



The Bully Pulpit: The Politics of Protestant Clergy (Studies in Government & Public Policy)

James L. Guth, John C. Green, Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt

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When Democrats lost control of Congress in 1994, the Christian Right claimed a major role in their defeat and House Speaker Newt Gingrich credited the "organized Christian vote" with the Republican victory. Ministers from many political persuasions have long been active in American politics, but in the 1980s and 1990s it has seemed impossible to find any political controversy that did not involve the clergy—often on both sides of the issue.

The Bully Pulpit is the first major study of clergy politics in more than twenty years. Drawing on two decades of survey research involving thousands of ministers nationwide, five social scientists explore the political lives of clergy in eight evangelical and mainline Protestant denominations, including the Assemblies of God, Southern Baptist Convention, United Methodist Church, and Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. They find that the competing theological perspectives of orthodoxy and modernism are increasingly tied to ideological and partisan divisions in American politics.

In addressing the nature and extent of clerical participation, *The Bully Pulpit* asks the following questions: How do different groups of ministers see their role in politics? What activities do they approve or disapprove? How active are Protestant clergy in politics? What factors account for the level and kinds of participation? Do the patterns of clerical activism discovered in the 1960s and 1970s persist today?

The authors discover that theological traditionalists emphasize moral reform and tend to specialize in making pronouncements in religious settings, while modernists stress social justice issues and engage in a wider range of political activities, inside and outside the church. They find that "New Breed" liberals have continued the mainline Protestant activism of the 1960s and '70s, but that Christian Right activists have become just as numerous, drawn from the ranks of previously inactive evangelical clergy. Their book offers a balanced assessment of political activity among both clergy at the end of the century and helps us understand the current relationship between church and state in America.

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