
Volume Forty-Two (2000)

Essays in History

Published by the [Corcoran Department of History](#) at the [University of Virginia](#).

***A Review of Constitutional Debates on Freedom of Religion: A Documentary History*, by John J. Patrick and Gerald P. Long.**

Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press: 1999. 360 pages. Hardcover: \$49.95.

Reviewed by Bernie D. Jones

This documentary collection is part of a Greenwood Press series entitled: "Primary Documents in American History and Contemporary Issues." Its purpose is to make easily accessible to high-school or undergraduate student researchers various key primary documents relating to the issue of freedom of religion in American constitutional history. The introduction is brief; it explains the basis of this freedom in American history, through the first amendment and its development over time. There is also a chronology of key events for understanding the development of religious freedom discourse. This chronology is helpful, insofar as it presents history predating the Constitution, establishing the colonial roots of freedom to exercise.

The introduction to each part of the volume explains the history significant for the religious freedom issues of the time period. Following each introduction is the collection of documents, with a brief introduction provided for each document, explaining what the document is and why it is important. The editors provide questions to guide the reader in understanding the document's significance and identify the source of the document. The parts of the volume are divided as follows: Colonial Roots of Religious Liberty, 1606-1776; Religious Liberty in the Founding of the United States, 1776-1791; the Constitutional Right to Free of Exercise of Religion, 1791-1991; The Constitutional Prohibition of an Establishment of Religion, 1791-1991, and Constitutional Issues on Freedom of Religion, 1991-1998.

The documents incorporate not only law cases decided by the Supreme Court, although these do comprise the majority of the collection. Also included are charters from the colonial period, legislative acts, executive statements, treatises, and letters written by government officials or religious leaders. The law cases are redacted, more often than not. Thus, the reader is provided the significant material relating to religious matters, but unfortunately the full context of the cases is not provided. The fact that the case

cites are included compensates for this weakness to a large degree, however. The reader who wants more information will be able to access cases with ease. In addition, at the close of each chapter, there is a list of further readings for the reader who wants more information. An appendix categorizes the law cases depending upon the issue raised before the Supreme Court, for example: equal access to public facilities; free speech, fund raising and religion, or government support for religious schools. There is also a glossary which explains legal terms. On the whole, the volume is helpful for the reader interested in learning about the basic issues relating to the history of freedom of religion in the United States.

by BERNIE D. JONES

© Copyright 1958-2000, University of Virginia. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED