The Autonomy of Church and State

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Autonomy of Church and State

Since the end of World War II, two visions of the proper relationship between church and state have vied for preeminence in U.S. law: one emphasizing the separation of church and state, and the other finding greater space for the accommodation of religion in public life. A third approach has prevailed in much of Europe, allowing for a much thicker interrelationship, engagement, and cooperation between church and state.


3. See generally Carolyn Evans, Freedom of Religion Under the European Convention of Human Rights (2001) [hereinafter Evans, Freedom of Religion]. As will be readily apparent, I have benefited from and relied extensively upon Carolyn Evans’s excellent book about the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights concerning freedom of religion or belief. I highly recommend her book for anyone interested in the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights on this topic. See also Malcolm D. Evans, Religious Liberty and International Law in Europe 6–171 (1997); Bahiyyih
In this Article, I will argue that each of these approaches has more in common with the other two than might appear on the surface. I will suggest that a single concept, autonomy, underlies each of these viewpoints, but that each of these visions of the proper relationship between church and state is animated by a strikingly different conception of what autonomy means and what is required for its exercise. Separation is animated by a conception of autonomy calling for stark independence of church and state. Engagement or cooperation is animated by a conception of autonomy calling for interdependence of church and state. Accommodation is animated by a conception of autonomy calling, somewhat counterintuitively, for what I term inter-independence. According to this conception, autonomy requires independence, but also requires inclusion, and rests upon respect and empowerment. In addition, the law in this area is concerned with three distinct sets of autonomy interests—the autonomy of churches, the autonomy of the state, and the autonomy of individuals.

4. In arguing that competing conceptions of autonomy underlie the separationist, accommodationist, and cooperationist viewpoints, I do not mean to suggest that courts consistently utilize the framework of autonomy for analyzing disputes in this area. For the most part, they have not and do not. Rather, my argument is that different conceptions of autonomy do in fact underlie these competing positions, and advocates of separation, accommodation, or cooperation have an obligation to defend as superior the particular conception of autonomy that animates their position.

5. See infra Part III.A.

6. See infra Part III.B.

7. See infra Part III.C.

Outcomes of cases involving the relationship of church and state or individual religious liberty are often determined by the underlying conception of autonomy adopted or assumed in a particular case, coupled with the understanding that autonomy interests are taken as preeminent. Unfortunately, both the Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights only intermittently appear to appreciate the centrality of the concept of autonomy in this area of the law. Often a particular conception of autonomy lies in the shadows of a case, but that conception is neither made explicit nor defended. Neither the Supreme Court nor the European Court of Human Rights does an adequate job of acknowledging and analyzing the autonomy interests that are implicated by a particular case, especially when the autonomy of the state lies at the heart of the case. The result of these failures is a body of law that is deeply unsatisfying. The U.S. Supreme Court, in particular, vacillates between different conceptions of autonomy and varying doctrinal tests, which results in church-state and religious liberty jurisprudence that is widely criticized as inconsistent, incoherent, and incomprehensible.9

The goal of this Article is twofold. First, I hope to explain the differences between these three conceptions of autonomy and how they manifest themselves in the church-state and religious liberty jurisprudence of the Supreme Court of the United States and the European Court of Human Rights. I argue that these competing conceptions of autonomy animate and undergird, though not always explicitly, current law regarding the relationships among church, state, and individual. Second, the Article aims to explain the differences between these three conceptions of autonomy and, by identifying the philosophical ground underlying each of these

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conceptions, to help focus and further the discussion concerning which conception of autonomy provides the best model for guiding jurisprudence in this area of the law. The strengths, weaknesses, limits, and implications of the separationist, cooperationist, and accommodationist positions can more readily be assessed if the respective visions of autonomy underlying each of these positions are made explicit and subjected to scrutiny. I conclude, that in order to bring coherence and consistency to the case law, courts must do a better job of identifying and analyzing the autonomy interests at stake in a particular case and articulating and defending a conception of autonomy that will guide the resolution of the dispute. If a particular conception of autonomy (either one that I identify and describe here, or some other, better conception) provides a superior account of what individual and institutional autonomy entails and what the conditions are in which autonomy can thrive, then this conception will have a strong claim to provide a better doctrinal rubric than existing tests and approaches for analyzing and deciding cases in this difficult and controversial area of the law.  

The Article will proceed as follows. Part II is a brief survey of the historical background of church-state issues and the jurisprudential frameworks for resolving them in the United States (under the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment) and in Europe (primarily under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights). Part III discusses three conceptions of autonomy—*independence*, *interdependence*, and *inter-independence*. Parts IV and V address how these conceptions of autonomy manifest themselves in the religious liberty and church-state jurisprudence of the U.S. Supreme Court and European Court of Human Rights. Specifically, Part IV focuses on institutional autonomy and is divided into two parts, the first addressing issues concerning the autonomy of churches, and the second addressing issues concerning the autonomy of the state. And Part V focuses on liberty issues that implicate individual autonomy.

10. As may become evident, I believe the *inter-independence* conception of autonomy to be the most forceful and appealing account of autonomy; however, my purpose here is not to persuade readers of the superiority of this conception of autonomy but to explain the differences between these competing conceptions of autonomy, the philosophical underpinnings and assumptions of each, and the ways in which these conceptions animate and guide the attitudes of separation, accommodation, and cooperation.
Part VI focuses upon several significant current issues in the United States involving the interaction of church and state and how these different conceptions of autonomy suggest resolving those issues. These issues include (1) school prayer, (2) vouchers and other forms of indirect aid to churches, (3) charitable choice, or the ability of religiously affiliated institutions to qualify for receiving state funding for social welfare programs, (4) the posting of the Ten Commandments and other religious monuments in public spaces, and (5) the constitutionality of including the phrase “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance.

I conclude in Section VII that, while the Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights have utilized a variety of doctrinal constructs to evaluate issues involving religious liberty and the interaction of church and state, autonomy is the most important and useful concept in analyzing such controversies. In order to bring coherence and consistency to this area of the law, courts should first identify the autonomy interests at stake in a case, then articulate and defend a conception of autonomy that explains the conditions that will facilitate the relevant autonomy interests. In so doing, the stage will be set for a more successful approach to deciding cases involving the interactions of church and state as well as cases involving claims based upon individual freedom of religion or belief.

B. The United States and Europe: Why Compare?

One might reasonably suppose that a comparative analysis of U.S. and European approaches to religious liberty issues might be of little value because the jurisprudential, historical, and philosophical contexts in which issues involving the freedom of religion or belief are adjudicated in the United States and Europe are so dissimilar. The most obvious difference between Europe and the United States is that the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution includes both a free exercise clause and a nonestablishment clause, whereas the concept of nonestablishment is inapplicable in the European context where there is a wide spectrum of views about the proper

11. See infra Part II.B.1–2.
12. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . . .” U.S. CONST. amend I.
relationship between the dominant church and the state, and several countries still have established or quasi-established state churches.\(^{13}\)

Additionally, the religious liberty jurisprudence of both the U.S. Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights is often criticized as being confused and chaotic.\(^{14}\) To a large extent such criticisms are valid and reflect the reality that the issues and problems in this area are extremely vexing and difficult to resolve. The fact that the jurisprudence of both the United States and Europe on matters of religious liberty is so severely criticized might be thought to be an additional reason why a comparative analysis is unlikely to shed much, if any, illumination.

But in spite of—indeed in large measure due to—these differences and difficulties, a comparative analysis is valuable because, among other reasons, in examining and comparing the approaches taken towards similar issues, it becomes easier to identify the

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\(^{13}\) Some commentators suggest that because the U.S. Establishment Clause dictates the separation of church and state, and because no such consensus exists in Europe, there is little benefit from comparing the approaches taken in the United States and Europe. For example, Carolyn Evans asserts that “the large and sophisticated literature that has developed around religious freedom in the United States is of limited use when considering why religious freedom is important in Europe and what values underlie its adoption by so many States with different religious backgrounds.” Evans, Freedom of Religion, supra note 3, at 22.

\(^{14}\) For an example of criticism concerning the religious liberty jurisprudence in the United States, consider Mark V. Tushnet, Red, White, and Blue: A Critical Analysis of Constitutional Law 247 (1988) (finding the constitutional law of religion to be “incoherent”); Stuart Buck, The Nineteenth-Century Understanding of the Establishment Clause, 6 Tex. Rev. L. & Pol. 399, 400 (2002) (arguing that religious liberty jurisprudence has departed from a true understanding of the Establishment Clause, “has become illogical, has undermined the values of both democracy and community, and has exacerbated political divisiveness”); Michael W. McConnell, Neutrality, Separation and Accommodation: Tensions in American First Amendment Doctrine, in Law and Religion 63, 64 (Rex J. Ahdar ed., 2000) (expressing the virtual consensus that the law of religious freedom in this country is “chaotic, controversial and unpredictable”).

An example of the criticism of religious liberty jurisprudence in Europe is available in Carolyn Evans’ work. Evans, Freedom of Religion, supra note 3, at 2. Professor Evans concludes that the bodies responsible for protecting the freedom of religion and belief under the European Convention have approached their task in an incoherent and inconsistent manner. The principles which they have developed to assist in interpreting articles relevant to freedom of religion or belief have generally been favourable to States and have given little consideration to the importance of freedom of religion and belief, both to those whose freedom is being denied, and to the development of pluralistic and tolerant democracies where the risk of serious persecution based on religion or belief is less likely to occur.

*Id.*

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assumptions and philosophical viewpoints that underlie the respective approaches, which might otherwise go unnoticed. And in spite of the fact that the U.S. Constitution is much older than the European Convention, almost all of the religious liberty jurisprudence of the Supreme Court has been developed since World War II, so the time frame in which these issues have been addressed by the U.S. Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights is quite similar.\footnote{15. \textit{John T. Noonan, Jr.} \\ & \textit{Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr.}, \textit{Religious Freedom: History, Cases, and Other Materials on the Interaction of Religion and Government} xi (2001) ("Prior to 1940 the Supreme Court of the United States had never upheld a claim of free exercise of religion, had never found any governmental practice to be an establishment of religion, and had never applied the religion clauses of the First Amendment to the states. . . Beginning in 1940 the Court changed all that."). The European Convention entered into force in September 1953, and currently, forty-four states are parties to the Convention. \textit{See Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, at} \url{http://www.echr.coe.int} (last visited Nov. 1, 2004).}

\section*{C. Caveats}

Several important caveats must be stated at the outset. First, I will try to sketch with broad strokes the similarities and differences in the jurisprudential, historical, and philosophical approaches to religious liberty issues in the United States and Europe. This is a broad, complex topic, and I am mindful that identifying general themes and characteristics always results in oversimplification.\footnote{16. To illustrate, a leading U.S. casebook on the religion clauses of the First Amendment includes citations to over 600 cases. \textit{Michael S. Ariens} \& \textit{Robert A. Destro}, \textit{Religious Liberty in a Pluralistic Society} xxiii–xxxviii (1996). Moreover, a summary of cases decided under the European Convention through the year 2000 includes references to sixteen cases decided by the European Court of Human Rights and sixty cases heard by the European Commission on Human Rights that relate just to Article 9, the primary provision of the European Convention that addresses religious liberty issues. \textit{See Barbara Mensah}, \textit{European Human Rights Case Summaries} 1179–80 (2002).} In addition, my focus will be primarily upon the differing philosophical underpinnings that inform the development of the law in this area. This focus will also contribute to the relatively general nature of my observations and conclusions.

Second, I do not maintain that the Supreme Court or the European Court of Human Rights has utilized autonomy consistently as an analytical rubric in church-state and freedom of religion or belief cases, much less that these courts have been sensitive to the different conceptions of autonomy that undergird
cases in this area of the law. Rather, the Supreme Court, as well as the European Court of Human Rights, has utilized a variety of doctrinal tests and approaches in this area, resulting in a varied and fragmented set of outcomes that are difficult to reconcile and fit together. I do argue, however, that autonomy, both of institutions and of individuals, represents the deep, fundamental issue at stake in cases involving church-state relations and individual freedom of religion or belief. Since autonomy is the core issue in church-state relations, I suggest that explicit considerations of autonomy provide a more helpful analytical framework than the doctrinal tests the Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights have employed in this area of the law.

Third, in an important sense the comparison between the U.S. Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights is artificial because one institution is the court of last resort of a sovereign state, whereas the other institution is a court created by a multilateral treaty involving over forty European countries, each with different histories, political systems, and constitutional and legal systems. The European Court of Human Rights is a remarkable and unprecedented institution, a revolutionary attempt to create a pan-European court in which individual petitioners have standing to pursue a claim against their states. From the perspective of the states involved, the European Court of Human Rights represents a significant leap of faith to place what has historically been viewed as one of the primary rights of sovereignty into the hands of a multinational body over which each state in a particular case has relatively little control. Given the political sensitivities involved, it is nothing short of amazing that an institution such as the European Court of Human Rights even exists, and it is to be expected that the

17. See LUKE CLEMENTS, EUROPEAN HUMAN RIGHTS: TAKING A CASE UNDER THE CONVENTION 1–15 (1996) (discussing the development, challenges, growth, and adjustments that the Convention and Court of Human Rights have made as the number of contracting countries expands and the number of cases explodes); MARK W. JANIS & RICHARD S. KAY, EUROPEAN HUMAN RIGHTS LAW 87–96 (discussing the remarkable role and growth of the court and its effect on bringing human rights violations to light).

18. The European Court of Human Rights is composed of a number of judges equal to the number of contracting states (currently forty-four). There is no restriction on the number of judges of the same nationality, and thus, there is no guarantee to a country of judicial representation on the court. See European Court of Human Rights, Historical Background, Organisation and Procedure, at http://www.echr.coe.int/Eng/EDocs/HistoricalBackground.htm (last visited Nov. 6, 2004).

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Court has exhibited a relatively high degree of deference to states and what might be viewed as timidity on their part. Such criticisms, while having some merit, must be viewed within the wider context of the remarkable fact that the institution exists at all and operates as well as it does. Additionally, each European state has its own legal and often constitutional protections of religious liberty and other human rights, so the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights represents something more like a shared minimum standard rather than an accurate picture of the full extent of human rights protection in any particular state.

II. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AS A CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEE AND HUMAN RIGHT

A. The Grandparent and Neglected Stepchild of Human Rights

Religious liberty is at once the grandparent and the neglected stepchild of international human rights norms. Recognized at least since the first century A.D., religious liberty, in this now secular era, has lost some of its urgency, perhaps due to the marginalization of religious belief, at least among academic and policy elites, and

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20. For example, in the first case decided by the European Court of Human Rights involving a religious liberty claim, Kokkinakis v. Greece, the court stated, “[A] certain margin of appreciation is to be left to the contracting states in assessing the existence and extent of the necessity of an interference, but this margin is subject to European supervision. . . .” 17 Eur. H.R. Rep. 397, 422 (1994) (Westlaw).

21. Professor Cole Durham has described religious liberties as the “neglected grandparent” of human rights. See W.C. Durham, Perspectives on Religious Liberty: A Comparative Analysis, in RELIGIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE: LEGAL PERSPECTIVES 1 (J.D. van der Vyver & J. Witte, Jr. eds., 1996); see also Judith A. Berling, Is Conversation About Religion Possible? (And What Can Religionists Do To Promote It?), 61 J. AM. ACAD. RELIGION 1, 2 (1993) (“Religious Studies, the stepchild of a Supreme Court decision in the 1960s, is a newcomer to the university, whose presence is still questioned or threatened in a number of institutions.”), Eugene Volokh, Equal Treatment Is Not Establishment, 13 NOTRE DAME J.L. ETHICS & PUB. POL’Y 341, 366 (1999) (“Religious speech is not some stepchild of constitutional law: It is fully protected by the Free Speech Clause, and once the government sets up a generally open subsidy program, it can’t discriminate against religious speech in operating the program. And education is, of course, predominantly speech.”).
perhaps due to the inevitable conflicts that arise between religious rights and other important human rights.22

But because of the fundamental importance of religious liberty and the horrific problems with religious fanaticism, the once neglected grandparent has again moved to the fore. As Arcot Krishnaswami observed over forty years ago in his influential study of religious liberty,

[the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is probably the most precious of all human rights, and the imperative need today is to make it a reality for every single individual regardless of the religion or belief that he professes, regardless of his status, and regardless of his condition in life.23

Nevertheless, whether viewed with a wide historical lens from antiquity—through the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages—or


By the first century A.D. there is in the Mediterranean world a religion, which will spread widely in the West, that carries the concepts of a God, living, distinct from and superior to any human being, society, or state; of obligations to that God, distinct from and superior to any society or state; of authorized teachers who can voice these obligations and judge any society or state; of an inner voice of reason that is one way God speaks as well as by His authorized teachers. According to these concepts as taught by this religion, each person, individually and not as part of a family, tribe, or nation, will have to account to God as Judge for every thought and deed. Collectively, these concepts are at the core of liberty of conscience and liberty of religion.

Id.; see also Myres S. McDougal, Harold D. Lasswell & Lung-chu Chen, The Right to Religious Freedom and World Public Order: The Emerging Norm of Non-Discrimination, 74 MICH. L. REV. 865, 873 (1976) (“Even so fundamental a freedom as that of religious inquiry, belief and communication must, of course, be exercised and protected with due regard for the comparable rights of others and for the aggregate common interest in the preservation of all basic human rights.”). Critics of religious liberties often create an opposition between “fundamentalism” and human rights, and lump all religious liberties concerns into the category of fundamentalism. See, e.g., Courtney W. Howland, The Challenge of Religious Fundamentalism to the Liberty and Equality Rights of Women: An Analysis Under the United Nations Charter, 35 COLUM. J. TRANSNAT’L L. 271, 273 (1997) (“Religious fundamentalism poses the most acute problems for women’s equality, but many conservative religious groups share substantial areas of doctrine with the fundamentalists. The two groups are often differentiated solely by the political activism of fundamentalists rather than by significantly different religious beliefs. This political activism throws into sharp relief the conflicts between rights of religious freedom and women’s rights of liberty and equality.”).

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through a prism focused on the terrible middle years of the last century and the attempted extermination of the Jewish people, or with a focus on the events of September 11, 2001, religion has served as a factor in much of the pain and suffering that human beings inflict upon one another. Given the importance of religious liberty and the dangers associated with religious fanaticism and hatred, finding and developing appropriate approaches that allow for freedom of religion or belief while guarding against atrocities such as those mentioned above must be counted as one of the most pressing and vexing problems facing the world today.


[T]he world bears constant witness to genocide, ethnic cleansing, and religious fanaticism, and even in America, intolerance and fear of difference appear to be increasing. Whether we like it or not, the central task for anyone who today believes in equality is to end discrimination based on ethnicity and culture. Emphasis upon the experience of Catholics and Jews in mid-twentieth-century New York establishes that this task can be accomplished. Emphasis, in contrast, upon the intellectual conceptions needed to accomplish it shows how much work remains to be done.

Id. Gerard Bradley asserts that
B. Historical Background and Jurisprudential Framework

1. The United States

The pursuit of religious liberty was one of the most powerful forces driving early settlers to the American continent and remained a powerful force at the time of the founding of the American republic. According to James Madison, who drafted the Bill of Rights, the free exercise of religion is a right “precedent both in order of time and degree of obligation to the claims of Civil Society.”

The extensive jurisprudence of the United States regarding religious liberty is primarily based upon the interpretation of sixteen words of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The first provision, somewhat misleadingly labeled the “Establishment Clause,” among other things forbids the United States from having a state church. The second provision, known as the “Free Exercise Clause,” protects individuals and churches from governmental coercion.

There are other reasons for a renewed look at the relationship among Christianity, separation of church and state, and religious liberty in contemporary American society. One is that the debate of recent memory is pretty much spent. Accusations against secular humanists by fundamentalists, and by secular humanists against fundamentalists have become tiresome, as are charges of godliness and fanaticism. Scholarly criticism of the Supreme Court’s church-state corpus has grown so caustic, and is so widespread, that almost any new departure would be welcome.

Bradley, supra note 8, at 1060–61.


30. Justice Kennedy described the purpose of the Free Exercise Clause as follows: The First Amendment protects speech and religion by quite different mechanisms. Speech is protected by ensuring its full expression even when the government participates, for the very object of some of our most important speech is to persuade the government to adopt an idea as its own. The method for protecting freedom of worship and freedom of conscience in religious matters is quite the reverse. In religious debate or expression the government is not a prime participant, for the Framers deemed religious establishment antithetical to the freedom of all. The Free
The First Amendment, along with the other rights included in the Bill of Rights, originally only applied against the federal government. It was not until after the Civil War and the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment that the First Amendment was “incorporated” against the states—that is, found by the Supreme Court to apply to the actions of state governments as well as the federal government. As they have been interpreted, the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses apply to both the federal government and to state governments, and are sometimes in tension with each other—the Establishment Clause prohibiting the government from taking actions that benefit religion and the free exercise clause protecting religion, which is itself a benefit.

