



The Catholic Church in State Politics: Negotiating Prophetic Demands & Political Realities, by DAVID YAMANE. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005, 208 pp.; \$65.00 USD (cloth), \$24.95 USD (paper).

Most people would agree that religion, to various extents, matters in political life. David Yamane is no exception. Utilizing interviews, surveys, observation and secondary data, Yamane conducts an empirical case study of state Catholic conferences examining how, when and why religion matters for politics. He details conferences' legislative agendas, their advocacy strategies and attempts at maintaining legitimacy, and the discourse they use to defend their political positions.

Framing the study under the rubric of neo-secularization theory is a real strength of this book. In this view, secularization consists of a double movement that simultaneously constrains and enables religious groups' involvement in politics. On one hand, institutional differentiation has separated the spheres of religion and politics, allowing religion to maintain its authority within the spiritual realm, but giving religion little authority over secular political matters. On the other hand, there has been a resurgence of religious organizations bringing a religious perspective to bear on politics.

Its interdisciplinary focus is another strength of this book. Because political scientists have conducted the bulk of work on the political involvement of religious advocacy groups, Yamane draws on these existing studies for his empirical work. He also adds to this body of knowledge. For example, there is empirical evidence that state Catholic conferences use more insider tactics than some current political science literature suggests. Yamane also borrows the-

oretical and organizational discussions from sociologists to frame the analysis. Particularly, he skillfully incorporates Mark Chaves' concept of "dual structures," which offers a new dimension to the discussion of religious advocacy groups that we rarely see in the literature.

An especially important contribution of this book is a discussion of the conferences' organizational structure. Not only does Yamane address the typical organizational concerns, such as budgets, staff size and age, he also adds a new angle to the discussion of organizations. As "dual structures," state conferences have both a religious authority and agency structure. Religious authority refers to the authority that the state conferences have within their religious organizations to preside over theological matters, such as the teaching of doctrine. Religious agency refers to how the state Catholic conferences operate outside the spiritual realm by participating in politics. In other words, in addition to caring for the spiritual needs of their adherents, the conferences apply their religious teachings to such activities as lobbying, engaging in missionary work, and providing social services. Yamane argues that this dual structure is well-adapted to secular society because the bishops, as religious authorities, focus on the theological concerns of their adherents, while the laity monitor and implement the religious agency (political) aspects of the conferences.

Throughout the book, Yamane stresses that one of the most important and defining characteristics of organized Catholic political involvement is its lack of partisanship. The legislative agendas devised by Catholic conferences cover the political spectrum from life and reproduction to social and economic justice. Democrats are their allies on some issues, while they share concerns with Republicans on others. This lack of partisanship allows the conferences to move back and forth between parties based on the issue in question. Being able and willing to work with both political par-

ties provides the state conferences with political legitimacy that other interest groups working primarily with one side of the aisle may not have.

In addition to their lack of partisanship, Yamane argues that moral authority rooted in the church is another basis of legitimacy. Many of the conference directors who Yamane interviewed responded that the church's moral authority is their most important resource for political advocacy. However, the book pays limited attention to this resource. Readers particularly interested in this discussion may find themselves asking for additional information.

Yamane does an excellent job analyzing the testimony state conferences provide to legislators about their top four political priorities (abortion, criminal justice, same-sex marriages and economic justice). He suggests that religious arguments occur less often than secular arguments, thereby concluding that language used by religious political groups is becoming more secularized. This conclusion is one that both scholars and students should enjoy debating. The percentage of religious arguments is higher than secular arguments on the issues of criminal justice and same sex marriage. Therefore, the secularization of religious language might be quite issue specific.

Striking a balance between an interesting read and academic rigor, this book would be appropriate as a primary text for undergraduate courses and a supplemental book for graduate courses in disciplines including sociology of religion (emphasizing religion and politics and/or Catholicism), political science, and organizations. Students should find this to be a very clear and well-written book that incorporates story telling, personality and humor that is quite capable of capturing and holding their attention. In fact, when I first read this book, I did not want to put it down.

Rachel Kraus
Ball State University



Elusive Togetherness: Church Groups Trying to Bridge America's Divisions, by PAUL LICHTERMAN. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, 331 pp.; \$65.00 USD (cloth), \$21.95 USD (paper).

Church-based small groups have long played a central role in America's religious and civic life. They have also been increasingly important vehicles for providing social services since 1996, when President Clinton's welfare reform legislation transferred much of the burden of care for the nation's poor from the government to the voluntary sector. Thus Paul Lichterman's book arrives at an especially timely moment. Through an ethnographic study of church groups trying to strengthen the social safety net for the needy in their community, he seeks to shed light on a central question in scholarship on civil society: how do civic groups forge new relationships with individuals and organizations beyond their own group? Or in the author's words, what enables some groups to successfully "spiral outward"?

The conceptual starting point for the book is Alexis de Tocqueville's claim that civic engagement leads people to broaden their social relationships within their communities. Lichterman develops his own approach to studying civic engagement in dialogue with Tocqueville, Robert Putnam, Robert Wuthnow, and other scholars of civic life. One thing that sets his approach apart from previous studies is a focus on how group members ascribe *meaning* to their group's internal and external social relationships. This approach stands in contrast to existing research on the number, quality, or duration of civic ties. Substantively, Lichterman focuses on four Protestant groups in one community, along with more abbreviated examinations of other groups that participated in the same