

CROSSED SWORDS: ENTANGLEMENTS BETWEEN
CHURCH AND STATE IN AMERICA

by
STEVEN ALAN SAMSON

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APPROVED: _____
James Klonoski

© Steven Alan Samson

VITA

NAME OF AUTHOR: Steven Alan Samson

PLACE OF BIRTH: Portland, Oregon

DATE OF BIRTH: June 25, 1948

UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Colorado
Western Oregon State College
University of Oregon
Portland State University

DEGREES AWARDED:

Bachelor of Arts, 1969, University of Colorado
Master of Arts, 1974, University of Colorado
Doctor of Philosophy, 1984, University of Oregon

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

American Political Thought
Constitutional Law
Policy Analysis
Political Theory

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Instructor, Department of Social Science, Chemeketa Community
College, Salem, 1977-80

Instructor, Department of Social Science, Portland Community
College, Portland, 1979-84

Instructor, Department of History, George Fox College, Newberg,
1979

Instructor, Department of Social Science, Mt. Hood Community
College, Gresham, 1979-81

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Title: CROSSED SWORDS: ENTANGLEMENTS BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN
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Approved:


James Klonoski

The purpose of this study is to identify and assess a number of political, economic, and religious factors that have defined and redefined the historical accommodation between church and state. Particular attention is given to the effects of fiscal, educational, and social regulations on the free exercise of religion.

Religious liberty in America is commonly thought to be secured by a constitutional wall of separation between church and state. Its character is best understood in the context of an original Protestant Christian cultural consensus which underlay the plurality of competing sects. The findings of this study are that, first, American law and custom still preserve elements of an earlier state church tradition despite the historical coincidence between the framing of the Constitution and the disestablishment of religion. The political and religious perspective of the founders is in fact so strongly impressed upon the constitutional system that, second, discrepancies between the

basic doctrines of Christianity and the expectations of diverse religious and secular subcultures are among the major sources of conflict within the political arena. But, third, changing interpretations of the constitutional provisions respecting religion and a growing state presence in all areas of social and economic life tend to reduce the formal role of religion in public life, leading some religious leaders to express public concern over losses of liberty and influence by the church. Current litigation indicates that churches are faced with unaccustomed restrictions on the corporate powers, tax immunities, internal operations, teaching ministries, and missionary activities of their organizations.

This study analyzes the relationship of church and state in America against the background of early Christianity, the emergence of nationalism in Europe, the settlement of America, and the framing of the Constitution. Its central feature is a chronological and topical study of the Supreme Court rulings on religious issues.