Debates rage about the original purpose and intent of the Framers in adopting the religion clauses. Echoing Father Thomas Curry, Professor Fredrick Gedicks has argued that in the founding era, an “establishment of religion” was understood to “refer to a church which the government funded and controlled and in which it used its coercive power to encourage participation, like the Anglican Exercise Clause embraces a freedom of conscience and worship that has close parallels in the speech provisions of the First Amendment, but the Establishment Clause is a specific prohibition on forms of state intervention in religious affairs with no precise counterpart in the speech provisions. The explanation lies in the lesson of history that was and is the inspiration for the Establishment Clause, the lesson that in the hands of government what might begin as a tolerant expression of religious views may end in a policy to indoctrinate and coerce. A state-created orthodoxy puts at grave risk that freedom of belief and conscience which are the sole assurance that religious faith is real, not imposed.


33. See Frank Guliuzza III, The Practical Perils of an Original Intent-Based Judicial Philosophy: Originalism and the Church-State Test Case, 42 Drake L. Rev. 343, 362 (1993) (“What does the ‘Quest for Originalism’ in the church-state debate say about the ‘Case for Originalism’ in the larger interpretive debate? If the historical data is plentiful, as both sides maintain, and if the two sides can look at the evidence and reach two very different conclusions, then one might argue that there is no clear-cut, definitive ‘Framers’ intent.’ Or, if there is an obvious Framers’ intent, then some scholars cannot see it, or choose not to, because of their own political predilections.”).
Church in England or the Roman Catholic Church in southern Europe. It appears that there were three primary concerns that drove the adoption of the Establishment Clause. First, there was concern about the church exercising the coercive power of government, including the power to enforce criminal laws that reflected the church’s denominational and moral requirements. Second, early Americans worried about direct financial support of the church in aid of its worship, rituals, and other denominational activities, through general tax revenue. Third, they were also concerned with control by the state over the church, particularly in its definition of doctrine and selection of leaders. These concerns seem to indicate that the Founders did not view what I term interdependence as a viable conception of autonomy within the United States.

Concern for the autonomy both of the church and of the state is at the heart of each of these three concerns. From this perspective, if churches perform governmental functions, the autonomy of the state is threatened; if the state funds churches, the autonomy of churches is threatened, and the autonomy of the state may be jeopardized as well if a powerful church receives all or a predominant share of state funding since that church might exert considerable power in the political process; and if the state controls church doctrine, the autonomy of the church is undermined. Indeed, the primary purpose underlying the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment is the preservation of autonomy—of the state, of religious institutions, and of individuals. This purpose, however, has often gone unrecognized and has been obscured by doctrinal constructions utilized by the Supreme Court. As a result, jurisprudence under the religion clauses is fragmented

35. Gedicks, supra note 8, at 1098.
36. Id.
37. Id.
38. See Hamburger, supra note 1; Mark DeWolfe Howe, The Garden and the Wilderness: Religion and Government in American Constitutional History (1965); Mark DeWolfe Howe, The Supreme Court, 1952 Term, 67 Harv. L. Rev. 91 (1953).
39. See infra Parts IV–VI.
and inconsistent. Confusion and incoherence is supplemented by the fact that autonomy is a complex concept that bears multiple interpretations.

Since the end of the Second World War, two visions of the relationship between church and state have vied for preeminence in the United States, one emphasizing the ideal of “separation” of church and state, and the other finding greater space for the “accommodation” of religion and public life. As I will argue in greater detail below, the separationist and accommodationist positions each reflect very different conceptions of autonomy, with separationism favoring a conception of autonomy based upon strict independence and accommodationism favoring a conception of autonomy based upon the ideal of inter-independence.

Separationists argue that “the original purpose of the establishment clause was to create an absolute separation of the spheres of civil authority and religious activity by forbidding all forms
of government assistance or support for religion.” This view was perhaps most forcefully articulated by Justice Hugo Black in the 1947 case, *Everson v. Board of Education*, in which he stated that, “[T]he ‘establishment of religion’ clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another.”

A conception of autonomy based upon the idea of independence has had a strong influence upon much of the religion-clauses jurisprudence in the United States. Most famously, Jefferson’s metaphor of a “wall of separation”—dividing religion on the one hand and the state on the other—is a clear example of a vision of autonomy that rests upon stark independence. On this view, the domain of the state and the domain of churches are divided into respective spheres, and the mandate of the First Amendment prevents either from intruding upon the precincts of the other. Territorial metaphors prevail, and the wall becomes an apt symbol for the ideal relationship—even if imperfectly realized—between church and state. Because, according to this view, autonomy

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43. Davis, supra note 1, at 47–48.
44. *Everson v. Bd. of Educ.*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947) (permitting state reimbursement of costs of busing children to parochial schools). Perhaps ironically, in spite of its strongly separationist rhetoric, the outcome in *Everson* was accommodationist, permitting state aid to parents to pay for busing their children to religious schools.
45. *Id.* at 15.
46. As noted below, a counter-theme in U.S. Establishment Clause jurisprudence is accommodation. See infra text accompanying notes 51–52.
49. Another territorial metaphor of the garden and the wilderness was popularized by Roger Williams. See Stephen L. Carter, *Reflections on the Separation of Church and State*, 44 Ariz. L. Rev. 293 (2002). Carter describes the garden and wilderness metaphor as follows:
requires independence, the religion clauses mandate “mutual noninterference by church and state in each other’s affairs.”

In contrast, accommodationists argue that governmental aid to religious institutions is permitted as long as it is imparted in a nondiscriminatory fashion. Accommodationists explicitly reject Jefferson’s wall-of-separation metaphor. For example, in a dissenting opinion in Wallace v. Jaffree, Chief Justice Rehnquist wrote, “[t]he ‘wall of separation between church and state’ is a metaphor based on bad history, a metaphor which has proved useless as a guide to judging. It should be frankly and explicitly abandoned.”

To a large extent, the history of Establishment Clause jurisprudence, especially over the past thirty years, has been a story of the struggle for dominance between the separationist and accommodationist viewpoints. One problem with both

For Williams, the garden was the place of God’s people, the community of people of faith, who gathered together to determine what the Lord required of them, nurturing and building their religious understanding in relative tranquility. Outside the garden was the unevangelized world, what Williams called the wilderness. And between the two, separating the wilderness from the garden, was a high hedge wall, constructed to protect the people of the garden in their work of religious nurture. The hedge wall existed to keep the wilderness out, not to keep the people of the garden hemmed in. It was the vital work of the garden, not the less vital work of the wilderness, that the wall was built in order to protect.

Id. at 296. Adams and Emmerich assert that the

American Founders were influenced profoundly by philosophers and theologians who reflected on the religious conflicts that occurred in the wake of the Reformation. From Martin Luther and John Calvin they inherited the view that God had instituted “two kingdoms”—a heavenly one where the church exercised its spiritual authority and an earthly one where the civil magistrates exercised exercised temporal authority.

Adams & Emmerich, supra note 41, at 1561; see also Philip Hamburger, supra note 1 (discussing Roger Williams’ use of the wall metaphor); Howe, supra note 38.


51. See Peter J. Weishaar, School Choice Vouchers and the Establishment Clause, 58 ALB. L. REV. 543, 545 (1994) (“The ‘nonpreferential accommodationists’... claim that the religion clauses of the Constitution permit various forms of nonpreferential government support for religion. They argue that government may aid all religions, as long as it does not prefer one religion over another.”).

52. 472 U.S. 38, 107 (1985) (Rehnquist, C.J., dissenting) (striking down a state statute authorizing a moment of silence in public schools on grounds that there is no secular purpose underlying the statute).


Courts and commentators have noted that in the contemporary debate over the meaning of the Establishment Clause and the appropriate standard of review, both
“separation” and “accommodation” as doctrinal rubrics is that neither concept contains a principle to explain its limits. Thus, regardless of the analytical starting point, one is left without clear guidance with respect to the questions of how much separation or how much accommodation is required or permitted. The Supreme Court has utilized a number of different doctrines—including the so-called Lemon test, variations of that test emphasizing “endorsement,” and tests focusing upon “coercion” as constitutional tests for differentiating between permissible and impermissible interactions between church and state. None of these doctrinal approaches, however, has received widespread support, and none appears up to the task of providing a satisfying analytical

sideline in the debate have scoured primary sources in an effort to assemble an historical record permitting them to claim the legacy of the Framers’ original intent. This debate has generally broken down into two opposing factions: separationists and accommodationists. 

54. The Lemon test, as it has come to be known, stipulates: “[first, a statute] must have a secular legislative purpose; second, its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; [and] finally the statute must not foster ‘an excessive government entanglement with religion.’” Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S. 602, 612–13 (1971) (quoting Walz v. Tax Comm’n, 397 U.S. 664, 674 (1970)).


56. The “coercion” test was used by the Court in Lee v. Weisman, 505 U.S. 577 (1992) (holding that public school graduation prayer violates the Establishment Clause).

The principle that government may accommodate the free exercise of religion does not supersede the fundamental limitations imposed by the Establishment Clause. It is beyond dispute that, at a minimum, the Constitution guarantees that government may not coerce anyone to support or participate in religion or its exercise, or otherwise act in a way which “establishes a [state] religion or religious orthodoxy, or tends to do so.”

Id. at 587 (quoting Lynch v. Donnelly, 465 U.S. 668, 678 (1984)). With regard to school prayer specifically, “[W]hat to most believers may seem nothing more than a reasonable request that the nonbeliever respect their religious practices, in a school context may appear to the nonbeliever or dissenter to be an attempt to employ the machinery of the State to enforce a religious orthodoxy.” Id. at 592.
framework for addressing problems that arise under either the Establishment Clause or the Free Exercise Clause. 57

2. Europe

The potential ways in which the relationship between church and state is organized are virtually limitless, ranging from near identification of the church and the state (for example, Iran) 58 to an adversarial posture where church and state are viewed as antagonists (for example, the former USSR). 59 While no members of the Council of Europe fall in either of these extremes, “nevertheless a wide variety of relationships exist between religions and States in” Europe. 60

Several European states, such as France 61 and Turkey, 62 adopt a strong separationist and secularist conception of the state. At the

57. See, e.g., Kenneth Mitchell Cox, The Lemon Test Soured: The Supreme Court’s New Establishment Clause Analysis, 37 VAND. L. REV. 1175, 1177 (1984) (arguing that after the Lynch decision, “the Court’s apparent trend toward basing establishment clause analysis on the pervasiveness or historical significance of government-supported religious activities represents an undesirable move away from strict examination of the questionable law or activity under the Lemon test”); David Felsen, Developments in Approaches to Establishment Clause Analysis: Consistency for the Future, 38 AM. U. L. REV. 395 (1989) (arguing that the Court’s use of the Lemon test has resulted in an Establishment Clause jurisprudence that is confused and unprincipled); Gary J. Simson, The Establishment Clause in the Supreme Court: Rethinking the Court’s Approach, 72 CORNELL L. REV. 905 (1987) (suggesting that the Lemon test should be radically altered); John T. Valauri, The Concept of Neutrality in Establishment Clause Doctrine, 48 U. PIT. L. REV. 83 (1986) (pointing to the Lemon test’s internal inconsistencies); Amy Louise Weinhaus, The Fate of Graduation Prayers in Public Schools After Weisman, 71 WASH. U. L.Q. 957, 957–58 (1993) (“Weisman departs from the settled framework which has guided Establishment Clause analysis for more than twenty years and creates uncertainty as to the proper legal standards applicable in church-state jurisprudence.”).


60. The following brief summary of the variety of relationships between church and state in Europe is largely drawn from EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 19–22.

61. See LA CONSTITUTION [Const.] art. 77 (Autonomy) (Fr.). Article 2(1) of the French Constitution states, “France is an indivisible, secular, democratic, and social Republic.
other end of the spectrum, in Greece, there is a very close supportive
relationship between the Greek Orthodox Church and the state;63 in
Iceland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is still established as the
National Church, which according to the Constitution is to be
“supported and protected by the State”;64 and, in Italy, the Catholic
Church lost its status as the state religion only in 1984, and the
constitution continues to recognize that the “State and the Catholic
Church are each within its own ambit, independent and
sovereign.”65 The Church of England remains the established church
of the United Kingdom.66 The Spanish Constitution specifically
states that there is no established church,67 but Spain has entered
into a Concordat with the Catholic Church that grants the church
significant financial and other privileges that are not available to all
other religions in the state. Ireland does not have an established
correct church, although the dominance of the Catholic Church is evident in
a number of constitutional provisions (such as abortion and
blasphemy), and the constitution states that the “State acknowledges
that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall
hold his name in reverence and shall respect and honour religion.”68
Other states, such as Germany69 and the Ukraine,70 have
constitutional provisions requiring separation of church and state,

It ensures the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction as to origin, race, or
religion. It respects all beliefs.” Const. art. 2(1).

and Conscience) (“Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religious belief and
conviction.”) 63. See Const. of Greece sec. II, arts. 3 (Relations of Church and State) & 13
(Religion).

64. Const. of the Republic of Ice. arts. 63 & 64 (detailing the relationship between
correct church and state).

65. COSTIZIONE [Cost.] arts. 7 (Relation Between State and Church) & 8 (Religion)
(Italy).

66. While the United Kingdom has no constitution, it does publish an authoritative
statement of legal framework on its International Constitutional Law Web site,
http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/uk000000.html. See U.K. Legal Sys. sec. 18 (Freedom of
Religion).

67. CONSTITUCIÓN [C.E.] arts. 16 (Religion, Belief, No State Church) & 44 (Religion)
(Spain).

68. Ir. Const. art. 44 (Religion).

69. GRUNDEGESETZ [GG] [Constitution] art. 4 (Faith, Religion, Conscience, Creed)
(F.R.G.).

70. Const. of Ukraine art. 35 (detailing the relationship between the individual, the
state, and the church).
although the level of cooperation between the state and the dominant church is much greater than in the United States. Despite the wide variety of attitudes toward the proper relationship between church and state, “almost all member States have adopted constitutional or statutory provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion and allowing for freedom of religion. The provisions take different forms but demonstrate a reasonably strong level of consensus that freedom of religion is an important, European-wide principle.”

The primary pan-European basis for protecting religious freedom in Europe is the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the “European Convention” or “Convention”). One distinctive characteristic of the European Convention is that it provides a forum of last resort for individuals, not just states, to press claims against states who are party to the Convention.

The main provision of the European Convention dealing with freedom of religion or belief is Article 9. Article 9 establishes a two-tier structure for protecting religious liberties. First-tier rights, at

71. EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 22.
72. European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Nov. 4, 1950, 213 U.N.T.S. 221 [hereinafter European Convention]. Various European States have separate provisions addressing religious liberty, which often provide greater protection of religious liberty than that provided under the European Convention. Thus, the decisions under the European Convention should be viewed as a floor of protection rather than a description of the entire edifice protecting religious freedom and belief, which varies from state to state.
73. Prior to November 1998, a petition to the European Commission on Human Rights could be filed by “any person, nongovernmental organization or group of individuals claiming to be the victim of a violation by one of the High Contracting Parties of the rights set forth in [the European Convention].” Id. at art. 25.
74. Article 9 reads:
(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.
(2) Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.
Id. at art. 9. Paragraph 1 of Article 9 is identical to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Paragraph 2 of Article 9 is very similar to Article 18, Paragraph 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, although the reference to “necessary in a democratic society” is missing.
least in theory, are absolute and include “the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion,” as well as the “freedom to change [one’s] religion or belief.”

Second-tier rights involve “manifestations” of religion or belief “in worship, teaching, practice and observance,” in “public or private,” “either alone or in community with others,” which may be subject to limitations provided that such limitations meet certain conditions, including conditions that (1) such limitations are “prescribed by law,” (2) such limitations are necessary in a democratic society, and (3) such limitations serve a legitimate aim in that they either (a) are necessary in the interests of public safety and for the protection of public order, (b) are necessary for the protection of health, (c) are

75. Id. at art. 9, para. 1.

76. To date, no Article 9 case has succeeded because a restriction on freedom of religion or belief was not prescribed by law. Generally, the European Court of Human Rights has explicitly held that the legislation under which State action was taken was prescribed by law, despite strong criticism of this approach by some dissenting members of the court. EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 139.

77. The European Commission on Human Rights and European Court of Human Rights engage in a balancing test to determine whether a limitation is necessary, and the court has developed the notion of a “margin of appreciation,” which is quite deferential to state determinations of necessity. See Handyside v. United Kingdom, 24 Eur. Ct. H.R. (ser. A) at 22 (1976), http://hudoc.echr.coe.int (“By reason of their direct and continuous contact with the vital forces of their countries, State authorities are in principle in a better position than the international judge to give an opinion on the exact content of these requirements as well as on the ‘necessity’ of a ‘restriction’ or ‘penalty’ intended to meet them.”). The court also sometimes conducts a “proportionality” analysis to determine whether a restriction is necessary in a democratic society. See, e.g., Nat’l Union of Belgian Police v. Belgium, 1 Eur. H.R. Rep. 578, 595 (1979–80), http://hudoc.echr.coe.int (determining proportionality based upon whether “the disadvantage suffered by the applicant is excessive in relation to the legitimate aim pursued by the Government”); Larissis and others v. Greece, 65 Eur. Ct. H.R. (ser. A) 363 (1998–V), 27 E.H.R.R. 329 (1999) (Lexis) (upholding convictions of military officers for unlawful proselytizing of men under their command on grounds that this was proportionate to the end of preventing abuses to the rights and freedoms of others).

78. As Professor Evans explains, “There is clearly a need to allow restrictions to protect public order and safety, as some religious groups may be involved in inciting or organizing acts of violence.” EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 150; see, e.g., Omkaranda and the Divine Light Zentrum v. Switzerland, 25 Eur. Comm’n H.R. Dec. & Rep. 105 (1981), http://hudoc.echr.coe.int (imprisonment of leader of religious group which he led in acts of criminal violence); X v. United Kingdom, 3 Eur. Comm’n H.R. Dec. & Rep. 62 (1975), http://hudoc.echr.coe.int (right of free expression does not include right to incite others to desert army, to murder officers, and to supply weapons to the enemy). Nevertheless, “the public order limitation also has the potential to be interpreted very widely to allow States to intervene in religious practices at any time that they become inconvenient or annoying to those in power.” EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 150; see, e.g., Hakansson v. Sweden, 5 Eur. H.R. Rep. 297 (1983), http://hudoc.echr.coe.int (upholding the conviction of man who loudly proclaimed the evils of alcohol on grounds that doing so was necessary to
necessary for the protection of morals, or (d) are necessary for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

In the language of the European Court of Human Rights, Article 9’s first-tier protections apply to the *forum internum*, and the second-tier protections apply to the *forum externum*. Given the wording of Article 9(1), one might expect there to be a large sphere of religious freedom that is absolute, including the right to change one’s religion, and cannot be subject to derogation by the limitations on “manifestations” of religion that are contemplated in Article 9(2). But while the “Court has emphasized the importance of freedom of religion or belief, in particular at the level of the internal, individual conscience,” it has not “given much consideration to the content of the freedom.”

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79. “There have been a number of cases that have come before the [European] Commission [on Human Rights] that suggest that the State does have a right to force protection of health even on those who have a serious religious reason for rejecting the protection.” EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 156.

80. Although “[a]llowing a State to justify restrictions on the right to manifest a religion or belief by reference to morality potentially poses serious problems,” Professor Evans notes that “the [European] Court [of Human Rights] and [European] Commission [on Human Rights] have tended to grant States a wide margin of appreciation” in such cases. Id. at 159–60.

81. Conflicts with the rights and freedoms of others might involve conflicts between the religious beliefs of one party and the religious beliefs of another party, or might involve a conflict between a religious belief of one party and a nonreligious right or freedom of another party. One area where the possibility and likelihood of conflict appears to be particularly high is between conservative or traditional religious groups or believers on the one hand, and equality rights of women on the other hand. Professor Evans notes that “[a]lthough it has not been a particular issue in the Convention case law, there is significant potential for conflict between the rights of women and the right to freely practice a religion that may include practices that emphasize the subordinate status of women.” Id. at 161 n.147. Evans also notes that “sometimes the vague way in which “the rights and freedoms of others” is used suggests that the limitations clause may have a wider scope than the rights under the Convention.” Id. at 161.

