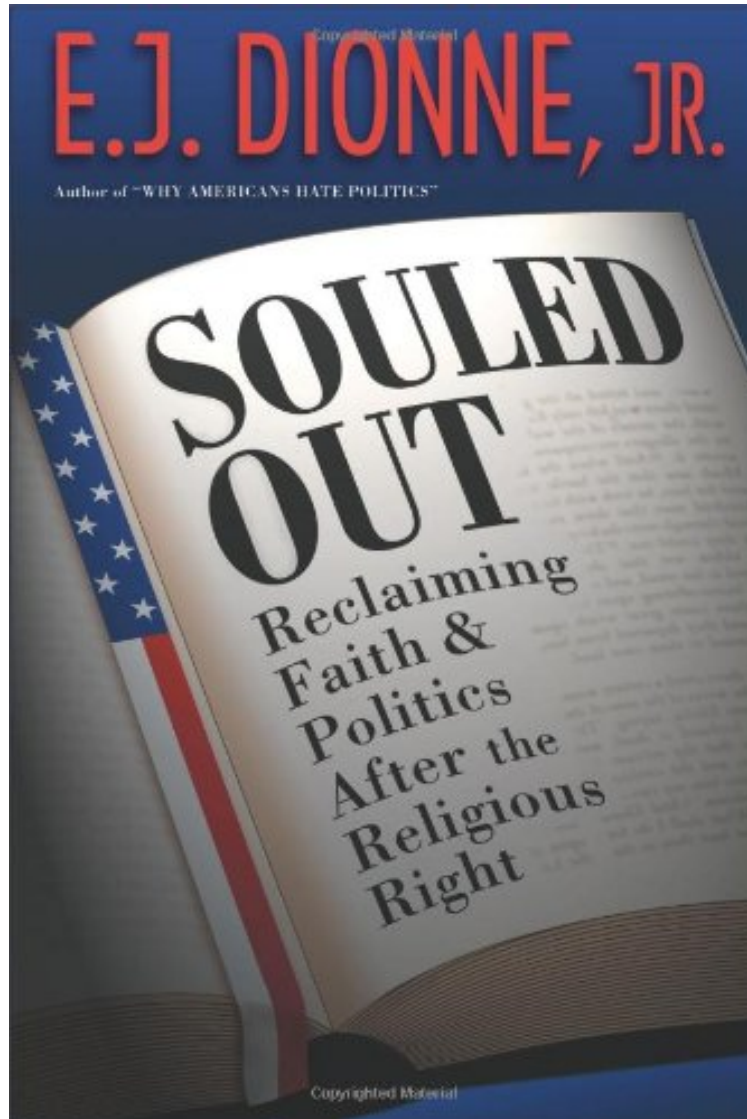


Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics after the Religious Right

E. J. Dionne

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The religious and political winds are changing. Tens of millions of religious Americans are reclaiming faith from those who would abuse it for narrow, partisan, and ideological purposes. And more and more secular Americans are discovering common ground with believers on the great issues of social justice, peace, and the environment. In *Souled Out*, award-winning journalist and commentator E. J. Dionne explains why the era of the Religious Right--and the crude exploitation of faith for political advantage--is over. Based on years of research and writing, *Souled Out* shows that the end of the Religious Right doesn't signal the decline of evangelical Christianity but rather its disentanglement from a political machine that sold it out to a narrow electoral agenda of such causes as opposition to gay marriage and abortion. With insightful portraits of leading contemporary religious figures from Rick Warren and Richard Cizik to John Paul II and Benedict XVI, Dionne shows that our great religions have always preached a broad message of hope for more just human arrangements and refused to be mere props for the powers that be. Dionne also argues that the new atheist writers should be seen as a gift to believers, a demand that they live up to their proclaimed values and embrace scientific and philosophical inquiry in a spirit of "intellectual solidarity." Written in the tradition of Reinhold Niebuhr and H. Richard Niebuhr, *Souled Out* will help change how we think and talk about religion and politics in the post-Bush era.

From *Publishers Weekly* The latest from reporter and author Dionne (*Why Americans Hate Politics*) is a highly worthy alternative to polarizing arguments regarding religion, whether pro or con (neo-atheist tracts like Christopher Hitchens's *God Is Not Great*). It's also a smart rebuke of those who would divert the faithful with a narrow set of values rather than viewing religion in a broader political context. Declaring that the era of the religious Right is over, Dionne looks to history, tradition, teachers and texts (including recent religious scholarship) to reassert both progressive and conservative views on how religion can play a legitimate role in matters of economics, social justice and morality. Dionne explodes the myth that George W. Bush was elected by evangelicals (he says gains among moderates were far more important); demonstrates the absurdity and unfortunate consequences of restricting religious political concerns to abortion and gay marriage (though he fully explores both); and examines the fate of governmental faith-based initiatives past and present. Along the way, Dionne considers the current crop of presidential candidates and provides a stinging analysis of the president and Congress's intervention in the Terri Schiavo case. Rousing and wry, Dionne's sensible voice makes a powerful case for broadening religious vision and visibility in the public square. (Feb. 27) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From *Booklist* Liberal commentator Dionne foresees different relations between faith and politics now that the religious Right is declining. He doesn't, however, think that a religious Left will arise, although he does point out that the connection between progressive politics, on the one hand, and mainstream Protestantism and modern Catholic social thought, on the other, is longstanding and deep in American history. From a close parsing of the entire Christian vote in recent federal elections, he argues that Christianity in politics is properly thought of not as either conservative or progressive but as both, that the conceptions of culture war and values promulgated by the religious Right are too restrictive and partisan, and that the religious Right has short-changed Christianity by focusing exclusively on abortion, gay marriage, and end-of-life issues (e.g., the Terry Schiavo brouhaha). He turns to recent developments in Catholicism since Vatican II and among liberal Catholics as a springboard to his concluding injunction that Christians continue to participate in politics, out of Christian hope rather than self-righteousness. (But is the religious Right really shrinking?) --Ray Olson "Souled Out, by the respected political journalist and progressive Catholic E.J. Dionne Jr., is a deeply personal and searchingly intelligent reflection on the noble history, recent travails, and likely prospects of American liberalism." --R. Scott Appleby, *New York Times Book Review* "[Souled Out] is a highly worthy alternative to polarizing arguments regarding religion, whether pro or con. . . . Rousing and wry, Dionne's sensible voice makes a powerful case for broadening religious vision and visibility in the public square." --*Publishers Weekly* "Souled Out gives facts, analysis and inside details on religious leaders' views. Dionne is well-equipped for the task. . . . Many of Dionne's chapters are must-reads for progressive activists." --Kim Bobo, *In These Times* "Recognizing that 'it's much easier to scream across barricades,' he provides a political primer for politicians who want to reclaim the center...[H]is book provides new ways of talking about religion and public policy--just in time for liberals laboring to be 'born again.'" --Glenn C. Altschuler, *New York Observer* "Liberal commentator Dionne foresees different relations between faith and politics now that the religious Right is declining. . . . He turns to recent developments in Catholicism since Vatican II and among liberal Catholics as a springboard to his concluding injunction that Christians continue to participate in politics, out of Christian hope rather than self-righteousness." --*Booklist* "E.J. Dionne writes well, and his latest effort, *Souled Out*, is no exception. *Souled Out* offers a critical and at times discomfiting account of the rise and role of the Christian right in politics. A liberal Catholic, Dionne also gives an insider's account of the battles going

on within Catholicism."--World Magazine"Is this really the year liberal Christians are going to take back politics? Not likely, but it is also not likely the year that the 'religious right' will dominate the political scene. Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne, a Catholic with extensive background in religion, writes in Souled Out that 'we do not need and should not want, to end religion's public role. We do need a more capacious understanding of what that role is.'"--William R. Wineke, Wisconsin State Journal"Souled Out tells the recent history of religion's role in American politics and the outlook for the future. Dionne . . . points to a general trend of increasing moderation of religious people in America. Christians who support abortion rights are acknowledging the horror of the practice, he writes, and Christians who used to vote exclusively on abortion are looking at other issues, too, including poverty and the AIDS crisis in Africa."--Daniel Heim, Roll Call"Souled Out by E.J. Dionne Jr. is an attempt to chart the rocky ride our ship of state has endured the last few years. Given that this popular syndicated newspaper columnist is often the standard-bearer for rational progressive politics, this book is well researched, much sourced, and eminently readable."--Susan Campbell, The Hartford Courant"In his new book Souled Out, E.J. Dionne zeroes in on how spiritual restlessness is affecting American politics. Since the Reagan years, a seemingly monolithic religious right has focused on a narrow moral agenda and voted accordingly. But Dionne sees signs that this agenda (stopping gay marriage, abortion, and stem-cell research) may at last be broadening to encompass concerns with the poor and the environment."--M.J. Andersen, Providence Journal"This book offers an insightful look into the intersection between religion and politics, coming from a self-described 'progressive Catholic.' While he doesn't mince words in his criticism of the Religious Right, it is clear that he believes that people of faith still have a part to play in directing the moral compass of our society."--Ann Fetters, The Wichita Eagle"E.J. Dionne brings special credentials to [SOULED OUT] on the role of religion in American politics. As a former New York Times correspondent to the Vatican, current political analyst for The Washington Post and professor at Georgetown University, he knows the present with the keen sense of a beat reporter and the past with the perspective of a scholarly historian. He seems to have read and digested every book written on the subject, as 20 pages of footnotes amply attest. The result is an astute and important review of the intersection of faith and public policy."--America Magazine"In Souled Out, Dionne recognizes that the Right raises legitimate points about the importance of personal morality, and that Christianity does have a 'conservative' streak in its skepticism about efforts to remake society in fundamental ways. . . . Another virtue of Dionne's book is the substantial attention it gives to specifically Catholic dynamics. . . . Dionne's book gives us reason to hope that an emphasis on human dignity across a broad range of issues--an emphasis resonating with Catholic thought, and increasingly embraced by Evangelicals--might be combined with Niebuhrian understanding of the limits and possibilities of politics."--Thomas C. Berg, Commonweal"E. J. Dionne's clever title, Souled Out, does not do justice to the wisdom of his meditation on the essential connection between religion and American politics. Dionne is right that many Americans are tired of the spectacle of political wrangling over morals and ethics that should never have been reduced to party slogans."--Anne C. Rose, Centre Daily Times"Dionne is a gifted writer who knows a lot about religion and electoral politics in America. He offers astute observations that would escape most churchgoers and citizens, and does not hesitate to debunk widely held assumptions about the culture war. . . . A Catholic from the liberal fold, . . . [he] explores the ongoing mystery of the Catholic vote."--Darryl Hart, American Conservative"Souled Out is an intelligent, written and eminently fair-minded work of advocacy."--Rev. Richard P. McBrien, Conscience