



ASPEN CASEBOOK SERIES

# RELIGION AND THE CONSTITUTION

*Fourth Edition*

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## PREFACE

The subject of religion and the state has unquestionably come of age in recent years. There is now a large enough body of court decisions on the First Amendment's religion provisions to support a full-length casebook—indeed, more than one. And the relationship of religion to government and public life has doubtless provoked even greater interest since the September 2001 terrorist attacks, which were inspired by a religious view radically opposed to the modern Western arrangement of religious liberty.

This casebook on religion and the U.S. Constitution reflects the authors' thinking on the subject over the period of a number of years. It reflects several premises about how to teach and understand the relations between government and religion.

The heart of the book is organized according to three fundamental ways in which government interacts with religion:

- the regulation of religious activity (Part III),
- the funding of religious activity (Part IV), and
- the treatment of religion in government's culture-shaping activities such as public schools (Part V).

Each of these ties together a number of sections—a structure that is designed to help students see logical relationships between cases that may involve quite different sets of facts. In each of these three major areas, we examine doctrines under both components of the First Amendment's religion provision:

- free exercise of religion and
- nonestablishment of religion.

One of the chief reasons why the Supreme Court's case law on religion has been so inconsistent and shifting is that for years the Court treated these two First Amendment concepts in isolation from each other, labeling cases as "Free Exercise Clause cases" or "Establishment Clause cases." The structure of this casebook—with free exercise rulings immediately followed by nonestablishment rulings in the same area, and vice versa—is designed to help teachers

and students think about the two clauses together, to consider the implications of nonestablishment in every free exercise dispute, and vice versa. The interaction of these two clauses is the key point of Part I; it continues to be emphasized throughout the text.

This casebook seeks throughout to integrate current issues concerning religion and the state with historical and theoretical perspectives on those issues. One of the great rewards of studying church-state relations is the rich history of reflection and debate on the subject that extends back for centuries. The questions that underlie today's debates—for example, how to maintain a moral framework for society and at the same time respect the rights of conscientious dissenters—are truly perennial questions, even though they may take different forms in different times and places. Accordingly, Part II of the book provides a concentrated historical background on the development of religious liberty in America from the established churches of the colonial era up through the enactment of the First Amendment. Subsequently, each of the three largest parts of the book (III through V listed above) begins with a historically oriented section, and the text returns to historical and theoretical materials throughout.

To make possible the integration of these rich historical and theoretical perspectives, the casebook relies on fairly significant notes following the leading cases. It is difficult to make sense of the Supreme Court's case law under the Religion Clauses, which is so shifting and inconsistent taken on its own terms, without understanding that there are various historical and theoretical tensions that pull the Justices in different directions. The notes following the cases aim to help students by summarizing the holding and rationale of the case before delving into its complications and variations. And the authors have worked hard to include questions on both sides of the issues. People who look through the book will find citations to a wide range of authors.

The richness of the subject of religion and the state means that it is difficult to cover every page of these materials in one course. Different emphases are possible: basic Religion Clause doctrines, the historical background of current issues, the legal problems faced by religious organizations, and so forth. The Teacher's Manual accompanying the book provides instructors with suggested syllabi for these varying emphases.

New developments following the publication of this edition, such as Supreme Court decisions and significant lower court decisions and scholarly commentary, will be posted on the supplemental website at <http://aspenlawschool.com/books/religionandtheconstitution/default.asp>.

A word about editing style: Another advantage of a subject as focused as religion and the Constitution is that students can read opinions in something resembling their actual form, without the need for constant severe editing. Therefore, a number of the cases here are lightly edited. We have, however, tried to streamline the reading by eliminating reported citations within excerpts. (The case citation almost always appears somewhere else in the materials.) We



have indicated the editing out of text within an excerpt by ellipses, but we have not indicated where citations or footnotes have been dropped.

Finally, as with the previous editions, we welcome comments from teachers and readers on all aspects of the book.