82. Id. at 68. Evans notes that “[a]t the most basic level, [the freedom of religion] could be considered simply the right to hold opinions silently (on religious or other important issues) without interference by the State.” Id. If so, the “content of the right is minimal,” perhaps limited to limitations “against the dehumanizing techniques adopted in a police state.” Id.
The court has tended to analyze religious liberty issues, even those involving the right to change one’s religion, under the rubric of the scope of permissible limitations upon manifestations of religious belief permitted by Article 9(2). For other times, the court simply assumes that a case involves a “manifestation” of religious belief without considering whether the case might involve a tier-one nonderogable right of conscience or religion. For example, in Buscarini v. San Marino, a Grand Chamber of the court held that a requirement that members of the parliament of San Marino “take an oath swearing on the Gospels” to perform their duties violated Article 9 since it “required them to swear allegiance to a particular religion.” But the court did not analyze the requirement under Article 9(1)’s absolute protection of “the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.” Rather, the court held that the required oath was an impermissible limitation under Article 9(2) because the oath was not necessary in a democratic society. Rather than consider the effect of requiring a non-Christian to make an oath on a Christian Bible, the court chose to focus on the manifestation such a requirement made concerning a particular religion.

In addition to Article 9, Article 14 of the European Convention contains a broad nondiscrimination provision prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion, among other grounds. Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention provides that “[n]o person shall be denied the right to an education” and requires states when exercising functions in relation to education and teaching to “respect the rights of parents to ensure such education

84. See EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 68.
86. Id. at para. 34.
87. European Convention, supra note 72, at art. 9, para. 1.
88. Buscarini, App. No. 24645/94, at paras. 35–40; see also EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 68.
89. Article 14 of the European Convention reads, “The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set out in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any grounds such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a minority, property, birth or other status.” European Convention, supra note 72, at art. 14.
and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.90

The history of the interpretation and application of the European Convention can be divided into two chapters, before and after November 1998, when Protocol 11 to the Convention took effect. Prior to November 1998, two bodies existed to “ensure the observance of the engagements undertaken” by the Contracting Parties—the European Commission of Human Rights (the “Commission”) and the European Court of Human Rights (the “European Court”).91 The role of the Commission and the European Court was quite complex. In order for a petition to the Commission to be admissible, an applicant must have exhausted all domestic remedies,92 the application could not be anonymous,93 and the petition could not be “incompatible with the provisions of the present Convention, manifestly ill-founded, or an abuse of the right of petition.”94 If the Commission found a case to be admissible, then it attempted to negotiate a friendly settlement between the parties,95 and if a solution was not achieved, it prepared a report giving its opinion whether or not there had been a breach of the

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90. Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom, Mar. 20 1952, protocol I, art. II. Carolyn Evans explains that “[t]his Article was one of the most controversial in the Convention and had to be included in a separate Protocol because agreement on its wording could not be reached in time for the signing of the main instrument.” EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 6. The European Convention contains other provisions that might be relevant to the protection of religious freedom or belief, including Article 8 (concerning private and family life), Article 10 (concerning freedom of expression), and Article 11 (concerning freedom of peaceful assembly), but these provisions are beyond the scope of this paper.

91. European Convention, supra note 72, at art. 19.
92. Id. at art. 35, para. 1.
93. Id. at art. 35, para. 2(a).
94. Id. at art. 35, para. 3. According to Carolyn Evans, [t]he power to determine that petitions were ill-founded allowed the Commission summarily to dismiss cases that were not procedurally inadmissible but that would clearly fail if taken to the merits phase. It allowed the Commission to weed out weak and hopeless cases at an early stage in order to expedite proceedings and avoid wasting time on cases with little or no merit.
EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 9.

Convention.96 Commission reports were not binding upon states, and states (but originally not the petitioners)97 could refer the matter either to a Committee of Ministers98 or to the European Court, both of which had the right to make a final decision whether a state had breached an obligation under the European Convention, and to make decisions, including awarding “just satisfaction” to injured petitioners, which were binding upon the Contracting Parties.99 When the Council of Europe adopted Protocol 11, it abolished the Commission, limited the role of the Council of Ministers, and established a new court, which is able to sit in smaller panels, enabling it to deal with a larger number of cases.100

In comparison with the United States, one distinctive feature of church-state relations in Europe is that in many countries a much greater degree of cooperation or engagement of religion and the state is deemed appropriate. I will argue that like separation and accommodation, this cooperationist viewpoint is based upon a

96. European Convention, supra note 72, at art. 31.
97. Id. at art. 38 (original text). With the adoption of Protocol 9, petitioners as well as states gained the right to bring a case to the European Court, although a panel of the court was authorized to evaluate petitions to determine whether they raised a “serious question involving the interpretation or application of the Convention.”
98. If a State referred a matter to the Committee of Ministers and the Committee determined that there was a breach of the Convention, this conclusion was binding upon the parties, but the Committee never overruled the Commission in relation to any Article 9 complaints, and so it is largely irrelevant to the interpretation of Article 9. See EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 9.
99. See European Convention, supra note 72, at arts. 50–53.
100. EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 10. The Plenary Court, comprised of a number of judges equal to the number of member states, sits only for administrative matters, European Convention, supra note 72, at art. 21 (as amended). Committees of three judges can decide by unanimous vote whether a case is admissible, id. at art. 28 (as amended), and Panels of seven judges decide the admissibility of cases that are not unanimously decided by Committees and also hear the merits of cases, id. at art. 29 (as amended). When a Chamber believes a matter is sufficiently significant, it may refer the case to a Grand Chamber of seventeen judges, id. at art. 30 (as amended). Parties may also request a Grand Chamber to consider cases, id. at art. 43 (as amended). Some commentators have suggested that

[s]ome cases that have been summarily dismissed . . . require analysis . . . [especially] cases that are found to be inadmissible on the basis that they are manifestly ill-founded . . . because often the failure of the Commission to deal seriously with these cases demonstrates its conservative approach to Article 9. Also, some members of the Court have suggested that sometimes the technical provisions that can be used to deem a case inadmissible (such as failure to exhaust domestic remedies) have been used by the Court to avoid looking into difficult or controversial areas.

EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 10 (citing case).
The Autonomy of Church and State

particular conception of autonomy, one which emphasizes interdependence.\textsuperscript{101} In Europe, the state is much less likely to be seen as an enemy of freedom and is much more likely to be seen as the champion or promoter of freedom. This is true with respect to liberty in general, as well as religious liberty in particular. For example, in describing the German experience with industrialization, Leonard Krieger suggests that the experience “set up the relationship between individuals and the authoritarian state in which the state was both favorable and necessary to the material side of personal freedom and in which the individual, consequently, was both beholden to the state and, to evade this dependence, withdrawn from it.”\textsuperscript{102} Much the same could be said about the relationship of the individual and the state with respect to spiritual freedom. According to Krieger, the Reformation resulted in

increased ecclesiastical powers of Lutheran and Catholic princes alike, a development which received theoretical expression for Lutheran princes in the doctrine of the \textit{jus episcopale}. Ultimately both the fact and the doctrine, which conferred upon the prince the prime responsibility and the supreme power for the organization and maintenance of religion in his territories, were to contribute signaly to the extension of authority which led to the organization of the sovereign state . . . .\textsuperscript{103}

This resulted in what became a “familiar mixing of [the prince’s] private and public capacities,” and the prince became “the agent of spiritual freedom for his society as well as of political power over it.”\textsuperscript{104}

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\textsuperscript{101} Carolyn Evans argues that “one of the reasons that the [European] Court and Commission have not developed an adequate jurisprudence on religious freedom is that they have not taken seriously the importance of understanding the rationale for religious freedom.” \textit{Id.} at 33. Evans suggests that “[t]he argument from autonomy seems to be the best approach for the [European] Court to take to interpreting Article 9.” \textit{Id.} While I agree with Professor Evans that the concept autonomy appears to provide a promising basis for interpreting Article 9, as I argue throughout this paper, I believe that a certain conception of autonomy does actually underlie much of the European Court’s and the Commission’s approach to issues of religious freedom and belief, but that the conception of autonomy adopted by the court is quite different than the liberal conception favored by Evans. \textit{See infra} Part III.A–C.

\textsuperscript{102} \textsc{Leonard Krieger}, \textsc{The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition} 39 (1957).

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Id.} at 48.

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Id.} at 49.
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The history of the relationship between church and state in Europe is extraordinarily complex and far beyond the scope of this paper. But even today in Europe, in contrast with America, people are much less likely to view the state as an enemy or threat to religious freedom and more likely to view it as a protector and facilitator of religious freedom. The clearest evidence of this difference in view between the United States and Europe can be seen in the jurisprudence concerning the institutional autonomy of the state and the institutional autonomy of the church.

III. THREE CONCEPTIONS OF AUTONOMY

In Part II of this Article, I suggested that three very different approaches to adjudicating issues involving religious liberty and the relationship between church and state—separation, cooperation, and accommodation—are each based upon competing conceptions of a single concept, autonomy. In Parts IV and V of this Article, I will illustrate how these three conceptions of autonomy influence jurisprudence relating to a wide variety of issues involving institutional autonomy (both of churches and of the state) and individual autonomy. In Part VI, I will consider the implications of these conceptions of autonomy for a few current areas of controversy in the United States. Before turning to these tasks, however, I must sketch the basic contours of these competing conceptions of autonomy. Each of these conceptions is based upon very different visions of what autonomy is and what conditions make its exercise possible.

The etymology of the term autonomy is from the Greek auton (self) and nomos (rule or law). The term was first applied by the Greeks to the concept of the city-state. A city was autonomous if


106. On the other hand, in states such as France and Turkey, where the emergence of a liberal democratic state was in large measure a struggle against a state dominated by a particular religious orthodoxy, the degree of separation of church and state that is deemed necessary to protect religious freedom is very high.

107. I will treat autonomy as a concept that is meaningful for both individual human beings and for institutions (both churches and the state). This view reflects both the history
its citizens made their own laws and the city was not under the control of an outside power. In his study of autonomy, Gerald Dworkin notes that the term autonomy is used “in an exceedingly broad fashion.”

It is used sometimes as an equivalent of liberty (positive or negative in Berlin’s terminology), sometimes as equivalent to self-rule or sovereignty, sometimes as identical with freedom of the will. It is equated with dignity, integrity, individuality, independence, responsibility, and self-knowledge. It is identified with qualities of self-assertion, with critical reflection, with freedom from obligation, with absence of external causation, with knowledge of one’s own interests. It is even equated by some economists with the impossibility of interpersonal comparisons. It is related to actions, to beliefs, to reasons for acting, to rules, to the will of other persons, to thoughts, and to principles. About the only features held constant from one author to another are that autonomy is a feature of persons and that it is a desirable quality to have.108

Professor Dworkin concludes, “[i]t is very unlikely that there is a core meaning which underlies all these various uses of the term.”109 There are, however, a number of central ideas that seem to be a part of all—or nearly all—accounts of autonomy. These ideas are self-direction, independence, and the ability to choose and implement a life plan.

One disputed issue—perhaps the disputed issue—in the philosophy of autonomy is the role or place for the influence of others on the individual or entity that is autonomous. What is the role of community in the exercise of individual autonomy? Is the state’s obligation to stay out of the way, or does it have an affirmative duty to create conditions that will facilitate the development of human autonomy? And must the state remain neutral regarding various conceptions of the good life, or can it take measures that will favor some conceptions of the good life over others?

and current usage of the term autonomy, but as will be clear from the discussion below, the conditions for exercising autonomy may be different in individual and institutional contexts. Institutional autonomy is discussed infra at Part IV, and individual autonomy is discussed infra at Part V.

109. Id.
The conditions that must prevail in order for individuals or institutions to be able to lead autonomous lives is a matter of considerable disagreement. I will briefly outline three possibilities—Independence, interdependence, and inter-independence—none of which is meant to describe the views of any particular author, but each of which illustrates broadly different approaches to understanding the conditions that must prevail in order for one to live an autonomous life.

The first conception is based upon an ideal of absolute independence. According to this vision, the key condition for being able to exercise autonomy is to be left alone, free from the influence or interference of others. The basic idea is that people should compose their own lives and be able to do so free from coercion in matters of fundamental importance. At an institutional level, the ideal of separation of church and state reflects this ambition, and the guiding metaphor is of a “wall of separation” between church and state, dividing each area into its own sphere of activity and influence, in which it will remain untouched by the other.

The second conception of autonomy is based upon an ideal of interdependence. According to this vision, autonomy is possible only within thickly contextualized social structures, where each person or institution has significant obligations to others that must be met in order for those others to have the ability to exercise autonomy.

The third conception of autonomy is based upon an ideal of inter-independence, a somewhat counterintuitive idea, which on the one hand requires neither separation nor isolation, but which on the other hand reserves a larger place for independence than does a conception of autonomy based upon interdependence.

A. Independence

The first conception, or really group of conceptions, of autonomy centers on the idea of independence. Echoing Kant’s argument for the fundamental importance of independence of the will, Joel Feinberg has stated, “I am autonomous if I rule me, and no one else rules I.”

This conception of autonomy receives its classic articulation by John Stuart Mill in his essay, On Liberty, and was forcefully

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articulated in the Eighteenth century by philosophers and politicians such as Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat Condorcet, Thomas Paine, and Benjamin Constant. In its strongest formulation, autonomy requires complete independence from all other influences. According to Isaiah Berlin, while personal freedom will have limits based upon protecting the liberties of others,

> a certain vacuum round him has to be created, a certain space within which he may be allowed to fulfill what might be called his reasonable wishes. One should not criticize these wishes. Each man’s ends are his own; the business of the State is to prevent collisions; to act as a kind of traffic policeman and night watchman . . . ; simply to see to it that people do not clash with each other too much in the fulfilling of those personal ends about which they themselves are the ultimate authorities. Liberty means non-encroachment; liberty therefore means non-impingement by one person on another."

Autonomy is contrasted, in Kant’s terminology, to heteronomy, the determination of one’s will by forces outside oneself. Strong
versions of autonomy require complete independence of the will, what I term “stark independence.”

Conceptions of autonomy based upon the idea of independence, however, need not be conceptualized in such a strong manner. Professor Joseph Raz explains that the basic idea behind the ideal of personal autonomy is that people should compose their own lives: “The autonomous person is a (part) author of [her] own life. The ideal of personal autonomy is the vision of people controlling, to some degree, their own destiny, fashioning it through successive decisions throughout their lives.”

Professor Raz contrasts an autonomous life with a life devoid of choices or without awareness of choices, of coerced choices, or of simply “drifting through life without ever exercising one’s capacity to choose.”

Professor Raz’s weaker conception of autonomy does not require complete independence, although it does contemplate an absence of coercion and invidious forms of psychological manipulation, as well as the existence of, awareness of, and the wherewithal to pursue a variety of life plans. Following Raz, Professor Carolyn Evans argues that

Coercion in matters of fundamental importance, such as belief in the existence of God, or an afterlife, or a religiously based set of morals or obligations towards others, would deny people the ability to be the authors of their own lives. The fullest personal autonomy will exist in a society in which a person sees the availability of a range of good choices in regard to religion or belief and is able to make meaningful decisions about which, if any, of these choices he or she wishes to adopt.

A conception of autonomy based upon the idea of independence (of both individuals and institutions) had a strong influence on much of the religion-clause jurisprudence in the United States. Most obviously, Jefferson’s metaphor of a wall of separation dividing

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116. Id. at 371.

117. EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 30.

118. As noted above, a counter-theme in U.S. Establishment Clause jurisprudence is accommodation. See supra Part II.B.1.
religion on the one hand and the state on the other is a clear example of a vision of autonomy that rests upon independence. On this view, the domain of the state and the domain of religion are divided into respective spheres, and the mandate of the First Amendment is to prevent either from intruding upon the precincts of the other. Territorial metaphors prevail, and the wall becomes an apt symbol for the ideal relationship—even if imperfectly realized—between church and state. Because autonomy demands independence, the religion clauses require “mutual noninterference by church and state in each other’s affairs.”

B. Interdependence

In sharp contrast to conceptions of autonomy that are based upon various understandings of independence, another group of conceptions of autonomy takes a markedly different tact in defining the social conditions that must prevail in order for autonomy to flourish. A conception of autonomy based upon conditions of thick social interdependence maintains that autonomy is possible only when exercised within a thick and embracing social setting, and only if one is true to one’s “real” self or “true” nature. On this view, the possibilities open to an autonomous agent are determined in large measure—perhaps almost completely—by the social context within which the agent is situated. Such conceptions of autonomy are closely related to Isaiah Berlin’s concept of positive liberty.

These views diverge significantly from independence-based conceptions of autonomy. A conception of autonomy based upon interdependence will suggest that human potential or nature can be truly realized only within a thick communal context. Religious, nonreligious, and a variety of utopian conceptions of the good life often posit a single truth or set of truths about human nature, the human good (or human flourishing), and the universe that justify significantly directing the choices available to a person, all in service of his or her own best interests.

A wide variety of eighteenth-century philosophers held views that either explicitly or implicitly endorsed such a conception of autonomy. For example, Claude-Adrien Helvetius, who is often

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119. NORMAN REDLICH, JOHN ATTANASIO & JOEL K. GOLDSTEIN, UNDERSTANDING CONSTITUTIONAL LAW 505 (2d ed. 1999).
120. BERLIN, supra note 114, at 118.
viewed as a forerunner of Benthamite utilitarianism, believed that he had discovered the single principle governing ethics and politics, namely the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Armed with this knowledge, he asserted that an enlightened political leader could enact laws that would maximize pleasure and minimize pain, without regard for human rights.¹²¹ Jean Jacques Rousseau settled the conflict between liberty and authority by defining them as the same thing; liberty he defined as wanting that which is good for me, that which will satisfy my true nature. And since human nature is unitary, what is good for one man will also be good for another. So what one person can truly want will never collide with what another person truly wants, and a state that forces one to be true to one’s nature is really acting to vindicate one’s freedom.¹²² Johann Gottlieb Fichte reaches a similar conclusion by focusing not upon personal self-realization, but collective self-realization. According to Berlin,

Fichte contrasts *compositum*, which is a mere artificial combination, and *totum*, [or] total nation, which is something organic, single, whole, and in which the higher principle dominates, the higher principle which may take the shape of a great nation, or of history. And the greatest agent of this force is a divine conqueror or leader whose business it is to play upon his nation as an artist plays upon his instrument, to mould it into a single organic whole, as the painter, the sculptor moulds his materials, as the composer creates patterns of sound.¹²³

On this view, individual autonomy is realized when it is made to fit harmoniously with the triumphant state by acquiescing to its destiny.¹²⁴ Perhaps most influentially, such a view of autonomy was


To have a right which nobody may impinge upon, to have a right which nobody may trample, to have a right to do or be or have this or that, whether anybody likes it or not, is an obstacle to the transformation of society in the direction of the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

*Id.* at 19. For a utilitarian, according to Berlin, rights are (as Bentham insisted) “nonsense on stilts.” *Id.* at 25. Berlin further states, “If the sole criterion of action is happiness and unhappiness, these odd rights which stick out in an obstinate way, and may not be smoothed over by the legislator, must be flattened out.” *Id.* at 20.

¹²². See *id.* at 37–41.

¹²³. *Id.* at 70.

¹²⁴. “Individual freedom, which in Kant has a sacred value, has for Fichte become a choice made by something super-personal. It chooses me, I do not choose it, and acquiescence is a privilege, a duty, a self-lifting, a kind of self-transcendent rising to a higher level.” *Id.* at 71.
developed by Hegel, who focused upon the triumph of natural power in his dialectic of history in which liberty is seen as the recognition of necessity, and liberty consists in aligning oneself with what is necessary.125

While these thinkers differ dramatically in their diagnosis and prescription of the true purpose or end of human beings, they share something important in common: a belief that there is one true good for humankind, and a belief that everything that a person can rationally want can be harmonized with that vision. As such, autonomy does not consist of having space in which there can be no interference with human choice, be it good or bad, foolish or wise; rather, autonomy is achieved when one realizes one’s true potential, and it may take the strong hand of a tutoring state to educate and direct one towards that end.

A conception of autonomy resting upon interdependence has not been particularly influential in religious freedom jurisprudence in the United States, primarily because of the Establishment Clause. In contrast, in Europe where religious establishments are much more common, an understanding of the proper relationship between the church and the state is heavily influenced by this conception of autonomy.

C. Inter-Independence

A third conception of autonomy, which I label somewhat paradoxically inter-independence, seeks a middle ground between conceptions of autonomy based upon conditions of stark independence, as well as conceptions of autonomy based upon

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According to Berlin, Fichte identifies “freedom with self-assertion, with the imposition of your will upon others, with the removal of obstacles to your desires, and finally with a victorious nation marching to fulfill its destiny in answer to the internal demands given to it by transcendental reason, before which all material things must crumble.” *Id.* at 73.

