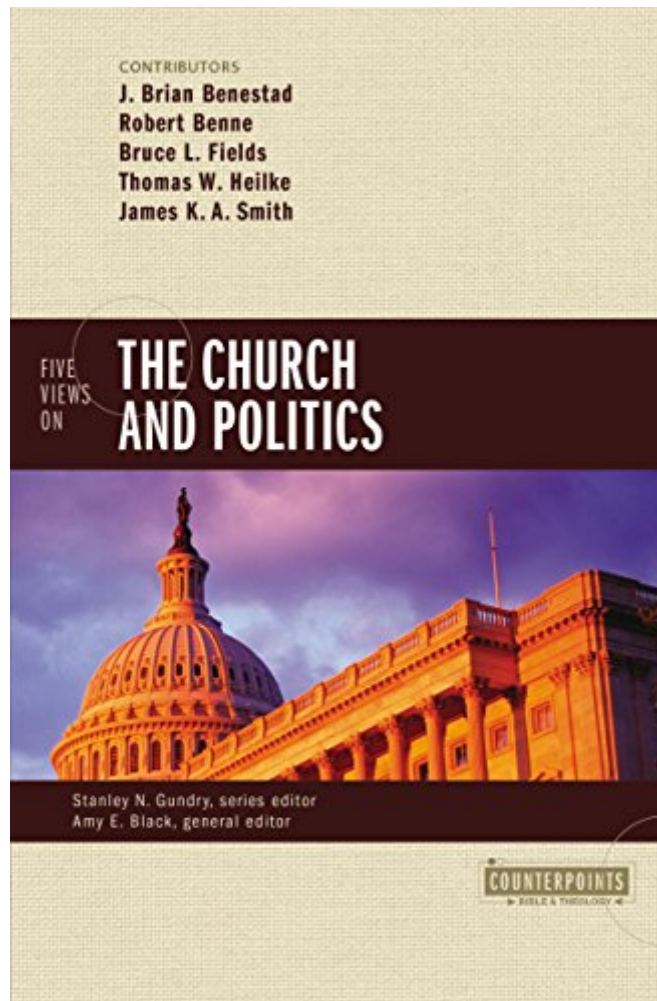


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# Five Views On The Church And Politics (Counterpoints: Bible And Theology)



## Synopsis

Few topics can grab headlines and stir passions quite like politics, especially when the church is involved. Considering the attention that many Christian parachurch groups, churches, and individual believers give to politics—and of the varying and sometimes divergent political ideals and aims among them—*Five Views on the Church and Politics* provides a helpful breakdown of the possible Christian approaches. Readers will find themselves equipped to think more deeply about the relationship between church and state in a way that goes beyond mere policy debates and current campaigns. General Editor Amy Black brings together five top-notch political theologians in the book, each representing one of the five key political traditions within Christianity: Anabaptist (Separationist) Thomas Heilke, Lutheran (Two Kingdom) Robert Benne, Catholic (In Tension) J. Brian Benestad, Reformed (Integrationist) James K. A. Smith, and Black Church (Prophetic) Bruce Fields. Each author addresses his tradition's theological distinctives, the role of government, the place of individual Christian participation in government and politics, and how churches should (or should not) address political questions. Responses by each contributor to opposing views will highlight key areas of difference and disagreement. Thorough and even-handed, *Five Views on the Church and Politics* will enable readers to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the most significant Christian views on political engagement and to draw their own, informed conclusions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Recent trends in the United States seem to point to a constantly lowering importance of religion in public life. Yet religion persists as an important factor in elections and in policy making. Grappling with the question of the interactions of faith and politics does not compare in importance to larger, eternal mission of the church, but political life is unquestionably an element of the temporal mission of the church. In *Five Views on the Church and Politics*, Amy Black brings together five scholars who describe and discuss their own traditions' views. Each of these contributes a chapter, to which the other four offer brief responses: Thomas Heilke (Anabaptist), Robert Benne (Lutheran), Bruce Fields (the Black church), James K.A. Smith (Reformed), and J. Brian Benestad (Roman Catholic). As you might expect from this type of book, each chapter feels just a bit brief. Each contributor covers the high points of his tradition, while providing extensive sources for those who want to dig in. The responses highlight the differences among the traditions. I was left with an impression of varied traditions that have distinctive ways of saying the same things. Of course, there are differences among these five traditions, but there are many more similarities. *Five Views* is a very useful volume for readers looking for a brief synopsis of these five traditions. Black couches each in categories drawn from Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*. She points out that "these traditions overlap in many significant ways, have borrowed from each other's teachings over time, and continue to learn from one another and change from within.

Should Christians participate in politics? If it is no, is it a responsible way to live in this world? If yes, how should Christians relate to the political leaders of the land? What about the separation of Church and state? What does it mean? If a Church totally abandon all forms of involvement, what happens when the government makes decisions that negatively impact the Church? While most believers will tend to walk the middle way, to be involved only when absolutely necessary, Christians in general are split right down the middle generally, and at least five ways theologically. In this book, we learn of five such ways in the relationship between Church and state. In fact, when we

read the gospels, we see how the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus with the question of whether the Jews ought to pay tax to the Romans. Either way, Jesus would be trapped. If Jesus answered 'yes,' the Jews would be unhappy. If he said 'no,' the Romans would come after him. Life nowadays are a lot more different than the first century. Moreover, Christians living in the modern world now have the benefit of hundreds of years of theological reflection. This book distills five different points of view surrounding relationship between Church and state. Editor Amy Black calls it the five historic traditions of Anabaptist, Lutheran, Black Church, Reformed, and Catholic. Five contributors have been invited to this discussion and after one proposition, there would be four other responses. This gives readers multiple dimensions of each proposition and alternative viewpoints. Each political thought begins with a historical background of the denomination and how they arrive at the current political thought. The names of key founders and significant leaders are mentioned, together with the unique circumstances they face.

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