*Michael W. McConnell*

*Thomas C. Berg*

*Christopher C. Lund*

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**RELIGION  
AND THE  
CONSTITUTION**

# SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Contents	ix
Preface	xix
Acknowledgments	xxiii
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. HISTORY	13
III. RELIGION IN THE REGULATORY STATE	77
IV. THE POWER OF THE PURSE	303
V. RELIGION AND THE GOVERNMENT'S INFLUENCE ON CULTURE	451
VI. WHAT IS "RELIGION"?	665
Table of Cases	703
Table of Statutes	709
Table of Authorities	713
Index	723

# CONTENTS

Preface	xix
Acknowledgments	xxiii
<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A. The Religion Clauses and Underlying Values: The Case of Sabbath Observances</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Stansbury v. Marks</i>	3
<i>Estate of Thornton v. Caldor, Inc.</i>	7
Notes and Questions	10
<b>II. HISTORY</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>A. The Theory and Practice of Religious Establishments</b>	<b>13</b>
Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>	16
Notes and Questions	16
George Washington, Farewell Address	18
Constitution of Massachusetts (1780)	19
<i>Barnes v. First Parish in Falmouth</i>	20
Notes and Questions	23
<b>B. Evangelical and Enlightenment Ideas of Church-State Separation</b>	<b>24</b>
Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia	26
Elisha Williams, The Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants	27
John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration	28
Notes and Questions	32
George Washington, Letter to the Religious Society Called Quakers	36
Thomas Jefferson, Letter to a Committee of the Danbury Baptist Association	36
Notes and Questions	37

<b>C. The Virginia Assessment Controversy</b>	<b>39</b>
Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776)	40
Notes and Questions	40
A Bill Establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion (1784)	41
Notes and Questions	42
James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments	43
Notes and Questions	47
A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom (1786)	48
Notes and Questions	50
<b>D. The Constitutional Provisions</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>1. Framing the First Amendment</b>	<b>50</b>
Annals of Congress, Aug. 15, 1789	52
Journal of the First Session of the Senate of the United States of America, Sept. 3, 1789	54
Senate Journal, Sept. 9, 1789	55
Annals of Congress, Aug. 17, 1789	56
a. Issues Concerning Establishment	56
b. Issues Concerning Free Exercise	59
<b>2. Perspectives and Developments in the Early Republic</b>	<b>61</b>
James Madison, Detached Memorandum	61
Notes and Questions	63
<b>3. Incorporation in the Fourteenth Amendment</b>	<b>65</b>
<i>Permoli v. New Orleans</i>	65
Notes and Questions	66
<i>Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow</i>	69
<i>Abington School District v. Schempp</i>	70
Notes and Questions	72
Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia	74
Notes and Questions	74
<b>III. RELIGION IN THE REGULATORY STATE</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>A. Free Exercise: Is Accommodation Required?</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>1. The Historical Debate</b>	<b>78</b>
Michael W. McConnell, The Origins and Historical Understanding of Free Exercise of Religion	79
Philip A. Hamburger, A Constitutional Right of Religious Exemption: An Historical Perspective	86
Notes and Questions	92
<b>2. The First Free Exercise Cases</b>	<b>94</b>
<i>People v. Philips</i>	94
<i>Simon's Executors v. Gratz</i>	99
Notes and Questions	100
<b>3. Belief and Conduct: The Mormon Cases</b>	<b>101</b>
<i>Reynolds v. United States</i>	103
Notes and Questions	106

<b>4. The Rise of Exemptions</b>	<b>109</b>
<i>Sherbert v. Verner</i>	110
Notes and Questions	115
<i>Wisconsin v. Yoder</i>	118
Notes and Questions	122
<b>5. The Exemptions Period</b>	<b>123</b>
<i>Thomas v. Review Board</i>	124
Notes and Questions	127
<i>Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association</i>	129
Notes and Questions	134
<b>6. The Decline of Exemptions</b>	<b>137</b>
<i>Employment Division v. Smith</i>	137
Notes and Questions	143
<b>7. The Return of Exemptions</b>	<b>146</b>
a. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act	146
b. RFRA's Partial Invalidation: <i>City of Boerne</i>	148
c. The Modern Patchwork of Free Exercise	149
<b>B. Free Exercise After <i>Smith</i></b>	<b>150</b>
<b>1. The Free Exercise Clause Itself</b>	<b>150</b>
<i>Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah</i>	151
Notes and Questions	154
<i>Rader v. Johnston</i>	154
<i>Fraternal Order of Police v. City of Newark</i>	156
Notes and Questions	160
<b>2. RFRA</b>	<b>164</b>
<i>Gonzales v. O Centro Espirita Beneficente Iniao</i>	164
Notes and Questions	169
<i>Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.</i>	172
Notes and Questions	186
<b>3. State RFRAs (and State Constitutional Provisions)</b>	<b>189</b>
<i>Elane Photography v. Willock</i>	190
Notes and Questions	194
<i>Stinemetz v. Kansas Health Policy Authority</i>	198
Notes and Questions	201
<b>4. RLUIPA</b>	<b>201</b>
<i>Holt v. Hobbs</i>	202
Notes and Questions	206
<b>5. Targeted Legislative Accommodations</b>	<b>208</b>
<i>Spencer v. World Vision</i>	209
Notes and Questions	218
<b>C. The Establishment Clause: Is Accommodation Unconstitutional?</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>1. An Introduction</b>	<b>222</b>
a. Case Law and Theoretical Arguments	222
<i>Welsh v. United States</i>	222
Notes and Questions	226