125. Isaiah Berlin explains Hegel’s conception of human freedom as follows:

What is freedom but doing what I wish to do, getting what I want to get, obtaining from life what I am seeking for? I can only get this if I do not run against the laws which govern the world. If I defy them I shall be inevitably defeated. . . . If I wish to be effective historically, I must not set myself against the laws which govern human beings and institutions. This non-defiance is not an acquiescence which I consciously adopt with resignation, although I would rather be free. To understand why things cannot be otherwise is to want them not to be otherwise, because to understand things is to understand the reasons from them.

*Id.* at 89.
conditions of thick interdependence. On this view, stark independence is unappealing because in a world where the government plays a significant social and economic role in the lives of citizens and institutions, requiring stark independence can easily manifest itself as indifference or hostility rather than neutrality. Since human beings are social creatures, we need some resources in order to be able to develop into autonomous agents. On the other hand, thick interdependence is unappealing because it is insufficiently respectful of the pluralism and diversity that has come to characterize, and in all likelihood will continue to characterize, our political communities. If the state strongly favors or forces upon its subjects a particular conception of the good, then this will retard the development of autonomy.

A conception of autonomy based upon inter-independence is difficult to conceptualize and articulate. Autonomy based upon the idea of inter-independence will be more willing than independence-based conceptions of autonomy to recognize that human beings are born into and raised within social contexts. When we are born, our condition is one of near complete dependence upon others for survival and nurture, and even as we mature and become increasingly independent, it is evident that the possibilities available to us are in large measure defined by the social conditions within which we find ourselves. We do not create ourselves ex nihilo, as self-defining adults, but emerge, through education and inculcation, as members of particular families and communities. If my polity insists on isolating me, insists on erecting walls of separation between me and its social institutions, and refuses on grounds of eschewing paternalism to educate and equip me to survive—and more, to have a range of life options and possibilities among which I may choose and pursue—such a state, for it would not even begin to qualify as a society, much less a community, could not in reality be said to be interested in my autonomy.

On the other hand, unlike conceptions of autonomy based upon thick interdependence, a conception based upon inter-independence will continue to insist that there must be a distinction between the public and private spheres. Such a conception of autonomy will recognize that autonomy is not possible if the state, or some other authority, discerns and coerces me to follow a particular plan that facilitates the realization of my “true” nature or potential. Even if I have a single true nature, and a single true course of action is
necessary for me to realize my innate potential, I cannot exercise autonomy if I am forced to abide by a plan for realizing my natural possibilities.

A conception of autonomy that is based upon relationships of inter-independence will view stark independence as a false ideal: untrue because autonomy is only possible within social settings; and unappealing because many of humanity’s greatest achievements are the result of collective, cooperative, and coordinated interaction. Likewise, inter-independence will view a conception of autonomy based upon thick interdependence as a false ideal: untrue because autonomy cannot be forced upon us; and unappealing as an empirical matter because history is littered with corpses left by theocrats, idealists, tyrants, and despots of every persuasion who were dedicated to imposing upon others their view of a single, true vision of human nature, potential, and destiny.

Although a complete development and articulation of the conditions for exercising an ideal of inter-independence must await another day, a few general observations can be made.

First, inter-independence is committed to a muscular, though not unlimited, independence. Coercion and manipulation, but not the ability to influence and be influenced, are destructive of inter-independence. A life can be meaningfully called autonomous only if it is to a considerable extent the creation or composition of the person living it. Space must be left for what Isaiah Berlin described as negative freedom, a sphere within which we as individual agents are free to direct our own lives. This commitment to independence presupposes a distinction between private and public life, although there will be some overlap between these spheres, and although there will be mutual influences between them.

Second, a conception of autonomy based upon the idea of inter-independence implies inclusion, being allowed to play an active role in a collective community’s social and political life. Inclusion is closely related to respect, for meaningful respect is not possible if one is ignored or pushed to the margins of public life. Inter-independence forbids exclusion. This implies the ability to influence and be influenced by others. Ultimately, inter-independence does not pretend that autonomous beings are, can, or should be completely free from the presence and influence of others.

Inclusion does not rest upon a hope for complete or perfect convergence of moral or social viewpoints. That is the false and
dangerous dream of thick interdependence and conceptions of autonomy based upon positive liberty. A commitment to an ongoing, shared normative discourse need not rest upon the belief that we will come up with arguments for a moral theory, religious doctrine, or social program that no rational person can reject. Inclusive discourse is based upon the belief that discussion and argument in moral matters is largely about learning to understand and respect each other and about taking responsibility for the implications of our moral positions. This is not to say that moral discourse is not about persuasion—it is—but it is not exclusively about persuasion. Stephen Macedo, for example, acknowledges that when “public reasonableness has done its work,” moral viewpoints will remain “plural and divergent.” An ideal of autonomy based upon inter-independence aims at a polity characterized by political moderation and inclusion, for a form of fraternity that goes beyond bare toleration.

Third, inter-independence relies upon a shared commitment to mutual respect among autonomous agents. This respect will imply tolerance, but it includes more than mere forbearance of others. The respect grows out of both sides of the inter-independence ideal—the independence side, as well as the relational side. Hostility, discrimination, extreme variations in opportunity and access to social resources, or marginalization or exclusion of individuals from shared social and political life are all destructive of autonomy. Respect, however, requires not merely leaving another person alone, but helping her equip herself to live a life that can be characterized as autonomous, and engaging her in what Stephen Macedo has called a discourse of public reasonableness.

This type of discourse rests upon a commitment to public justification, which aims not only to give good reasons for state action, but also “seeks reasons that can be widely seen to be good by persons such as they are.” Macedo asks, Why public justification? He answers:

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126. See supra Part III.B.
129. Id. at 39–77.
130. Id. at 46.
We acknowledge, first of all, the permanent fact of pluralism: reasonable people disagree not only about preferences and interests, but widely and deeply about moral, philosophical, religious, and other views. While acknowledging pluralism we, secondly, respect as free and equal moral beings all those who pass certain threshold tests of reasonableness: we respect those whose disagreement with us does not impugn their reasonableness.\footnote{Id. at 47.}

This discourse of public justification requires listening to others; letting others speak; and giving reasons to them that they can understand and acknowledge when actions are taken that affect them. As Macedo puts it, “[p]ublic justification embodies a complex form of respect for persons: it respects both our capacity for a shared reasonableness, but also ‘the burdens of reason.’”\footnote{Id. at 47 (quoting John Rawls, *The Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus*, 64 N.Y.U. L. REV. 233, 235–38 (1989)).}

Fourth, *inter-independence* relies upon empowerment, having the abilities necessary to exercise autonomy. Although, as Joseph Raz has pointed out, it is part of the “special character of autonomy that one cannot make another person autonomous,” this does not mean that others cannot help, particularly in helping secure “the background conditions which enable a person to be autonomous.”\footnote{Raz, supra note 115, at 407.} The ideal of stark *independence*, while romantic, makes the mistake of assuming that respect for others means just leaving them alone. As Raz points out, “There is more one can do to help another person have an autonomous life than stand off and refrain from coercing or manipulating them,” including helping them develop the “inner capacities required for the conduct of an autonomous life.”\footnote{Id. at 407–08.} The ideal of *inter-independence* also avoids one of the cardinal mistakes of an ideal of stark *independence*—a mistake, characteristic of arrogant youth, of believing that we are entirely self-made persons.

In the case of personal autonomy, an individual must be provided with an education and with enough other opportunities and resources that he or she is empowered to exercise independence and choice. An autonomous agent must have an adequate range of options from which to choose projects and commitments.\footnote{See id. at 410–12.} *Inter-independence* implies mutual obligation for individuals to help
develop the inner capacities—mental, emotional, and physical—of others, which will enable them to conduct autonomous lives.

Autonomy based upon an ideal of stark independence posits that we may have nothing in common; autonomy based upon an ideal of thick interdependence posits that we have everything in common even though we may not have the good sense to realize it. Inter-independence posits a middle ground—that we share much, although not everything, in common, and that while we should cherish and nurture that common ground, we must also carve out space for each other to exercise our independent visions of who we are and ought to be.

Thus far, I have identified three primary attitudes towards the proper relationship of church and state and of the scope of individual religious freedom—separation, cooperation, and accommodation. I have also argued that each of these attitudes is based upon a different conception of a single concept: autonomy. Separation is based upon a conception of autonomy that strives for independence. Cooperation is based upon a conception of autonomy that strives for interdependence. And accommodation is based upon a conception of autonomy that strives for what I have called inter-independence. In Part III, I have tried to sketch the characteristics and differences between these three conceptions of autonomy. In doing so, I have set the stage for an exploration of how these three conceptions of autonomy are manifested in cases involving religious freedom issues.

In the next three parts of this Article, I will explore the implications of these three conceptions of autonomy for issues involving the autonomy of churches, the autonomy of the state, and the religious autonomy of the individual. In Part IV, I will focus on institutional autonomy—first, the autonomy of churches, and second, the autonomy of the state. In Part V, I will turn to issues involving religion and personal autonomy. In Part VI, I will explore the implications of each of these conceptions of autonomy for several current controversies in the United States involving the relationship of church and state.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

In trying to determine the appropriate contours of interaction between church and state, the autonomy of two types of institutions is implicated: the autonomy of churches and the autonomy of the state. What autonomy means and what is required for church and
state to have autonomy will depend upon one’s conception of autonomy. I will argue that in the United States since World War II, two conceptions of autonomy (one based upon the independence of church and state and the other based upon the inter-independence of church and state) have vied for dominance. In Europe, a third conception of autonomy based upon the interdependence of church and state has been dominant in the jurisprudence of the European Court. In Part IV.A, I will discuss a number of contexts in which the autonomy of the church is a primary concern, and in Part IV.B, I will focus upon situations in which the autonomy of the state is at stake.\textsuperscript{136}

\textbf{A. The Autonomy of the Church}

Issues concerning the autonomy of churches arise in a number of contexts, including: whether or not a state church is permitted; whether and the extent to which direct state aid to churches is permissible; whether churches qualify for and are permitted to receive tax exemptions; whether states can provide aid to religious schools, and if so, what the limits are on that aid; whether and the extent to which the state can influence or dictate decisions involving church property, officials, and doctrine; whether churches are entitled to have a distinct legal personality with standing to seek protection of its legal rights; and whether and the extent to which churches can qualify for exemptions from general laws.

In addition to their institutional dimension, many of these issues have implications for individual religious liberty as well, especially the freedom of religion or belief of people who find themselves in the minority with respect to matters of religion or belief. Thus, to some extent the outcomes of cases concerned with institutional autonomy also have implications for individual autonomy.

\textit{1. State church}

An established church would clearly be unacceptable under a conception of autonomy based upon independence. It would also be

\textsuperscript{136} As will be apparent, classification is sometimes difficult and disputable. In many instances, a particular issue will implicate both the autonomy of the church and the autonomy of the state (for example, in the case of a state church). I have tried to classify issues according to the autonomy interest that seems to me to be primarily implicated, but the classification of an issue is more a matter of impression and convenience than of metaphysics.
unacceptable under a conception of autonomy based upon *inter-independence*, because a state church would not have the degree of independence required to realize the *inter-independence* ideal of self-direction and composition. From the perspective of *inter-independence*, an established church would present too great a possibility for coercion and manipulation of church affairs by political overseers. The possibility of church self-direction would be compromised, and the distinction between public and private spheres would be significantly weakened.

In contrast, a conception of autonomy based upon *interdependence* would permit a state religious establishment, since the roles and purposes of the state and the church are viewed as being complimentary and mutually reinforcing. If church-state relations are based upon the *interdependence* of church and state, a religious establishment will not necessarily be viewed as being *inimical* to the autonomy of the state, to the autonomy of the church, or to religious freedom. A shared state or national identity may be seen as important for social and political stability, and the role and purposes of the church and the state may be seen as being mutually supportive and reinforcing. Religion may be viewed as the social glue that holds society together. Overt coercion of membership may be recognized as being inconsistent with individual autonomy, but the existence of a church that is endorsed, supported, and even given preferential treatment by the state may not be seen as violating religious freedom human rights guarantees and as being not only fully consistent with but supportive of the autonomy of both the church and the state.

The jurisprudence of the Supreme Court and the European Court concerning a state church reflect different conceptions of autonomy.

**United States**: The Establishment Clause clearly forbids the United States from having a national church,137 although it did not originally prohibit states from having state churches. By the time the Free Exercise Clause138 and the Establishment Clause139 were


138. The Free Exercise Clause was first held to apply to the states in *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296 (1940).
incorporated to apply to action by states as well as by the federal
government (following the Civil War and the adoption of the
Fourteenth Amendment), no state still had an established church.\textsuperscript{140}
The prohibition in the United States of a state church is consistent
with a conception of autonomy based upon the ideal of complete
independence of church and state, as well as a conception of
autonomy based upon inter-independence.

\textit{Europe:} The European Convention permits an established state
church. This conclusion was confirmed in \textit{Darby v. Sweden}, in which
the European Court held that an established church does not violate
the Convention.\textsuperscript{141} The court did say, however, that a state church
cannot force people to become members or prohibit people from
leaving the church.\textsuperscript{142} The European Court’s conclusion reflects a
conception of autonomy based upon the \textit{interdependence} of church and state.

\textbf{2. Direct state aid to churches}

A conception of autonomy based upon the \textit{independence} of
church and state would clearly prohibit direct state aid to churches.
Although it may be viewed as a closer call, the same outcome would
be expected from the \textit{inter-independence} conception of autonomy,
since independence, even if not perfectly realized, will be jeopardized
by financial dependence of churches upon the state. While a
prohibition on both direct and indirect state aid to churches
comports with a conception of autonomy based upon \textit{independence},
some aid, especially if it is indirect rather than direct, might be
permitted by a conception of autonomy based upon \textit{inter-independence}.
However, such aid would be scrutinized based upon
the purpose and effect such aid has upon the independence of
churches and the independence of the state. On the other hand, a
conception of autonomy based upon \textit{interdependence} might easily
permit significant levels of direct aid from the state to a favored
church or group of churches.

\textsuperscript{139} The Establishment Clause was first applied to the states in \textit{Everson v. Board of
\textsuperscript{140} Carl H. Esbeck, \textit{Dissent and Disestablishment: The Church-State Settlement in the
(Lexis).
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Id.} at para. 45.
United States: Under United States law, neither the federal nor state governments are permitted to provide direct aid to religion, reflecting a conception of autonomy consistent with both independence and inter-independence. The distinction between direct and indirect aid, however, is not always clear, and as the recent debate about charitable choice illustrates, separationist and accommodationist viewpoints diverge sharply upon the permissibility of allowing religiously affiliated organizations to participate in such programs. As will be discussed in greater detail below, allowing parochial schools to benefit from tuition voucher programs, allowing church-affiliated entities to qualify for state funding grants for social service programs, and allowing scholarships to be used by students studying for the clergy are examples of state aid to religion that could jeopardize the independence of churches to an extent that would violate the principle of independence. Thus, on the question of state aid to churches, in the United States there appears to be a significant movement from a conception of autonomy based upon independence to a conception based upon inter-independence.

Europe: In contrast, under the European Convention a relatively high degree of cooperation, support, and preferential treatment for a particular church is permissible. For example, in Darby v. Sweden, the court held that the state may directly collect taxes for an established church, and in order for an individual to be exempt from such a requirement, the state can require a person to notify the state that she has changed religious affiliation. In addition, a nonbeliever may be required to pay the proportion of taxes to a state church that the church uses for carrying out “secular functions,” such as keeping records of births and deaths, performing marriages, and arranging funerals, even if the nonbeliever opposes such involvement of the church in secular functions. A large degree of direct state aid to a particular church reflects a conception of autonomy based upon interdependence of church and state.

143. See Everson, 330 U.S. at 9, 15 (“The ‘establishment of religion’ clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another.”).
144. Charitable choice is discussed in greater detail infra Part VI.C.
3. Tax exemptions

Autonomy conceived as requiring strict independence of church and state would not only permit, but also probably guarantee, tax-exempt status to churches. Thus, while separation is sometimes viewed as being hostile to religion, strict independence is not always inimical to the interests of churches. Autonomy based upon inter-independence would appear to permit a tax exemption for churches since doing so would facilitate churches’ ability to utilize donations to pursue their self-defined missions and would reduce troubling entanglements of churches with the state. It is less likely, however, that inter-independence would view tax exemptions as required in order to preserve the autonomy of church and state, since a mild degree of engagement between church and state would be viewed as being permissible. Especially if churches are able to receive a significant degree of direct or indirect financial support from the state (for example, by being able to participate in access to state funds through finance social service programs), the payment of taxes as an ordinary burden of citizenship and participation in the program of public benefits may be seen as justifying the inclusion of churches in tax programs. Thus, under a view of autonomy based upon inter-independence, certain types of generally applicable taxes, such as sales tax on religious literature and perhaps even property taxes, would appear to be permissible. Autonomy based upon interdependence would not necessarily require or permit a tax exemption, since concerns about engagement and entanglement of church and state are much less likely to be perceived as problematic. Under interdependence, favorable tax treatment for preferred churches would be expected.

United States: Tax exemptions that benefit churches have been permitted under the Establishment Clause, but such benefits must be equally available to all churches and must be equally available to nonreligious charitable organizations. U.S. churches are exempt from paying taxes, not as a matter of constitutional right, but pursuant to legislative enactment. Churches are included in the list of charitable and other nonprofit organizations that can qualify for tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.\textsuperscript{147} The Supreme Court has held that the tax-exempt status of

\textsuperscript{147} I.R.C. § 501(c)(3).
churches does not violate the Establishment Clause on the grounds that it is a neutral benefit available to all churches and to other nonprofit organizations. Churches have also been exempted from certain generally applicable tax laws. For example, in *St. Martin Evangelical Lutheran Church v. South Dakota*, the Supreme Court held that a church-sponsored school was exempt from paying unemployment compensation tax required under federal law. In addition, the Supreme Court has disapproved of laws that disadvantage a particular religion but not religions generally. For example, in *Larson v. Valente*, the Court struck down a state statute requiring religious organizations that receive less than half their total contributions from members or affiliated organizations to register and report their income. The statute in question affected only the Unification Church, and the Court stated that the exemption scheme violated the “clearest command of the Establishment Clause,” namely that “one religious denomination cannot be officially preferred over another.”

The approach to tax-exemption issues in the United States has reflected the presumptions and concerns of a conception of autonomy based upon *inter-independence*. Tax exemptions are not a matter of constitutional right as one would expect from a conception of autonomy based on strict *independence*. The indirect benefits to churches created by a tax exemption are not constitutionally required, but neither are they constitutionally forbidden. Instead, tax exemptions may be permissible when the autonomy interests of churches are significantly implicated. For example, the Court has reasoned that tax exemptions are permissible because they reduce the entanglement of church and state, which is problematic from the perspective of *inter-independence*. Requiring laws that provide an

148. Walz v. Tax Comm’n, 397 U.S. 664, 672–73 (1970). Although the Court analyzed tax-exemptions from the perspective of neutrality (the government was exercising “benevolent neutrality towards churches and religious exercise generally so long as none was favored over others and none suffered interference”), autonomy would appear to be a much more promising basis upon which to justify the Court’s outcome. While neither outcome would be neutral towards churches (since they benefit from an exemption and are burdened by a tax obligation), the autonomy of church and state is enhanced when the state’s taxing authority does not cover churches.


151. Id. at 244.
indirect benefit to religion not to discriminate against some religions is also consistent with the mandate of inter-independence for mutual respect and inclusion.

On the other hand, in cases involving commercial activities such as the sale of religious literature, the Supreme Court has held that the Establishment Clause does not exempt churches from paying a generally applicable sales tax.\textsuperscript{152} If autonomy required complete independence, such taxes should be prohibited. But when churches are participating in the commercial world, which falls squarely within the states’ domain, inter-independence does not prohibit being included in a general tax mechanism.\textsuperscript{153} The concept of inter-independence allows a degree of entanglement but places bounds on the extent of entanglement between church and state that would be permitted in an environment of interdependence. For example, in Larson, because the Minnesota Act in question had a “valid secular purpose” when viewed as a whole,\textsuperscript{154} the Court did not rule out the idea that “the burdens of compliance with the Act would be intrinsically impermissible if they were imposed evenhandedly.”\textsuperscript{155} Thus both when allowing and disallowing exemptions from taxation, the U.S. Supreme Court has followed a path illuminated by a conception of autonomy based upon inter-independence.

