



# Religion and the Struggle for European Union: Confessional Culture and the Limits of Integration (Religion and Politics)

By Brent F. Nelsen, James L. Guth

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In *Religion and the Struggle for European Union*, Brent F. Nelsen and James L. Guth delve into the powerful role of religion in shaping European attitudes on politics, political integration, and the national and continental identities of its leaders and citizens.

Nelsen and Guth contend that for centuries Catholicism promoted the universality of the Church and the essential unity of Christendom. Protestantism, by contrast, esteemed particularity and feared Catholic dominance. These differing visions of Europe have influenced the process of postwar integration in profound ways. Nelsen and Guth compare the Catholic view of Europe as a single cultural entity best governed as a unified polity against traditional Protestant estrangement from continental culture and its preference for pragmatic cooperation over the sacrifice of sovereignty. As the authors show, this deep cultural divide, rooted in the struggles of the Reformation, resists the ongoing secularization of the continent. Unless addressed, it threatens decades of hard-won gains in security and prosperity.

Farsighted and rich with data, *Religion and the Struggle for European Union* offers a pragmatic way forward in the EU's attempts to solve its social, economic, and political crises.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

They build a compelling, coherent argument. Their narrative is rich with quotations that blend religious symbolism with political aspirations... The argument rests on a firm foundation of statistical analysis: Nelsen and Guth have pioneered the use of Eurobarometer data to explore the correlations between religious devotion and European identity, putting the findings of their many (large) statistical models to good use here.

### **Review**

"*Religion and the Struggle for European Union* is refreshing and counter-intuitive for three main reasons. First, it reveals how religious identities and cleavages are essential for even an archetypal humanist project?the European Union. Second, it problematizes the deeply conceived notion of Europe as the paramount example of socio-political secularization. Finally, it discusses possibilities and limitations for the integration of Orthodox and Muslim groups into the supranational European identity, which was originally promoted by Catholics and doubted by Protestants."?Ahmet Kuru, author of *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey*

"*Religion and the Struggle for European Union* is a major contribution to the literature on religion and politics in Europe. Brent Nelsen and James L. Guth argue that religious, or confessional, culture, plays an important role in understanding regional differences of opinion among Europeans, especially regarding integration. The authors display an impressive command of the relevant historical, cultural, and political factors, and convincingly argue that Catholics tend to be more supportive of European integration than Protestants."?Paul Christopher Manuel, Institute for Leadership Studies, Mount St. Mary's University

"This is a superlative book. Nelsen and Guth have taken a novel, imaginative approach to the prospects for the European Union, which is among the most important global issues of the 21st century. Nelsen and Guth combine broad historical and theoretical perspectives with nuanced and insightful data analyses. This is an excellent illustration of the subtle and indirect ways in which religion can influence apparently secular political phenomena."?Ted Jelen, professor, Department of Political Science, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

"Two top American scholars join forces to explore European complexities in a both distanced and intimate way. This book is a striking illustration of the significance of religion as a whole and of the resilience of diverse confessional cultures in the "longue durée". A must-read for anybody willing to understand contemporary politics in the European Union."?Francois Foret, professor of political science/Jean Monnet Chair, Director of CEVIPOL, CEVIPOL/Institute for European Studies, Université Libre de Bruxelles

### **About the Author**

**Brent F. Nelsen** is a professor of political science at Furman University. He is the coeditor of *The European Union: Readings on the Theory and Practice of Integration* and editor of *Norway and the European Community*.

**James L. Guth** is William Rand Kenan, Jr. Professor of Political Science, Furman University. He is the coeditor of *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics* with Corwin E. Smidt and Lyman A.

Kellstedt.

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