b. The Historical Understanding	232
Annals of Congress, Aug. 17, 20, 1789	233
Notes and Questions	235
2. The Current Doctrine	236
<i>Cutter v. Wilkinson</i>	237
Notes and Questions	240
3. Denominational Neutrality	244
Larson v. Valente	245
<i>Board of Education, Kiryas Joel Village School</i>	
<i>District v. Grumet</i>	246
Notes and Questions	254
<b>D. Institutional Religion</b>	<b>257</b>
1. Formation of Churches	258
a. Religious Structures	258
b. Civil Legal Structures	259
c. First Amendment Concerns	261
Madison's Veto Message	261
Notes and Questions	262
2. Internal Church Property Disputes: The Rise of "Neutral Principles of Law"	263
<i>Watson v. Jones</i>	263
Notes and Questions	266
<i>Jones v. Wolf</i>	267
Notes and Questions	272
<i>Masterson v. Diocese of Northwest Texas</i>	274
Notes and Questions	278
3. The Reaffirmation of Church Autonomy: <i>Hosanna-Tabor</i>	279
<i>Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and</i>	
<i>School v. E.E.O.C.</i>	281
Notes and Questions	286
4. Churches and Tort Law	290
<i>Kubala v. Hartford Roman Catholic Diocesan Corporation</i>	290
Notes and Questions	294
<i>Redwing v. Catholic Bishop for Diocese of Memphis</i>	296
Notes and Questions	299
<b>IV. THE POWER OF THE PURSE</b>	<b>303</b>
A. Introduction: Government Aid in Modern Times and in the Founding Generation	303
<i>Everson v. Board of Education</i>	304
Notes and Questions	313
Note on the Uses of History: Religious Assessments and the Establishment Clause	315
Board of Education v. Allen	316
Notes and Questions	317



<b>B. The Historical Struggle over Nonpublic Education: Subsidy or Suppression?</b>	<b>318</b>
<b>1. Before the Civil War</b>	<b>318</b>
John C. Jeffries, Jr., and James E. Ryan, A Political History of the Establishment Clause	319
Notes and Questions	321
<b>2. After the Civil War</b>	<b>323</b>
a. Reconstruction	323
b. The Blaine Amendment	323
c. Continued Conflict	328
<i>Pierce v. Society of Sisters</i>	329
Notes and Questions	330
Brief for the Governor of Oregon in <i>Pierce v.</i> <i>Society of Sisters</i>	330
Notes and Questions	331
<b>C. The <i>Lemon</i> Approach: No Aid to Religious Teaching</b>	<b>334</b>
<b>1. The Basic Decisions</b>	<b>334</b>
<i>Lemon v. Kurtzman</i>	334
Notes and Questions	340
Committee for Public Education v. Nyquist	343
Notes and Questions	345
<b>2. <i>Lemon</i> Applied: Different Forms of Aid, Different Institutions</b>	<b>348</b>
a. Forms of Aid to Nonpublic Schools	348
b. Distinctions Among Institutions	350
i. Hospitals	351
ii. Universities	351
iii. Social Service Organizations	353
c. Conclusion: The Relevance of the <i>Lemon</i> Approach	353
<b>D. The New Approach: The Permissibility of Neutral Aid</b>	<b>354</b>
<b>1. Indirect Aid Through Genuine Private Choice</b>	<b>355</b>
<i>Witters v. Washington Dept. of Services for the Blind</i>	355
Notes and Questions	358
<i>Zelman v. Simmons-Harris</i>	359
Notes and Questions	371
<b>2. Direct Aid to Religious Institutions</b>	<b>373</b>
<i>Mitchell v. Helms</i>	373
Notes and Questions	377
<i>Freedom From Religion Foundation v. McCallum</i>	379
Notes and Questions	382
<b>E. Is Neutrality Concerning Aid Constitutionally Required?</b>	<b>386</b>
Rosenberger v. Rector and Visitors of Univ. of Virginia	386
Notes and Questions	388
<i>Locke v. Davey</i>	389
Notes and Questions	397