\textit{Europe:} The Commission has approved of tax arrangements that provide benefits to one or some churches to the exclusion of other
churches. In *Iglesia Bautista ‘El Salvador’ and Ortega Moratilla v. Spain*, the Commission held that a tax system that gave preferences to the Catholic Church, but not to Protestant churches, did not violate Article 9 or Article 14. In that case, the Catholic Church received a tax exemption from property tax, based upon a Concordat between the Catholic Church and Spain, and a Protestant church argued that it too should be exempt from property tax. The Commission denied the claim that the preferential tax system violated Article 9, on the grounds that there is no right to an exemption from ordinary tax obligations and there were “objective and reasonable” justifications for the difference in treatment. Thus, according to Professor Evans, under the jurisprudence of the European Court, “the State may legitimately tax one Church and not another, and give financial assistance to one Church and not another, if there is some arrangement between the privileged Church and the State which imposes reciprocal obligations on the two parties.”

This outcome reflects a conception of autonomy based upon *interdependence* of church and state. From this point of view, the state is not required to be neutral toward religion or to give equal treatment among churches. Thus it is entirely natural for the state to view one church as having a particularly significant role in the life of the nation, and receiving favorable treatment from the state not only enhances the ability of that institution to perform that distinctive and valuable role, but also benefits the state through the social good accomplished by the favored church. Under a conception of autonomy based on *interdependence*, the state is viewed as being competent to make differentiations based upon “objective and reasonable” justifications for which religious institutions deserve special treatment and support. On this view, the autonomy of both the state and the favored church are reinforced by the mutually symbiotic relationship between these institutions.

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157. In the *Iglesia Bautista* case, the Catholic Church had undertaken such reciprocal obligations by placing its historical, artistic, and documentary heritage at the service of the Spanish people in exchange for benefits from the state including the property tax exemption. *Id.* at 261.
158. EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 83.
4. State aid to religious schools

Autonomy conceived as requiring independence of church and state would not permit state aid to religious schools, whether direct or indirect. A view of autonomy based on interdependence would have no difficulty with such aid. A view based on inter-independence would be very skeptical of aid from the state to religious schools, since such aid might create dependence of religious schools upon the state and might also result in situations where church autonomy is threatened by conditions placed by the state upon access to the aid. Nevertheless, inter-independence might view certain types of aid as being permissible if the programs were carefully structured and limited. A conception of autonomy based upon inter-independence would consider the effects of such programs upon the independence of both church and state and the importance of inclusion and the impact upon the distinction between public and private spheres of life, as well as whether exclusion would evince hostility and discrimination, and whether participation is necessary for the empowerment required to exercise autonomy.

United States: State aid to parochial schools has been very controversial and the subject of extensive litigation in the United States. The Supreme Court has struggled mightily to construct a coherent approach to such cases, and the result has been a complex, convoluted, and internally inconsistent series of cases. In 1947 in Everson v. Board of Education, the first case that applied the Establishment Clause to the states, the Court upheld a state program that reimbursed parents for the costs of busing their children to religious schools, but the Court employed strongly separationist rhetoric. This case provided the wellspring for both separationist

159. For a sampling of the sheer number of state and Supreme Court cases addressing state aid to parochial schools, see, for example, Gary D. Spivey, Annotation, Constitutionality, Under State Constitutional Provision Forbidding Financial Aid to Religious Sects, of Public Provision of Schoolbus Service for Private School Pupils, 41 A.L.R. 3d 344 (1972); A.G. Barnett, Annotation, Furnishing Free Textbooks to Sectarian School or Student Therein, 93 A.L.R. 2d 986 (1964); C.C. Marvel, Annotation, Public Payment of Tuition, Scholarship, or the Like, as Respects Sectarian School, 81 A.L.R. 2d 1309 (1962).

160. 330 U.S. 1 (1947). Justice Black reasoned that busing was a “public function” akin to providing fire and police services, and did not promote a “religious function.” Id. at 17–18.

161. “Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa. In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect ‘a wall of separation between church and State.’” Id. at 16.
and accommodationist arguments and outcomes in a long line of cases over the next several decades.

In cases dealing with state aid to religiously affiliated schools, the Supreme Court has vacillated between a conception of church-state autonomy requiring separation and independence and a conception based upon inter-independence, allowing for greater accommodation and inclusion. Some cases have reflected a view of autonomy based upon stark independence of church and state. For example, in *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, the Court held that states may not reimburse religious schools for the salaries of teachers of various secular subjects and that the state may not provide state-approved instructional materials to religious schools. The Court also held that the Establishment Clause was violated by state salary supplements to teachers at religious schools who taught only subjects offered in public schools using materials used in public schools. It also struck down grants to parochial schools that served low-income families to maintain and repair school facilities, as well as small (fifty-dollar) tax credits for low-income parents of children attending religious schools. In addition, the Court struck down payments for state-mandated examinations prepared by teachers at religious schools, and instructional materials such as maps, films, and laboratory equipment, provided to religious schools. Finally, the Court struck down programs providing therapeutic services, such as remedial speech and hearing therapy, on the premises of religious schools and the reimbursement of bus transportation for children attending religious schools to participate in educational field trips.

In recent years, the Supreme Court has moved away from a strongly separationist stance with respect to state aid to religious schools and has permitted certain types of aid that are generally

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162. 403 U.S. 602 (1971).
163. *Id.* at 606–07.
166. *Id.*
available to both religious and nonreligious private schools. The concerns of *inter-independence* have been evident in a number of cases. For example, in *Board of Education v. Allen*, the Supreme Court upheld a state policy allowing public school boards to lend textbooks to religious schools. The Court allowed remedial instruction off school grounds, later allowed remedial services on religious school premises (reversing two earlier cases), allowed state reimbursement to religious schools for instructional materials such as maps and films (reversing earlier cases), therapeutic services such as speech and hearing therapy at religious schools (reversing an earlier case), and reimbursement to religious schools for the costs of bus transportation for educational field trips.

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170. See infra Part VI.B in which I discuss the Supreme Court’s move away from a separationist stance with vouchers and other forms of indirect aid to churches. For an interesting perspective on Supreme Court “flip-flops” on Establishment Clause issues, see Christopher E. Smith, *Supreme Court Surprise: Justice Anthony Kennedy’s Move Toward Moderation*, 45 OKLA. L. REV. 459 (1992).


172. Id. at 243. In dissent, Justice Black advocated the view that the Establishment Clause requires complete independence of church and state.

It is true, of course, that the New York law does not as yet formally adopt or establish a state religion. But it takes a great stride in that direction and coming events cast their shadows before them. The same powerful sectarian religious propagandists who have succeeded in securing passage of the present law to help religious schools carry on their sectarian religious purposes can and doubtless will continue their propaganda, looking toward complete domination and supremacy of their particular brand of religion.

Id. at 251.


177. *See Meek v. Pittenger*, 421 U.S. 349, 366 (1975) (holding that a state’s loan of instructional materials, such as maps and laboratory equipment, violated the Establishment Clause); *Wolman*, 433 U.S. at 250 (same).


179. *Meek*, 421 U.S. at 371 (holding that state expenditures for auxiliary services “gave rise to a constitutionally intolerable degree of entanglement between church and state”).

(reversing an earlier case\textsuperscript{181}). These cases represent a significant movement on the part of the Court from a conception of autonomy based upon \textit{independence} to a conception of autonomy based upon \textit{inter-independence}.

The Court exhibited a similar movement as it became increasingly willing to allow state funds to flow to the benefit of religious institutions. In \textit{Tilton v. Richardson}, the Supreme Court allowed a program providing federal construction grants to church-related colleges for facilities devoted exclusively to secular educational purposes.\textsuperscript{182} Later, the Court approved a state revenue-bond program permitting church-related colleges to borrow funds for constructing buildings at low interest.\textsuperscript{183} The Supreme Court has also allowed private religious colleges to participate in a state program providing noncategorical grants for nonsectarian use,\textsuperscript{184} permitted a blind student to participate in a state vocational rehabilitation assistance program that paid the student’s tuition to a private Christian college,\textsuperscript{185} allowed the state to provide an interpreter to a deaf student at a sectarian school,\textsuperscript{186} and given religiously affiliated organizations permission to participate in a federally funded program to encourage innovative services to deal with the problems of adolescent pregnancy.\textsuperscript{187} The Supreme Court has become more accepting of aid that reaches religiously affiliated schools indirectly. For example, if vouchers are given to parents to spend at the school of their choice for the education of their children, the Supreme Court has allowed parents to direct that aid to religiously affiliated schools.\textsuperscript{188}

In sum, in the United States in cases involving state aid to religious schools, there has been a general trend over the past thirty years away from a conception of autonomy based upon \textit{independence} towards a conception based upon \textit{inter-independence}.

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\textsuperscript{181} Wolman, 433 U.S. at 255 (holding that state funding of field trips created excessive entanglement and therefore violated the establishment clause).
\textsuperscript{182} 403 U.S. 672, 675 (1971).
\textsuperscript{183} Hunt v. McNair, 413 U.S. 734 (1973).
\textsuperscript{188} Zelman v. Simmons-Harris, 536 U.S. 639 (2002).
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Europe: Under the European Convention, states may subsidize religious schools and may pay for certain types of religious education in both public and private schools if it so desires, but the state cannot be required to provide funds to private religious schools. According to Carolyn Evans, “The concern of the drafters of the Convention was not (compared with the framers of the United States Constitution) to keep the State out of religion, including religious education, but rather to ensure that the State was not subject to financial demands that it did not wish to meet.” However, the European Court has stated that the state has an obligation to respect the beliefs of parents within the public school system, even in areas not directly related to denominational instruction, and that it is not enough to allow parents to opt out of public schooling altogether and send their children to religious schools. The opportunity to opt out of specific religious instruction, however, has been held to satisfy the requirements of Article 9, even when doing so results in teacher and peer pressure to participate.


190. EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 89.

191. See, e.g., Kjeldsen, Busk Madsen and Pedersen v. Denmark, 23 Eur. Ct. H.R. (ser. A) 25, para. 53 (1976), http://hudoc.echr.coe.int (holding that a State could impose an integrated “sex education” curriculum in spite of parental objections based upon religious belief, but requiring the State to convey information in “an objective, critical and pluralistic manner” and prohibiting the state from pursuing “an aim of indoctrination that might be considered as not respecting parents’ religious and philosophical convictions”); see also Campbell and Cosans v. United Kingdom, 48 Eur. Ct. H.R. (ser. A) (1982), 4 E.H.R.R. 293 (1982) (Westlaw) (extending the requirement that schools respect parents’ wishes in a case of parents wishing to prevent their children from being subjected to corporeal punishment).

192. See Bernard and others v. Luxembourg, 75 Eur. Comm’n H.R. Dec. & Rep. 57 (1992); C.J., J.J. and E.J. v. Poland, 84-A Eur. Comm’n H.R. Dec. & Rep. 46 (1996), http://hudoc.echr.coe.int (holding that religious instruction was “voluntary” when a student was required to wait in the corridor, received frequent questioning from teachers and pressure from a teacher and other students to take the classes, and eventually capitulated, against her father’s wishes, and joined the class). Professor Evans notes that the Commission did not explore how voluntary a decision by a child in such a situation of social pressure could really be. It also refused to deal in any detail with the claim by the
The approach taken by the European Court in cases involving state aid to religious schools reflects a conception of autonomy based upon the *interdependence* of church and state. State subsidies to religiously affiliated schools are permitted, although some concern is expressed for the autonomy interests of dissenters who wish to opt out of religious instruction.

5. Church property, officials, doctrine

One area where the differing attitudes toward institutional autonomy are most striking is in controversies that arise with respect to church property, personnel, and doctrine. A conception of autonomy based upon *independence*, and to a slightly lesser extent a conception based upon *inter-independence*, would be highly suspicious of state involvement in the direction of the internal affairs of a church. In contrast, a conception based upon *interdependence* would be much less sensitive to negative impacts upon autonomy from state involvement in such affairs.

**United States:** The Supreme Court has demonstrated a high (although not absolute) degree of protectiveness of churches from interference by the state in controversies involving church property, officials, and doctrine. In an early case involving a property dispute between two groups claiming ownership of the same church property, the Court deferred to the Church’s own internal rules for determining which group had the legitimate claim, an approach that the Court has generally followed in subsequent cases.\(^{193}\) However, in a more recent case that did not involve an ownership dispute over church property, *City of Boerne v. Flores*, the Court upheld a general statute on historic preservation that prevented a church from adding

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\(^{193}\) See, *e.g.*, Serbian Eastern Orthodox Diocese v. Milivojevich, 426 U.S. 696 (1976); Presbyterian Church v. Mary Elizabeth Blue Hull Mem’l Presbyterian Church, 393 U.S. 440 (1969); Kedroff v. Saint Nicholas Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church, 344 U.S. 94 (1952); Watson v. Jones, 80 U.S. (13 Wall.) 679 (1871). *But see* Jones v. Wolf, 443 U.S. 595 (1979) (allowing a state to resolve a church property dispute based upon “neutral principles of law”); The Corp. of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints v. United States, 136 U.S. 1 (1890) (upholding the seizure of church property of Mormons on grounds that polygamy did not constitute religious belief).
to the size of its existing building.\textsuperscript{194} Church autonomy was not viewed as a sufficient reason to create an exemption from a generally applicable zoning ordinance. This case was significant also because it was the vehicle the Supreme Court used to strike down the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, in which Congress had attempted to restore the compelling state interest standard to free exercise jurisprudence.\textsuperscript{195}

The Supreme Court has been very protective of church autonomy in matters relating to personnel and doctrine. The state cannot dictate to a church who it hires or fires as a minister, or what the church’s doctrine will be.\textsuperscript{196} Indeed, church autonomy over personnel and doctrine extends beyond employees with a directly

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\item[194.] 521 U.S. 507 (1997).
\item[196.] See, e.g., Harold P. Southerland, \textit{Theory and Reality in Statutory Interpretation}, 15 \textit{ST. THOMAS L. REV.} 1, 32 (2002) (asserting that “it would be hard to imagine a more flagrant interference with the free exercise of religion than for Congress to dictate to a respectable church ... whom it might or might not choose as its minister”); Laura L. Coon, Note, \textit{Employment Discrimination by Religious Institutions: Limiting the Sanctuary of the Constitutional Ministerial Exception to Religion-Based Employment Decisions}, 54 \textit{VAND. L. REV.} 481, 531 (2001) (“Courts holding that the adjudication of negligent hiring and supervision claims against church employers necessarily violates the First Amendment emphasize that in all decisions regarding hiring, firing, or discipline, the church’s determination is necessarily guided by religious doctrine and practice. These courts reason that, regardless of whether or not a religious institution has a doctrinal reason for the challenged employment decision, examining church employment policies regarding ministerial employment to determine what is reasonable conduct necessitates ‘inappropriate governmental involvement’ in violation of the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses.” (footnote omitted)).
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ecclesiastical function. For example, in *Corporation of the Presiding Bishop v. Amos*,\(^{197}\) the Court unanimously held that even a church-owned nonprofit organization that did not have a directly religious mission was exempt from the general law prohibiting discrimination in employment based upon religion. In that case, the Church operated a gymnasium and was allowed to limit employment to individuals who adhered to certain religious tenets. The Court’s reasoning invoked autonomy concerns, noting that a religious-employment exemption alleviated “significant governmental interference with the ability of religious organizations to define and carry out their religious missions.”\(^{198}\)

As these cases illustrate, in sensitive matters involving church property, personnel, and doctrine, the Supreme Court has based its jurisprudence on a conception of autonomy that reflects a high degree of concern for the *independence* of churches, although in recent cases that degree of concern has apparently diminished.

*Europe:* The European Court has allowed quite a high degree of state involvement in issues involving church property, officials, and doctrine. For example, in *Holy Monasteries v. Greece*, the court dismissed a claim from a church involving transfer of land from monasteries to the government.\(^{199}\)

The European Court has also been deferential to state control of personnel and doctrine of a state church. For example, in *Knudsen v. Norway*, the Commission upheld the right of the state to dismiss a pastor of a state church on the grounds that the pastor had revoked his oath of loyalty to the state, thus implying that if there is an established church, the state has the right to set forth conditions for employment in the church generally or for a particular post.\(^{200}\) In another case, *Karlsson v. Sweden*, the Commission upheld the

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197. 483 U.S. 327 (1987). For additional cases concerning corporeal punishment, see EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 93 n.132.

198. *Amos*, 483 U.S. at 335. Determining that certain activities are in furtherance of an organization’s religious mission, and that only those committed to that mission should conduct them, is thus a means by which a religious community defines itself. Solicitude for a church’s ability to do so reflects the idea that furtherance of the autonomy of religious organizations often furthers individual religious freedom as well. *Id.* at 342 (Brennan, J., concurring).


decision of an employment board to deny a position to a pastor because he opposed the ordination of women.201

State control of nonestablished churches is more limited. In Serif v. Greece, the court held that the Greek government violated Article 9 by prosecuting a man who claimed to be the Mufti of a local Muslim community, when another man had been appointed Mufti by the Greek government.202 The court stated that to punish a person “for merely acting as the religious leader of a group that willingly followed him can hardly be considered compatible with the demands of religious pluralism in a democratic society.”203 The court’s holding was quite limited, however, noting that a different outcome might be warranted if the Mufti attempted to carry out functions with legal effect, such as marriage ceremonies.204

In an established church, the court has held that the state has the right to control church doctrine, and ministers can be required to comply or resign. For example, in X. v. Denmark, the state disciplined a clergyman in the state Church of Denmark who attempted to impose a requirement that parents take five lessons of religious instruction before he would baptize their children.205 The Commission upheld the state’s control over the clergyman’s behavior, taking the position that clergymen’s “individual right of thought, conscience or religion is exercised at the moment they accept or refuse employment as clergymen, and their right to leave the church guarantees their freedom of religion in case they oppose its teachings.”206 State control of religious doctrine was affirmed again by the Commission in Knudsen v. Norway, a case in which the state-appointed minister of religion was permitted to dismiss a clergyman who refused to carry out certain of his functions in protest of a new liberal abortion law.207

In cases involving church property, personnel, and doctrine, the European Court has based its jurisprudence upon a conception of autonomy that reflects the assumptions of interdependence of church

203. Id. at para. 51.
204. Id. at para. 52.
206. Id.
and state. A very high degree of state involvement in church affairs has been permitted.  

6. Church standing

From the perspective of independence and inter-independence, a church’s standing to sue to protect its legal rights would be viewed as an elementary component of church autonomy. A conception of autonomy based upon interdependence, on the other hand, would be less concerned with the ability of churches to have standing to pursue and vindicate their rights.

**United States:** The Supreme Court has long recognized standing for both individuals and churches in Free Exercise and Establishment Clause disputes. Churches have standing in U.S. courts, and for the most part standing issues have not been important in religious liberty jurisprudence in the United States. The Court’s jurisprudence involving standing issues reflects the view that church autonomy is based upon a degree of independence.

**Europe:** The autonomy of churches was dealt an early blow by the Commission in the 1968 case of Church of X v. the United Kingdom, in which the Commission dismissed the case on the

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208. The degree to which state involvement is permitted, however, may turn, to some degree, on whether the state is regulating a state church or another religion. When the state is regulating the state church, it will, of course, have greater latitude than when it is regulating other religions. In either scenario, though, the degree of state involvement permitted is demonstrative of interdependence.


211. 13 Y.B. Eur. Conv. on H.R. 306 (Eur. Comm’n on H.R.) (1968), http://hudoc.echr.coe.int. In Church of X v. United Kingdom, a church brought a complaint claiming its rights of religious freedom had been violated when the British government made a determination that it was a “cult” that was dangerous to society and took a variety of measures to limit the activities of the church, including deregistering its educational institutions, refusing to allow individuals into the country who wished to study or work with the church, and refusing entry to hundreds of delegates to an international conference of the church. The church, which was a corporation, brought the action on its own behalf and on behalf of its
grounds that a church does not have standing. The Commission reasoned that “a corporation being a legal and not a natural person, is incapable of having or exercising the rights mentioned in Article 9, paragraph 1 of the Convention and Article 2 of the First Protocol.”\(^{212}\) In 1971 the Commission reiterated that churches have no standing in \textit{X v. Sweden},\(^{213}\) although it revised its decision and granted standing to a church in the 1979 case, \textit{X and the Church of Scientology v. Sweden}.\(^{214}\) The Commission explained that it was overruling its earlier decisions that denied standing to churches, stating that the Commission was

now of the opinion that the . . . distinction between the Church and its members under Article 9(1) is essentially artificial. When a church body lodges an application under the Convention, it does so in reality, on behalf of its members. It should therefore be accepted that a church body is capable of possessing and exercising the rights contained in Article 9(1) in its own capacity as representative of its members.\(^{215}\)

This change of view represents some movement away from a view of autonomy based upon \textit{interdependence} towards a view of autonomy based upon a measure of \textit{independence} for religious institutions. But Professor Evans notes, “[t]he right of a Church to bring a claim is derivative, however, based on aggregating . . . the rights of its members. It cannot claim a breach of its own rights.”\(^{216}\) Thus, even under the revised doctrine, religious institutions still do
not have standing in their own rights, but only as an aggregation of the rights of their members. The Commission has confirmed this view by holding that a legal person cannot exercise freedom of conscience,217 and in continually denying standing to for-profit corporations who have lodged complaints regarding freedom of conscience or religion under Article 9.218 Thus, the European Court’s jurisprudence on church standing does not reflect a conception of autonomy requiring a muscular institutional independence of churches.

7. Church right to have organization and legal personality

Even more fundamental than the right to have standing to sue in order to protect one’s rights is the right to organize oneself as a legal entity. A conception of autonomy based on independence and inter-independence would view the right to have a legal personality as a basic requirement for churches to have a measure of autonomy. A conception of autonomy based upon interdependence, however, might not recognize the importance of being able to organize a church and have a legal personality.

United States: In the United States anyone can create a church under the nonprofit corporation statutes of any state.219 No permission of any government official or body is required. Having a legal personality is viewed as a basic requirement of exercising church autonomy. This is consistent with a conception of autonomy based upon independence or inter-independence.

Europe: While Article 9 states that the right to manifest one’s religion is to be protected “either alone or in community with

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217. Kontakt-Information-Therapie and Hagen v. Austria, 57 Eur. Comm’n H.R. Dec. & Rep. 81, 88 (1988), http://hudoc.echr.coe.int. Although the legal person at issue was a drug rehabilitation center and not a church, the Commission seemed to state the general rule and specifically mentioned that churches do not have rights of freedom of religion.

218. See, e.g., Company X. v. Switzerland, 16 Eur. Comm’n H.R. Dec. & Rep. 85 (1979) (dismissing a claim that requiring a company to pay ecclesiastical taxes breached its freedom of religion on grounds that it had no rights under Article 9(1)).

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others,” and the Commission has recognized a group dimension to certain religious liberty rights, the Commission has also stated that Article 9 does not entitle a religious group to be formally recognized or registered as a religion and that states are permitted to distinguish between recognized and non-recognized religions. In X v. Austria, the court upheld the government’s refusal to allow followers of Reverend Moon to set up a legal association on the grounds that this did not interfere with the group’s right to worship in association with others because it was not “necessary” to have a legal association in order for members to be able to practice their beliefs. On the other hand, the court has held that state interference with the ability of a minority religion to set up a place of public worship can result in a violation of rights of worship and observance. More recently, in the case of Canea Catholic Church v. Greece, the court held that every religious denomination has the right not only to de facto existence, but also to be granted legal personality under rules that are fair and similar to those applied to other denominations.

The European Court’s jurisprudence in this area reflects an increasing degree of concern about the institutional independence of churches, although much of the court’s work in this area reflects a conception of autonomy reflecting the assumptions and concerns of interdependence.

8. Exemptions from general laws for churches

One of the most significant recurring problems in church-state relations is the extent to which churches and individuals should be exempt from generally applicable laws. If churches are always exempt from such laws, then churches are in an important sense above the

220. See X v. United Kingdom, 22 Eur. Comm’n H.R. Dec. & Rep. 27, 33 (1981), 4 E.H.R.R. 126 (1982) (Westlaw) (ruling that a Muslim school teacher who wished to take time off on Friday afternoons to attend worship at a local mosque was not sufficiently accommodated by being given a room within the school where he could pray in private).


224. The subject of exemptions is also addressed below in the section on individual autonomy. See infra Part V.F.
law. On the other hand, if the state is unwilling to make exceptions for churches and religious adherents in order to protect religious observance, then the state can interfere significantly in the independence and self-direction of the church and of religious adherents.

If stark independence is the goal, then a concern for church autonomy and the autonomy of religious adherents might seem to require an extensive network of exemptions when state laws conflict with religious beliefs and obligations, since the state might vigorously try to create a separated social space for religious activity.225 If autonomy is based upon inter-independence of church and state, a more limited set of exemptions would seem to be recognized. Desired exemptions would be evaluated based upon their impact upon the independence of churches and their adherents, and based upon the independence and autonomy of the state. For example, exemptions that are deemed to threaten the state’s ability to fulfill its functions of protecting public safety and morals would not be recognized. A conception of autonomy based upon interdependence would recognize an even narrower set of exemptions, since what is good for the state and what is good for the church might be seen as being harmonious. When interdependence prevails, the state is likely to be quite sensitive to the religious needs of majority religion adherents, and laws that facilitate religious belief and observance of powerful religions would be commonplace. A high degree of concern for the needs and claims for exemptions from adherents of minority religions, however, would be much less likely to prevail.

225. While it would seem that independence would recognize the need to protect religious exercise from encroachment (based upon a commitment between church and state to mutual noninterference), the reality is rather more complicated. It is possible that a conception of autonomy based upon independence could result in very limited recognition of exemptions. For example, if the realm of protected religious independence is limited to “belief” and the realm of government oversight is said to encompass everything that includes “action,” then as a practical matter most assertions of a right to an exemption will be denied (since religious beliefs often require specific actions), while the state will claim (somewhat disingenuously) to be protective of institutional and individual independence with respect to religious freedom. This approach has been common in United States free exercise jurisprudence. See, e.g., Reynolds v. United States, 98 U.S. 145, 165 (“Congress was deprived of all legislative power over mere opinion [or belief], but was left free to reach actions which were in violation of social duties or subversive of good order.”); see also Employment Div. v. Smith, 494 U.S. 872, 877 (1990).
United States: In recent cases the Supreme Court has exhibited remarkably little concern for church autonomy in situations involving religious exemptions from generally applicable laws. This was not always the case. Historically, churches have been granted exemptions from certain generally applicable laws, which had the effect of preserving the autonomy of both churches and religious adherents. For example, in *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, the Supreme Court granted an exemption to Amish school children based upon freedom of religion from a state law requiring compulsory education until the age of sixteen. The Court focused on whether the exemption in question was based upon religious belief or more general cultural factors and concluded that the Amish objection to compulsory education beyond the eighth grade was based upon religious belief.

Additionally, in *NLRB v. Catholic Bishop of Chicago*, the Court ruled that church-run schools were exempt from a national law requiring schools to recognize unions. And in *Corporation of Presiding Bishop v. Amos*, the Court upheld a federal statute that exempted religious organizations from Title VII requirements forbidding discrimination on the basis of religion in hiring for church-related nonprofit enterprises that did not have a directly religious function. In that case, the Court explicitly invoked autonomy concerns in justifying its holding.

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227. In *Wisconsin v. Yoder* the Supreme Court exhibited a high degree of concern for the autonomy of the Amish religion. The Court held that laws that impose burdens on religious belief must be subject to heightened scrutiny. This means that the state must show a compelling state interest in order to justify such burdens. *Id.* at 210–11.
229. The Court determined that “[t]he church-teacher relationship in a church-operated school differs from the employment relationship in a public or other nonreligious school. We see no escape from conflicts flowing from the Board’s exercise of jurisdiction over teachers in church-operated schools and the consequent serious First Amendment questions that would follow.” *Id.* at 504.
231. *Id.* at 345–46 (“Sensitivity to individual religious freedom dictates that religious discrimination be permitted only with respect to employment in religious activities. Concern for the autonomy of religious organizations demands that we avoid the entanglement and the chill on religious expression that a case-by-case determination would produce. We cannot escape the fact that these aims are in tension. Because of the nature of nonprofit activities, I believe that a categorical exemption for such enterprises appropriately balances these competing concerns.”).
The right of churches and religiously affiliated organizations to receive exemptions, however, has never been unlimited, especially when exemptions apply to commercial for-profit operations. For example, in *Tony and Susan Alamo Foundation v. Secretary of Labor*, the Court held that a religious organization’s commercial enterprises were not exempt from the requirements of a labor statute. The Supreme Court also struck down a state statute that granted a sales tax exemption to religious publications but not other publications and upheld a state sales tax that covered the sale of religious materials.

A conception of autonomy based on *inter-independence* would predict that a lesser degree of autonomy would be granted to churches when they are engaged in commercial activities as opposed to more overtly religious or nonprofit activities, since the regulation of economic affairs is an area of high engagement of churches with the regulatory powers of the state. If stark *independence* were the goal, then it would seem that exemptions for commercial activities should exist as well as other types of exemptions. Rather than treating sales of religious literature as ordinary commerce, a stark *independence* view would endeavor to separate transactions by churches from ordinary commerce.

In *Oregon v. Smith*, the Supreme Court retreated dramatically from its earlier approach of subjecting general laws that burden religion to heightened scrutiny (which required a compelling state interest and further required that the state employed the least restrictive available means of effecting the interest). Instead, the Court held that a law that burdens religion is permissible, as long as it is general and neutral, and does not specifically target religious belief.

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235. As noted above, this assertion must be qualified because the belief-action distinction can be used to bring all religious “action,” including commercial transactions, within the sphere of state regulation. So interpreted, an *independence*-based conception of autonomy would not recognize assertions of exemptions involving action as opposed to pure belief.
237. The *Smith* decision elicited a wide range of scholarly commentary. In defense of *Smith*, see, for example, William P. Marshall, *In Defense of Smith and Free Exercise Revisionism*,
The Court’s approach in *Smith* reflects a view of autonomy that approaches the European *interdependence* conception of autonomy. If autonomy requires *independence*, or even *inter-independence*, then one would expect a higher degree of concern about the religious beliefs and needs of minority religious adherents.238 Instead, a view of autonomy based on *interdependence* would be satisfied if laws are neutral on their face and general in application, since the interests and needs of churches and the state are not viewed as being in conflict with each other. It is unlikely that majority or powerful religions will be burdened by laws that are on their face neutral and general, but as the *Smith* case illustrates, it is much less likely that the religious claims and needs of minority religions will be protected.239

Since *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, the Supreme Court’s treatment of religious exemptions has exhibited a general pattern of transition from a conception of autonomy based on *independence* of church and state, to a conception based on *inter-independence* (for example, involving for-profit activities of churches), to a conception in *Oregon v. Smith* that approaches a model of autonomy based on *interdependence* of church and state.

*Europe*: There do not appear to have been any cases decided as of yet by the European Court concerning claims that churches are entitled to an exemption from generally applicable laws. There are, however, cases involving individual claims (based upon religion) for exemptions from generally applicable laws, which are discussed in Part V.F below.

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238. In *Oregon v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), Justice Scalia acknowledges that the approach taken by the Court affords less protection to minority religions. Justice Scalia wrote,

> It may fairly be said that leaving accommodating to the political process will place at a relative disadvantage those religious practices that are not widely engaged in; but that unavoidable consequence of democratic government must be preferred to a system in which each conscience is a law unto itself or in which judges weigh the social importance of all laws against the centrality of all religious beliefs.

*Id.* at 890.

239. Thus while sacramental use of peyote by the Native American Church may not be exempted, it is much more likely that sacramental use of wine in a Catholic Mass will receive legislative protection.
9. Summary of church autonomy issues

Figure 1 summarizes the approaches of the U.S. Supreme Court and the European Court to issues involving the autonomy of churches.
### Figure 1
Institutional Autonomy: The Autonomy of Churches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Conception of Autonomy</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Conception of Autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State church</td>
<td>prohibited</td>
<td>independence or inter-independence</td>
<td>permitted</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct state aid to churches</td>
<td>not permitted (although this may be changing)</td>
<td>independence or inter-independence</td>
<td>permitted, including preferential treatment</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax exemptions</td>
<td>permitted (but not in commercial affairs)</td>
<td>inter-independence</td>
<td>permitted, including preferential treatment</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State aid to religious schools</td>
<td>increasingly permitted</td>
<td>move from independence towards inter-independence</td>
<td>direct state aid permitted</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church property, officials, doctrine</td>
<td>strong limits on state involvement</td>
<td>independence or inter-independence</td>
<td>high degree of state involvement permitted</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church standing</td>
<td>recognized</td>
<td>independence or inter-independence</td>
<td>originally not recognized; now is recognized</td>
<td>some movement from inter-independence to inter-independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to legal personality</td>
<td>recognized</td>
<td>independence or inter-independence</td>
<td>not recognized</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemptions from generally applicable laws</td>
<td>movement towards less recognition of exemptions</td>
<td>move from independence to inter-independence and towards interdependence</td>
<td>no cases</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In cases generally involving church autonomy in the United States, there has been a struggle between a conception of autonomy based on *independence* and a conception of autonomy based on *inter-independence*. This struggle has been particularly apparent with respect to laws concerning state aid to religious schools, where a
view of autonomy based on *independence* has been supplanted by a view based on *inter-independence*. In Europe, a conception of autonomy based on *interdependence* has been dominant in cases involving the autonomy of churches.

For those who believe that *interdependence* is not a compelling conception of autonomy to guide U.S. church-state relations, one area of potential concern in the United States is the availability to churches of exemptions from generally applicable laws. The cases in this area have evinced a gradual movement from a conception of autonomy based on *independence* to a conception based on *inter-independence*, and ultimately towards a conception based on *interdependence*.

**B. Autonomy of the State**

In church-state relations there are two dimensions to the concern about institutional autonomy. A highly integrated relationship threatens not just the independence of the church, but also creates the possibility of domination of the state by a church.

Concern for the autonomy of the state can be seen in a variety of contexts, including cases involving various forms of religious expression or teaching of religious viewpoints in public schools, cases involving religious expression in the public sphere outside of schools, cases concerning the permissibility of churches conducting functions usually associated with the state, and cases about the permissibility of state policies that converge with or reflect religious beliefs.

In each of these areas, the Supreme Court has vacillated between a conception of autonomy based upon the *independence* of church and state, which has exerted a particularly strong influence in the public school setting, and a conception of autonomy based on the *inter-independence* of church and state. In Europe, cases involving the autonomy of the state have for the most part reflected a conception of autonomy based on the *interdependence* of church and state.

**1. Religious expression in public schools**

If autonomy requires *independence* of church and state, then religious expression in public schools would be prohibited. If autonomy is based on *interdependence*, then a high degree of religious expression in public schools would be permitted, at least of
favored religious views. A view of autonomy based on inter-
independence would be sensitive to concerns about the independence
of the state and so religious expression in public schools will be
limited, especially when there is concern that a particular religious
viewpoint is exerting a dominant force. On the other hand, some
religious expression would be tolerated in view of countervailing
concerns such as the burdens of exclusion and the requirements of
mutual respect.

United States: Religion in public schools has been a source of
tremendous controversy in the United States, and the Supreme
Court’s concern for the autonomy of the state is perhaps more
evident in this context than in any other group of cases. Compared
with other contexts where state autonomy is an issue, a conception
of autonomy based on the independence of church and state is much
more prevalent in public schools than in other settings. To some
extent this is understandable, since public education is of particular
importance to maintaining and preserving the autonomy of the state.
Because public schools are subject to a high degree of local control,
the threat posed by churches to state autonomy is unusually high,
since in a particular school district it is much more likely than on a
larger political stage that one religion might be dominant. As a
result, public school settings are perhaps the single place where the
Supreme Court of the United States has had the greatest concern
about religious expression. Additionally, the Supreme Court has
evincd a high degree of concern for the autonomy interests of
children in the public school setting. Young children are viewed as
particularly vulnerable and impressionable, and the Court has
expressed concern that their autonomy may be compromised by
allowing high levels of sectarian religious expression.

Europe: In Europe, by contrast, a much higher degree of
religious expression and teaching is permissible in public schools. As
discussed earlier, under the jurisprudence of the European
Convention, a state can subsidize religious education in public
schools, and can pay for certain types of religious instruction in
either state-sponsored or religiously sponsored schools. As Professor
Evans explains, “The concern of the drafters of the Convention was
not (compared with the framers of the United States Constitution)
to keep the State out of religion, including religious education, but
rather to ensure that the State was not subject to financial demands
that it did not wish to meet.”

The European Court has, however, set some parameters on religious speech in schools. For example, in *Kjeldsen, Busk Madsen and Pedersen v. Denmark*, although the court rejected parents’ complaint that an integrated sex education curriculum violated their right to choose the religious and moral education of their children, the court stated that the State “must take care that information or knowledge included in this curriculum is conveyed in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner. The State is forbidden to pursue an aim of indoctrination that might be considered as not respecting parents’ religious and philosophical convictions.”

I will survey three areas of concern about religious speech in public schools in the U.S. and Europe: (a) cases involving release time (the practice of excusing students from secular school activities to receive religious instruction); (b) cases involving mandatory Bible reading, prohibitions on the teaching of evolution, and requirements for posting the Ten Commandments; and (c) cases involving access to public school facilities by private groups that are religious in nature.

### a. Release time from public schools.

One early dispute concerning the constitutional limits upon the interaction of church and state in public schools involved “release time,” the practice of excusing students from class to receive religious instruction. If the autonomy of church and state requires complete *independence*, then release time during the school day would violate the Establishment Clause, regardless of the particulars involved. In contrast, if the autonomy of church and state is based on the *interdependence* of church and state, then religious instruction in the schools would be permissible and the formalities of release time would not be needed. If the relationship between church and state is based on a conception of autonomy that emphasizes *inter-independence*, attention would focus on the particular context and implications of the different types of release time programs.

**United States:** The approach taken by the Supreme Court in the release time cases reflects sensitivity to the *inter-independence* of church and state.
church and state. In *Illinois ex rel. McCollum v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court struck down a release time program that allowed public school students to be dismissed from their secular instruction for a period of time to receive optional religious instruction on school premises. Emphasizing the independence of church and state, the Court stated that “[T]he First Amendment rests upon the premise that both religion and government can best work to achieve their lofty aims if each is left free from the other within its respective sphere.” The Court also emphasized the important individual autonomy concerns at stake, declaring that neither the federal government nor a state “can force or influence a person to go to or to remain away from church against his will or force him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion.”

In a concurring opinion, Justice Frankfurter defended an even more strongly separationist vision of the Establishment Clause, especially in the public school setting.

Designed to serve as perhaps the most powerful agency for promoting cohesion among a heterogeneous democratic people, the public school must keep scrupulously free from entanglement in the strife of sects. The preservation of the community from divisive conflicts, of Government from irreconcilable pressures by religious groups, of religion from censorship and coercion however subtly exercised, requires strict confinement of the State to instruction other than religious, leaving to the individual’s church and home, indoctrination in the faith of his choice.

Justice Frankfurter concluded, “If nowhere else, in the relation between Church and State, ‘good fences make good neighbors.’”

Based upon the strong separationist rhetoric in *McCollum*, one might have thought that any release time program would violate the Establishment Clause. A few years later, however, in *Zorach v. Clauson*, the Supreme Court allowed a release time program in

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244. Id. at 212.
245. Id. at 210 (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting *Everson v. Bd. of Educ.*, 330 U.S. 1, 15–16 (1947)).
246. Id. at 216–17 (Frankfurter, J., concurring). Justice Frankfurter states, “In no activity of the State is it more vital to keep out divisive forces than in its schools, to avoid confusing, not to say fusing, what the Constitution sought to keep strictly apart.” Id. at 231.
247. Id. at 232.
which religious instruction took place off school property. In *Zorach* the Court retreated from the ideal of stark separation. Writing for the majority, Justice Douglas said, “The First Amendment . . . does not say that in every and all respects there shall be a separation of Church and State. Rather, it studiously defines the manner, the specific ways, in which there shall be no concert or union or dependency one on the other.” The Court noted that the release time program in *Zorach* involved neither the expenditure of public funds nor the use of public school classrooms and concluded that there is no system of coercion to get public school students into religious classrooms.

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249. Some years later, in *School District v. Ball*, 473 U.S. 373 (1985), *overruled by Agostini v. Felton*, 521 U.S. 203 (1997), the Supreme Court explained the different outcomes in *McCollum* and *Zorach* as follows:

The difference in symbolic impact helps to explain the difference between the cases. The symbolic connection of church and state in the *McCollum* program presented the students with a graphic symbol of the ‘concert or union or dependency’ of church and state. This very symbolic union was conspicuously absent in the *Zorach* program. *Ball*, 473 U.S. at 391 (citation omitted). By focusing on symbolic “concert or union or dependency,” the Court focused on the institutional autonomy of both church and state.

250. The retreat is accompanied, however, by a denial that a retreat is being made. The majority opinion in *Zorach* states,

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the First Amendment reflects the philosophy that Church and State should be separated. And so far as interference with the ‘free exercise’ of religion and an ‘establishment’ of religion are concerned, the separation must be complete and unequivocal. The First Amendment within the scope of its coverage permits no exception; the prohibition is absolute.

251. Id. at 306. That, the Court states, is the common sense of the matter. Otherwise the state and religion would be aliens to each other—hostile, suspicious, and even unfriendly. Churches could not be required to pay even property taxes. Municipalities would not be permitted to render police or fire protection to religious groups. Policemen who helped parishioners into their places of worship would violate the Constitution. Prayers in our legislative halls; the appeals to the Almighty in the messages of the Chief Executive; the proclamations making Thanksgiving Day a holiday; ‘so help me God’ in our courtroom oaths—these and all other references to the Almighty that run through our laws, our public rituals, our ceremonies would be flouting the First Amendment. A fastidious atheist or agnostic could even object to the supplication with which the Court opens each session: ‘God save the United States and this Honorable Court.’

252. Id. at 308–11.
When the state encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities by adjusting the schedule of public events to sectarian needs, it follows the best of our traditions. For it then respects the religious nature of our people and accommodates the public service to their spiritual needs. To hold that it may not would be to find in the Constitution a requirement that the government show a callous indifference to religious groups. That would be preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe.253

In the release time cases, the stage is set for much of the debate between separation and accommodation over the next fifty years in the U.S. Much of the rhetoric in favor of a strict independence of church and state can be traced to *McCollum*, and much of the rhetoric calling for an accommodation of religion in public life can be traced to *Zorach*.

Forbidding release time on school property but permitting it off school property might appear to be a distinction without a difference, but such a division is quite sensitive to the concerns of *inter-independence* and the different implications of the programs for state autonomy. On the one hand, the independence of churches from the state and of the state from churches is one of the primary ideals the Establishment Clause was meant to protect. On the other hand, the Court identifies a number of undesirable implications of a conception of autonomy that rests upon an ideal of stark separation. The legitimate threat to the autonomy of the state that exists when children receive religious instruction in public schools during the school day is significantly ameliorated when the instruction takes place off school property and without the expenditure of public funds. The possibility of “concert,” “union,” or “dependence” of church and state, and the risk of “coercion” is less when religious instruction takes place off school premises. A small degree of cooperation with religion and encouragement of religious instruction is seen to be consistent with the relational dimension of church autonomy, and also consistent with state autonomy.

*Europe:* In Europe, the state is permitted to sponsor religious and devotional exercises in public schools, so the issue of release time does not arise. Students do have a right to opt out of religious instruction, but the European Court has been quite insensitive to the

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253. *Id.* at 313–14.
subtle coercive pressures that can exist in such situations. In *C.J., J.J., and E.J. v. Poland*, the Commission denied admission of applicants’ claims that discrimination that resulted from a student’s decision not to participate in religious instruction did not constitute a violation of the student’s Article 9 rights. The decision was made in spite of the pressure that both students and teachers put on the student to attend and evidence that she was ostracized until she finally conceded. The European approach to these issues rests upon a conception of autonomy based on interdependence, which permits a high degree of cooperation and mutual support of church and state.

*b. Requiring Bible reading, prohibiting teaching evolution, and posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools.* Another controversial set of issues involving the interactions of church and state in public schools has been various state and local laws that attempt to inject religious instruction or viewpoints into the official school day, by requiring Bible reading, forbidding the teaching of evolution (or permitting it only if it is accompanied by teaching of creation science), or requiring the posting of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms.

Autonomy based upon independence would forbid such infusions of religion into public schools, whereas autonomy based upon interdependence would probably permit such efforts to include religious speech of favored religions in public schools. Autonomy based upon inter-independence would take a highly contextualized approach to analyzing whether the required religious expression in question threatens the ability of the school to conduct its educational mission, or whether the requirements represent an effort by a particular religious viewpoint to dominate or dictate the content of public education. The key question is whether the religious expression poses a threat to the independence of the state, or of individual school children.

*United States:* In the United States, cases involving required Bible reading, forbidding the teaching of evolution or requiring the teaching of creation science, and requiring schools to post copies of the Ten Commandments are examples of efforts by a particular

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255. Another example is school prayer, which I discuss in detail below. See infra Part VI.A.
religious viewpoint to infuse the public school curriculum with teachings that reflect particular religious ideology or tenets. The independence of the state is undermined when it is used as a vehicle for conveying the doctrinal views of particular religious groups. Thus, it is not surprising that these cases have elicited strong separationist responses from the Supreme Court.

For example, in *Abington Township v. Schempp*, which held that requiring Bible reading in public schools violates the Establishment Clause, the Court stated that the purpose of the Establishment Clause was not merely to outlaw the official establishment of a single sect, “[i]t was to create a complete and permanent separation of the spheres of religious activity and civil authority by comprehensively forbidding every form of public aid or support for religion.” 256 In a concurring opinion, Justice Douglas surveyed several ways in which an establishment of religion could be achieved.

The church and state can be one; the church may control the state or the state may control the church; or the relationship may take one of several possible forms of a working arrangement between the two bodies. . . . The vice of all such arrangements under the Establishment Clause is that the state is lending its assistance to a church’s efforts to gain and keep adherents. Under the First Amendment it is strictly a matter for the individual and his church as to what church he will belong to and how much support, in the way of belief, time, activity or money, he will give to it. 257

The key to the autonomy of church and state is freedom from the control or domination of one institution by the other. Justice Brennan strikes a similar chord of concern for the autonomy of church and state in his concurring opinion in *Abington*.

What Virginia had long practiced, and what Madison, Jefferson and others fought to end, was the extension of civil government’s support to religion in a manner which made the two in some degree interdependent, and thus threatened the freedom of each. The purpose of the Establishment Clause was to assure that the

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257. *Id.* at 227–28 (Douglas, J., concurring).
national legislature would not exert its power in the service of any purely religious end.258

A similar concern for the autonomy of the state from the injection of sectarian doctrines into public education is evident in the cases involving the teaching of evolution. In Epperson v. Arkansas, the Supreme Court held that a state statute that made it unlawful for public school teachers to teach evolution is unconstitutional.259 Writing for the majority, Justice Fortas stated that the statute violates the Establishment Clause because it “selects from the body of knowledge a particular segment which it proscribes for the sole reason that it is deemed to conflict with a particular religious doctrine.”260 The Court voiced similar concerns about the autonomy of the state from the imposition of religious viewpoints in Edwards v. Aguillard, in which the Court held that a state law forbidding the teaching of evolution unless accompanied by instruction in creation science violates the Establishment Clause.261 The Court concluded that “[t]he preeminent purpose of the Louisiana Legislature was clearly to advance the religious viewpoint that a supernatural being created humankind.”262 According to the Court, the autonomy of the state is jeopardized when schools become tools for teaching religious doctrine, and the state’s autonomy is arguably jeopardized to a greater degree when religious viewpoints are used to censor or restrict what may or may not be taught in public schools.

Similarly, in Stone v. Graham, in which the Supreme Court struck down a statute requiring the posting of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms, the Court was

258. Id. at 234 (Brennan, J., concurring) (quoting McGowan v. Maryland, 366 U.S. 420, 465 (1961)). Justice Brennan suggests that rather than focusing on whether Jefferson or Madison would have found a particular religious exercise to be permissible, “[a] more fruitful inquiry . . . is whether the practices here challenged threaten those consequences which the Framers deeply feared; whether, in short, they tend to promote that type of interdependence between religion and state which the First Amendment was designed to prevent.” Id. at 236.

259. 393 U.S. 97 (1968).

260. Id. at 103. The Court states, in the present case, there can be no doubt that Arkansas has sought to prevent its teachers from discussing the theory of evolution because it is contrary to the belief of some that the Book of Genesis must be the exclusive source of doctrine as to the origin of man. No suggestion has been made that Arkansas’ law may be justified by considerations of state policy other than the religious views of some of its citizens.


262. Id. at 591.
concerned about efforts of one religious viewpoint to dominate or dictate classroom content. In striking down the statute, the Court held that it had no secular purpose, "and no legislative recitation of a supposed secular purpose can blind us to that fact." The Court said,

Posting of religious texts on the wall serves no [appropriate] educational function. If the posted copies of the Ten Commandments are to have any effect at all, it will be to induce the schoolchildren to read, meditate upon, perhaps to venerate and obey, the Commandments. However desirable this might be as a matter of private devotion, it is not a permissible state objective under the Establishment Clause.

In cases involving efforts to promote a particular religious viewpoint in public schools, the Supreme Court has responded by vigorously rejecting such efforts. In doing so, the Court has based its reasons, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, upon a conception of autonomy that reflects the concerns of independence.

Europe: I have not been able to locate any cases decided by the European Court concerning challenges to the permissibility of Bible reading, teaching evolution, or posting the Ten Commandments in public schools. This is not surprising, since concern about such practices reflects a conception of autonomy that is concerned primarily with independence, whereas the European approach in such cases rests upon a view of church-state relations reflecting interdependence.

c. Use of public school facilities for religious clubs. A third set of public school cases has involved claims for equal access by religious clubs who want to use school facilities for religious instruction or worship on the same basis as other student clubs. Autonomy based on independence would suggest that such access should not be allowed, whereas autonomy based on interdependence would find the inclusion of religious groups unobjectionable. A conception of autonomy based on the idea of inter-independence would be concerned not only with the independence of the state, but also the

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265. Stone, 449 U.S. at 42.
demands of mutual respect and the possibility that exclusion might reflect hostility rather than neutrality.

United States: In a series of cases involving equal access claims by religious groups, the Court has evidenced sensitivity for the independence of the state but, at the same time, has been sensitive to the autonomy consequences for religious groups if they are excluded from forums that are generally open. In this area, the Court has, for the most part, reflected a view of autonomy sensitive to the concerns of inter-independence, taking a position that autonomy does not require religion to be separated from the state, but rather requiring equal treatment with respect to religious and nonreligious groups or clubs seeking access to school facilities.

The Supreme Court has used equality, rather than autonomy, as the principal rationale for permitting certain forms of student-sponsored religious speech on school property. In *Widmar v. Vincent*, the Supreme Court focused on First Amendment free-speech rights in holding that a university’s policy of denying access to religious groups to conduct meetings in facilities generally available to other student groups was an unconstitutional violation of the fundamental principle that a state regulation of speech should be content neutral. The Court reached a similar result in *Board of Education v. Mergens*, in which the Court held that a high school that makes its facilities generally available to student clubs cannot specifically refuse access to a religious club. In a similar vein, the Court held in *Lamb’s Chapel v. Center Moriches Union Free School District* that a religious group could show religious films on public school property after school hours, and in *Rosenberger v. University of Virginia*, the Court held that a public university could not discriminate in withholding funds from a school newspaper with a religious viewpoint.

These cases represent a significant departure from a model of autonomy based on a wall of separation between church and state. From a strict separationist viewpoint, religious groups should be excluded from public schools and universities. Instead, the Court asserts that the state risks greater “entanglement” with religion by

attempting to exclude all religious speech and religious worship from forums that are generally available to everyone.\textsuperscript{270} In \textit{Widmar}, the Court noted that “an open forum in a public university does not confer any imprimatur of state approval on religious sects or practices” and endorsed the court of appeals’ conclusion in the case that “such a policy ‘would no more commit the University . . . to religious goals’ than it is ‘now committed to the goals of the Students for a Democratic Society, the Young Socialist Alliance,’ or any other group eligible to use its facilities.”\textsuperscript{271} In a similar vein, in \textit{Mergens}, the Court held that extending the equal access policy to secondary schools likewise did not violate the Establishment Clause.\textsuperscript{272} In \textit{Mergens} the Court states that an equal access policy does not have the principal effect of advancing religion.\textsuperscript{273} Thus, the independence of the state is not jeopardized by the policy. To the contrary, “the message is one of neutrality rather than endorsement; if a State refused to let religious groups use facilities open to others, then it would demonstrate not neutrality but hostility toward religion.”\textsuperscript{274} In recognizing that some forms of separation of church and state would represent hostility rather than neutrality, the Court appears to acknowledge that autonomy is not always facilitated by complete \textit{independence}, but rather rests on the \textit{inter-independence} of church and state.

\textit{Europe}: I have not been able to locate any cases decided by the European Court concerning challenges to the permissibility of granting religiously affiliated student organizations access to school facilities. This is to be expected, given the \textit{interdependence} perspective prevalent in Europe.

2. Religious expression outside of schools

Controversies involving religious expression in the public domain also arise outside the public school context. Two prominent areas of controversy have involved legislative prayer and the display of religious artifacts on public property. As with religion in public schools, a model of autonomy based on complete \textit{independence}
would forbid all religious expression in the public square. A model of autonomy based on *interdependence* would permit religious expression by favored religious voices. A model of autonomy based on *inter-independence* would be sensitive to the implications of exclusion versus inclusion, as well as the possible interference with the independence of either religion or the state by a particular type of religious expression.

United States: The Supreme Court has demonstrated concern for the independence of the state by placing restrictions on religious expression on state property outside of the school context, although the Court has been somewhat more willing to allow religious expression outside the school context. Although autonomy conceived as requiring independence is very influential, a conception based on inter-independence also asserts itself. For example, in contrast to the Court’s rulings on prayer in schools, in *Marsh v. Chambers*,275 the Supreme Court ruled that a state could hire a minister to deliver official prayers at the beginning of legislative meetings. Remarkably, in evaluating the constitutionality of legislative prayer, the Supreme Court ignored the *Lemon* test altogether, conducting instead an analysis of the longstanding historical precedent of allowing legislative prayer.276

At times the line drawn by the Supreme Court between permissible and impermissible religious expression appears—to put it charitably—somewhat strained. For example, in *County of Allegheny v. ACLU*,277 the Court ruled against the display of a crèche in a country courthouse. However, it reached the opposite conclusion in *Lynch v. Donnelly*,278 when the display in question contained a menorah, a Santa Claus house, reindeer, and a Christmas tree as well as a crèche.

Unpopular or dissenting speech that might have a religious component has also been given protection. In *Bristol Square Review and Advisory Board v. Pinette*,279 the Court held that the Establishment Clause was not violated by a Ku Klux Klan display of

276. *See id.* at 786 (“The opening of sessions of legislative and other deliberative public bodies with prayer is deeply embedded in the history and tradition of this country.”).
an unattended cross on state property that constituted a public
forum, equally accessible to all community groups.

Europe: I have not been able to locate any cases in which the
European Court or Commission have expressed concern for the
autonomy of the state in nonschool settings.

3. Church conduct of state functions

A model of autonomy based on independence would forbid
churches from performing state functions. A model of autonomy
based on interdependence would permit churches to perform a wide
variety of functions that might be thought to fall within the state’s
domain. A model of autonomy based on inter-independence would
make a context-sensitive inquiry into the implications for state and
church independence of allowing churches to perform particular
state functions, as well as the implications for each institution of
disallowing such activities.

United States: Concern for state independence is evident in the
Supreme Court’s reluctance to let churches exercise powers that are
normally reserved for the state. For example, in Larkin v. Grendel’s
Den, Inc., the Supreme Court struck down a state statute that gave
schools and churches power to prevent the issuance of liquor licenses
for premises within a 500-foot radius of church or school property.
Evidencing similar concern for state autonomy, in Board of
Education v. Grumet, the Court struck down a school districting
plan that created a school district along the boundaries of an
exclusively Hasidic Jewish community, on the grounds that the state
had relinquished control over public education to a religious
community.

Europe: The European Court, in contrast, has been quite willing
to allow churches to perform state functions and to receive state
funding for conducting functions such as keeping records of births
and deaths, providing welfare services, performing marriages and
funerals, and maintaining cemeteries. The court has allowed
mandatory taxes that apply to members as well as nonmembers of a
Church performing such functions. Professor Evans explains, “The
individual may be forced to pay this tax even though he or she is

281. 512 U.S. 687 (1994); see Thomas C. Berg, Slouching Towards Secularism: A
strongly opposed to the relationship between the State and Church that these ‘secular functions’ imply.”282 Allowing church performance of state functions reflects a view of autonomy based on interdependence.

4. State laws and policies that converge with religious beliefs

None of the conceptions of autonomy outlined above would prohibit all state laws and policies that reflect or correlate with religious beliefs, but each conception of autonomy would adopt a different approach toward assessing when laws that reflect religious beliefs are permissible. Autonomy conceived as requiring independence of church and state would be most skeptical of convergence, and might question state practices such as Sunday-closing laws, or even policies that close public facilities on religious holidays, such as Christmas or Easter. Autonomy based on a conception of interdependence of church and state would be unlikely to find problematic clear causal connections between religious beliefs and state laws, even concerning controversial and morally charged issues such as abortion and divorce. A conception of autonomy based on inter-independence would be skeptical of laws and policies that reflect religious viewpoints, especially when there are no (or very weak) independent nonreligious bases for such policies and laws.

United States: For the most part, the Supreme Court has adopted a view consistent with a conception of autonomy based on the inter-independence of church and state. In the Court’s view, state autonomy does not demand that laws consistent with religious belief be deemed unconstitutional. The Supreme Court has been willing to tolerate government policies that coincide with religious beliefs of a particular religion, provided there is a legitimate secular purpose for the regulation and the effect is not primarily to endorse a particular religion. For example, in *Harris v. McRae*,283 the Supreme Court upheld federal regulations that forbade the use of federal funds for performing abortions under the Medicaid program, noting that “the fact that the funding restrictions . . . may coincide with the religious tenets of the Roman Catholic Church does not, without more,


contravene the Establishment Clause.\textsuperscript{284} In \textit{McGowan v. Maryland},\textsuperscript{285} the Supreme Court upheld Sunday-closing laws on the grounds that while such laws were originally motivated by religious beliefs, their contemporary purpose was to afford a uniform day of rest for citizens. On the other hand, in \textit{Wallace v. Jaffree},\textsuperscript{286} the Supreme Court struck down a law providing for a mandatory moment of silence in public schools, on the grounds that there was no plausible secular rationale for the law.

\textit{Europe:} The European Court’s jurisprudence in this area has reflected a conception of autonomy based on the \textit{interdependence} of church and state. Under Article 9, one of the grounds upon which a state may restrict a manifestation of religious belief is for the protection of morals. As Professor Evans notes, “One complex question that arises in this area is whether a general law based on moral conceptions that are part of the morality of the dominant religion, but not of some minority religions, is a justifiable infringement on freedom of religion or belief.”\textsuperscript{287} Such an issue arose in \textit{Johnston v. Ireland},\textsuperscript{288} in which the Commission held that no issue arose under Article 9 with respect to a Protestant who claimed his religious freedom was abridged by an Irish law that reflected the Catholic Church’s prohibitions concerning divorce.\textsuperscript{289}

5. \textit{Summary of state autonomy issues}

Figure 2 summarizes the issues involving the autonomy of the state.

\textsuperscript{284} Id. at 319–20.


\textsuperscript{286} 472 U.S. 38 (1985).

\textsuperscript{287} EVANS, \textit{FREEDOM OF RELIGION}, \textit{supra} note 3, at 159.


\textsuperscript{289} The Commission held that the case did not even raise an Article 9 issue, since Article 12, dealing with the freedom to marry and have a family, was the \textit{lex specialis} of the Convention relating to marriage. \textit{Id.} Professor Evans notes that “[t]he case has been criticized for its focus on the right of the State to set out marriage and divorce regulations, without looking at whether such regulation, while not a limit on the right to marry, was an improper restriction on freedom of religion.” EVANS, \textit{FREEDOM OF RELIGION}, \textit{supra} note 3, at 160.
In cases involving the autonomy of the state, the jurisprudence of the United States Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights are based on very different conceptions of autonomy. U.S. cases involve a struggle between a conception of autonomy based on a categorical independence of church and state and a conception of autonomy based on inter-independence. In Europe, a conception of autonomy based on interdependence has prevailed, with a much greater institutional engagement and cooperation between the state and favored churches or religious viewpoints.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Conception of Autonomy</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Conception of Autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious expression in public schools</td>
<td>trend towards less religious expression permitted during school</td>
<td>movement from inter-independence to independence</td>
<td>permitted</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release time</td>
<td>prohibited on site; permitted off school property</td>
<td>inter-independence</td>
<td>permitted</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible reading, evolution, Ten Commandments</td>
<td>prohibited</td>
<td>independence</td>
<td>permitted</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of school facilities by religious clubs</td>
<td>permitted, based upon neutrality</td>
<td>inter-independence</td>
<td>permitted</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious expression in the public domain</td>
<td>more permitted than in schools; trend towards exclusion</td>
<td>movement from inter-independence to independence</td>
<td>permitted</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church conduct of state functions</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>independence, but to some extent inter-independence</td>
<td>permitted</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws and policies that mirror religious beliefs</td>
<td>permitted, but subject to heightened scrutiny</td>
<td>inter-independence</td>
<td>permitted</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As noted above, the Establishment Clause was based in large part on a concern for the autonomy of the state. Today it is easy to lose sight of that fact, because the state has grown so large and powerful. Thus, it would be easy to overlook the large number of contexts in which concern for the autonomy of the state remains an animating concern in cases involving the relationship between church and state. Although American society is much more secular and pluralistic than it was two hundred years ago, concerns for the autonomy of the state arise in a surprisingly large number of situations.

V. INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY

We have seen that in cases involving institutional autonomy, the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court and the jurisprudence of the European Court are informed by very different conceptions of autonomy. This may come as little surprise, since this difference could be attributable to the fact that the U.S. Constitution includes not only a free exercise provision, but also prohibits an establishment of religion. The European Convention, in contrast, provides for freedom of religion or belief, but does not prohibit the existence of a state church and does not have an equivalent of the Establishment Clause.

In cases involving individual religious liberty, in contrast, we might expect greater convergence in the approaches and outcomes in the United States and Europe. After all, Article 9 of the European Convention contains a clear guarantee of religious liberty that is much more explicit and detailed than the Free Exercise Clause and would appear to guarantee at least as broad a protection of religious freedom as exists in the United States. Thus, while we might expect that cases involving institutional autonomy, which are more likely to be categorized in the United States as Establishment Clause cases, are likely to have different outcomes, we might expect that cases involving individual religious freedom will have similar outcomes in the United States and Europe.

Such an expectation is not, for the most part, borne out by the cases. In cases involving the freedom of religion or belief of individuals, we see that the same conceptions of autonomy are prevalent. U.S. free exercise jurisprudence (at least until quite recently) has exhibited quite a high degree of concern for a conception of individual autonomy based on the idea of independence. In contrast, cases decided under the European
Convention have reflected a view of autonomy based on the idea of *interdependence*, exhibit a higher degree of deference to state goals and can more often be described as paternalistic. Because its jurisprudence often reflects a view of autonomy based on *interdependence*, the European Courts do not see individual autonomy being infringed when the state directly supports, or interferes with, church affairs.

I will briefly survey six categories of cases that raise religious freedom issues involving the autonomy of the individual: (a) whether a state can impose oaths and religious requirements for office; (b) whether there is a right to conscientious objection; (c) whether an individual has a right not to work on his or her Sabbath; (d) whether there is a right to religious education; (e) the scope of the right to proselytize; and (f) whether and upon what grounds an individual may receive an exemption from a generally applicable law that burdens his or her religion or belief.

**A. Oaths and Religious Requirements for Office**

A conception of autonomy based on *independence* of church and state would prohibit all oaths and religious requirements for public office. A conception of autonomy based on *interdependence*, in contrast, would allow oaths and religious requirements for public office. A conception based on *inter-independence* would be very suspicious of such requirements, although it would be more likely than a view based on *independence* to tolerate a practice of taking oaths that are religious in nature if nonreligious variations are permissible or if such oaths are not mandatory.

*United States:* Religious oaths are specifically prohibited by the U.S. Constitution. In 1961, in *Torcaso v. Watkins*, the Supreme Court invalidated a requirement that candidates for public office profess a belief in God. In *McDaniel v. Paty*, the Court ruled that a Tennessee state constitutional requirement that certain public officials could not be “minister[s] of the Gospel, or priest[s] of any denomination whatsoever” was unconstitutional. Thus, religion

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290. U.S. CONST. art. VI, cl. 3 (“[N]o religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.”).
293. Id. at 620 (citing TENN. CONST. art. VIII, § 1 (1796)).
may not be used as either a requirement or as the basis for excluding someone from holding public office. These holdings reflect a view of autonomy based on the independence of church and state. On the other hand, oaths that invoke God are permitted for those taking public office or giving evidence in a legal proceeding, but exceptions are available for those who object to making such an oath.294 This reflects a view of autonomy that does not require stark independence of church and state, but rather one that envisions a degree of inter-independence.

**Europe:** In *Buscarini v. San Marino*,295 the European Court ruled that the requirement of taking a religious oath to hold political office may be an impermissible limitation on the manifestation of religion. The court, quoting the Commission, stated that “it would be contradictory to make the exercise of a mandate intended to represent different views of society within Parliament subject to a prior declaration of commitment to a particular set of beliefs,” thus making the requirement of the religious oath unnecessary in a democratic society.296 However, in *Kalac v. Turkey*,297 the Court, reversing a Commission decision, held that Article 9 was not violated when a military judge was dismissed from his job because he belonged to a fundamentalist Islamic group, even though there was no evidence that his religion was interfering with his performance of

294. “In response to pressures from atheists and other religious objectors, courts in recent years have gone beyond traditional oaths and affirmations and have allowed other alternative formulations such as ‘declarations’ or ‘promises’ to tell the truth.” Jonathan Belcher, Note, *Religion-Plus-Speech: The Constitutionality of Juror Oaths and Affirmations Under the First Amendment*, 34 WM. & MARY L. REV. 287, 289 (1992). For example, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals held the following:

[When a judge is confronted with a prospective juror’s refusal, on grounds of constitutionally protected beliefs, to swear or affirm to answer voir dire questions truthfully, the judge should either allow the person to withdraw from jury duty without penalty or allow the prospective juror an alternative that requires him or her to make some form of serious public commitment to answer truthfully that does not transgress the prospect’s sincerely held beliefs.

Soc’y of Separationists, Inc. v. Herman, 939 F.2d 1207, 1219 (5th Cir. 1991).


296. Id. at 221.

his role as a military judge.\textsuperscript{298} In \textit{Kalac}, religious status was viewed to be a permissible basis for disqualifying someone from certain types of public office. These holdings exhibit a degree of concern for individual religious independence, but are broadly consistent with a view of autonomy based on a conception of interdependence.

\textbf{B. Conscientious Objection}

A constitutional guarantee of the right of conscientious objection would be unlikely under any of the three conceptions of autonomy. If autonomy is based on the independence of church and state, we would expect the state to disallow conscientious objection on the grounds that matters of self defense and national security fall squarely within the sphere of the state, and religious preferences and convictions are irrelevant to a determination of whether an individual is obliged to serve in the military. Stark independence would view religious conviction as irrelevant to a determination of civic obligation. A conception of autonomy based on inter-independence might be more willing to accept or accommodate conscientious objectors, since religion is not seen as being totally separate from and unconnected with the concerns of the state. Nevertheless, the parameters of conscientious objection will likely be carefully circumscribed and would be set by the state with an eye towards protecting the state’s ability to defend itself and its interests. A conception of autonomy based on interdependence would not be likely to guarantee rights of conscientious objection, unless a religion favored by the state had a strong doctrinal basis for guaranteeing conscientious objection. For basic reasons of self-preservation, it seems unlikely that a state would ally itself with a church that is strongly passivist, or one that asserts a robust guarantee of each individual’s right to assert a claim of conscientious objection.

\textit{United States:} While the United States recognizes conscientious objection, it receives statutory rather than constitutional protection.

\textsuperscript{298} Professor Evans notes that this case seems to fall into the category of \textit{forum internum}, or religious beliefs that are to receive absolute protection, but the Court in reversing the Commission’s finding that his dismissal constituted a breach of Article 9 used such a narrow definition of freedom of religion or belief that it is difficult to see how any but the most totalitarian State could breach it. Thus, in most cases, the State can make it unpleasant or burdensome to hold a religion or belief without actually intruding on the \textit{forum internum}.

\textsc{Evans, Freedom of Religion, supra note 3, at 78–79.}
Conscientious objectors have been the beneficiaries of a long history of legislative recognition reaching back as early as 1661 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony and continuing to the present day by federal statute. The United States Code permits a conscientious objector to avoid combat service if his opposition is based on “religious training and belief.”

Scholars disagree on whether a free exercise right to conscientious objection exists, but it seems fairly unlikely the Supreme Court would recognize a free exercise exemption for three reasons. First, while the Court has never squarely addressed the question, there is dictum indicating that there is no such constitutional right. Second, the Court has granted a high degree of deference to Congress and the military on matters of national...
defense and security. The third reason to suspect that the Court would not recognize a constitutional exemption from military service on religious liberty grounds is the Court’s relatively recent decision in *Oregon v. Smith,* which eliminated requiring strict scrutiny of generally applicable laws that burden religion. In sum, while conscientious objectors receive statutory recognition in the United States, it is unlikely that there is a constitutional right to an exemption from military service. Statutory rather than constitutional protection of conscientious objection is consistent with a view of autonomy based on *inter-independence* of church and state.

*Europe:* There is no right to conscientious objection under the European Convention, and it is left to individual states to provide, or to choose not to provide, exemptions from military service for conscientious objectors. As early as 1966, and consistently since, the Commission has held that there is no right under Article 9 that covers conscientious objectors. This holding was based on Article 4 of the Convention, which prohibits slavery or forced or compulsory labor, but which specifically creates an exception in cases of “conscientious objectors in countries where they are recognized.” The Commission emphasized that because Article 4 contemplated that countries might not recognize conscientious objectors, there could be no obligation for countries to recognize them.

Nevertheless, a sea change may be afoot. A more liberal approach to conscientious objector claims appears to be evident from two

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303. See *Davis,* supra note 301, at 205–06; C. Thomas Dienes, *When the First Amendment Is Not Preferred: The Military and Other Special Contexts,* 56 U. CIN. L. REV. 779 (1987). “[J]udicial deference to . . . congressional exercise of authority is at its apogee when legislative action under the congressional authority to raise and support armies and make rules and regulations for their governance is challenged.” *Rostker v. Goldberg,* 453 U.S. 57, 70 (1981). This deference means the Court does not probe constitutional challenges in the military context with the same level of scrutiny. *Id.* at 70–71 (citing numerous representative cases); Dienes, *supra.* Military interests simply carry more weight in any balancing analysis than do governmental interests in most other areas. Any petitioner fighting for recognition of a constitutional right to conscientious objection will have to overcome this barrier.

304. *494 U.S. 872 (1990).*


306. *Id.* (citing European Convention, art. 4(3)(c)).

307. *Id.*
recent cases. In *Tsirlis and Kouloumpas v. Greece*, the European Court held that while ministers do not have a right to conscientious objection, lengthy imprisonment of Jehovah’s Witness ministers violated their Article 9 rights, since under the law providing exemption for members of a “known religion,” Orthodox ministers had no difficulty obtaining exemptions. In an unreported case, *Thlimmenos v. Greece*, the European Court held that a Jehovah’s Witness who passed a public exam to become an accountant, but was denied entry into the profession based upon a criminal conviction for refusing to serve in the armed forces, had his Article 9 rights violated since there was no option of substitute service available at the time of his conviction for a serious criminal offense. These recent decisions reflect a higher degree of concern for individual equality and autonomy rights, perhaps signaling some movement away from a conception of autonomy based on *interdependence* to a conception based on *inter-independence*.

C. Sabbath Work

A conception of autonomy based on *independence* would probably not permit Sunday-closing laws (since such laws use state power to further religious ends), but might recognize a right to have one’s work schedule structured to accommodate Sabbath-day observance. In contrast, autonomy based on *interdependence* would likely allow Sunday-closing laws and would also allow laws that protect religious adherents from Sabbath work. These protections and guarantees, however, while likely protecting preferred churches and their adherents, would not necessarily afford similar protections to religious believers who do not observe the same Sabbath day as the preferred churches. Autonomy based on *inter-independence* would be suspicious of Sunday-closing laws,

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310. As noted above in the discussion of religious-based claims for an exemption from generally applicable laws, while it might seem that *independence* would require a broad recognition of claimed exemptions, if the sphere of religious life is limited to “belief” and the sphere of government oversight is said to encompass everything that includes “action,” then *independence* will be viewed as requiring very little recognition of claims for an exemption from generally applicable laws, including the claims of Sabbatarians for an exemption from requirements to work on their Sabbath day.
although if such laws had a credible secular basis, and if such laws had an appropriate set of exemptions and exceptions, they might be permitted. Autonomy based on inter-independence might also recognize that the state’s failure to accommodate Sabbath-day work preferences imposes a burden on individual religious freedom, and state policies that burden religious observance might be subject to heightened judicial scrutiny.

United States: In 1961, in Braunfeld v. Brown, the Supreme Court held that the free exercise rights of Jewish merchants were not violated by Sunday-closing laws, although the Court suggested that the state could enact an exemption from such laws for merchants whose religious beliefs required them to close on another day. This case represents one of the few early instances in which a conception of autonomy based on interdependence seems to underlie the Supreme Court’s analysis. In Braunfeld, the Court upheld a state law that was intended to protect and further the interests of a majority religious viewpoint, finding reciprocal benefits to the state for providing this preference and protection, while being dismissive of the burdens that such a law placed upon adherents to another Sabbath day.

A few years later, the Supreme Court modified its approach to laws that burden religious freedom by subjecting such laws to heightened scrutiny. In Sherbert v. Verner, the Court held that a Seventh-Day Adventist who was denied unemployment

312. However, in Estate of Thornton v. Caldor, Inc., 472 U.S. 703 (1985), the Supreme Court invalidated an effort to follow such an approach, striking down a statute providing Sabbath observers with an absolute and unqualified right not to work on their chosen Sabbath.
313. Braunfeld, 366 U.S. at 599, 605 (“[T]he statute at bar does not make unlawful any religious practices of appellants; the Sunday law simply regulates a secular activity and, as applied to appellants, operates so as to make the practice of their religious beliefs more expensive.”) The court also asserts that the legislation “imposes only an indirect burden on the exercise of religion.” Id. at 606. The Court further states:
If the purpose or effect of a law is to impede the observance of one or all religions or is to discriminate invidiously between religions, that law is constitutionally invalid even though the burden may be characterized as being only indirect. But if the State regulates conduct by enacting a general law within its power, the purpose and effect of which is to advance the State’s secular goals, the statute is valid despite its indirect burden on religious observance unless the State may accomplish its purpose by means which do not impose such a burden.

Id. at 607.
compensation because she refused to work on Saturday was entitled to receive unemployment benefits because the denial of benefits constituted a “substantial infringement” or “coercive effect on her religious beliefs.” In so holding, the Court exhibited a high degree of concern for the autonomy of religious believers whose religious convictions put them at odds with state law. If a petitioner could demonstrate that a law created a “substantial burden” on his religious liberty rights, then the state was required to show that the burden was justified by a “compelling state interest” and that the government’s program was the “least restrictive means” to vindicate that interest. In Sherbert, the Court held that the state failed to prove either a compelling state interest (the Court rejected the argument that the law prevented spurious claims by “claimants feigning religious objections to Saturday work”) or that the law was the least restrictive means for combating such alleged abuses. Following Sherbert, in Hobbie v. Unemployment Appeals Commission, the Court declared unconstitutional a denial of unemployment benefits to an employee who refused to work on Saturdays after converting to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. In 1989, in Frazee v. Illinois Department of Employment Security, the Court required the State of Illinois to provide unemployment benefits to a man who refused to work on Sunday because it was the “Lord’s day,” even though the petitioner who said he was a Christian did not claim membership in a particular religious group.

These outcomes are consistent with a conception of autonomy based on the inter-independence of church and state. One of the strategies that will often be adopted under a conception of inter-independence is heightened scrutiny, where under the autonomy interests of individuals (Is there a substantial burden placed on religious observance?) will be weighed against the autonomy interests of the state (Is there a compelling state interest and is the state policy narrowly tailored to accomplish that interest?). In Oregon v. Smith, decided a year after Frazee, the Court signaled a sharp

315. Id. at 406.
316. Id. at 404.
317. Id. at 402–10.
318. Id. at 407.
retreat from subjecting facially neutral laws to heightened scrutiny when the autonomy interests of religious adherents are burdened by such laws. In Smith, the Supreme Court held that neutrally applicable laws that burden religion are not subject to heightened scrutiny, implicitly adopting a conception of autonomy based upon the interdependence of church and state.322

In these cases, we see the Supreme Court taking positions that rely on shifting conceptions of autonomy. In Braunfeld, the Court relies on a conception of autonomy based on interdependence. The Court sees a high degree of integration and cooperation between the goals of the state and those of a preferred religious group, and the Court is very deferential to state action that has a negative impact on the religious liberty of individuals who do not belong to that group. In Sherbert and Frazee, the Court reflects a greater sensitivity to burdens that facially neutral laws may place on religious observance and subjects such situations to heightened scrutiny, reflecting a conception of autonomy based on inter-independence. In Smith, the Court abandons heightened scrutiny and returns to a conception of autonomy based on the interdependence of church and state, with the state being trusted to adequately protect religious rights and interests. State action is presumed to protect religious freedom unless it overtly discriminates against a religious group.

Europe: The European Court’s stance on Sabbath-day work has not been fully tested. In Konttinen v. Finland,323 the issue of Sabbath work was raised by the applicant Konttinen, who worked for the State Railway for several years before becoming a member of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. As part of his new religious conversion, Konttinen was required to “refrain from working on the Sabbath (Saturday) which starts at sunset on Friday.”324 At certain times of year, based upon the time of sundown, Konttinen left work early to avoid working on the Sabbath day. Despite informing his employer of his religious convictions and his need to leave early on

322. Id. at 882–89. One might think that the Supreme Court in Smith relies upon a conception of autonomy that reflects independence, since churches are not given special treatment. Such an interpretation of independence, however, is possible only if the wall of separation is moved very far into the realm of religious practice. If religious practice is isolated and marginalized sufficiently a government can always claim that it leaves religion alone within its very constricted sphere.

324. Id.
occasion, Konttinen was dismissed by the Railway for leaving work early. The Commission ruled that because the applicant was a civil servant of the State Railway, he had an obligation to his employer to observe the rules governing his work hours. The Commission also found that Konttinen was not dismissed because of his religious beliefs but rather because of his failure to comply with his specified work hours. The Commission also emphasized that the applicant’s dismissal was not a violation of his right to freedom of religion because the applicant was free to relinquish his post. Thus, to date the European Court has not exhibited a high degree of concern for individual religious needs in cases involving Sabbath-day work, and the limited jurisprudence in this area seems to reflect a conception of autonomy based on interdependence.

D. The Right to Religious Education

A conception of autonomy based on independence might not recognize the right of parents to send their children to church-sponsored schools, since education could be viewed as a secular function of the state. Even if there is a right to receive religious education, autonomy based on independence would forbid the state from providing funding and other support for religious schools. In contrast, a conception of autonomy based on interdependence would recognize the right of parents to send their children to church-sponsored schools, at least to schools sponsored by preferred churches. Autonomy based on interdependence would also permit the state to provide financial and other forms of direct aid to schools sponsored by preferred churches. A conception of autonomy based on inter-independence would be sensitive to the implications for the state, for churches, and for children of being sent to religious schools. While the autonomy interests of parents, children and churches might weigh in favor of guaranteeing a right to attend church-sponsored schools, direct financial aid to church-sponsored schools would not be allowed, since this would jeopardize the independence of church and state. In addition, the state’s autonomy interests will weigh in favor of giving the state a voice in the content and character of the education provided.

325. Id.
326. Id.
327. Id.
United States: In the United States, parents have a constitutional right to send their children to parochial schools, but private schools may not receive direct state aid. In a highly anticipated decision handed down in the summer of 2002, the Supreme Court upheld a voucher program that allows parents to use vouchers to send their children to parochial schools. In cases involving parochial schools, the Supreme Court has exhibited a trend from a view of autonomy based on independence to a view of autonomy that reflects the assumptions of inter-independence. Indeed, if the recent voucher case is a precursor of things to come, the Supreme Court may be poised to allow programs that indirectly provide significant quantities of financial benefits to churches, which would mark a significant move in the direction of a conception of autonomy based on the assumptions of interdependence. Recently, the Supreme Court decided Locke v. Davey, which dealt with a provision in the Washington State Constitution that prohibited a student from using a particular state scholarship program in pursuit of a degree in theology. In considering the case, the Supreme Court held that a state may provide scholarship funds to a student in pursuit of a degree in theology without violating the Establishment Clause, but a state was not obligated to make those funds available by the Free Exercise Clause. Such an approach is indicative of inter-independence; the state may provide funding if it chooses, and even under the Washington plan, the scholarships may be used by students attending religious schools without pursuing a degree in theology. However, it is also sensitive of the concerns of independence by not requiring that the states use taxpayer funds to support religious ministry. The sort of balancing evident in Davey is suggestive of an inter-independence approach.

Europe: In Europe, parents have the right to send their children to church-sponsored schools. Additionally, under the European Convention states can subsidize religious schools or pay for certain types of religious education in public or religious schools, although minority religions have no basis to claim a right to state funding for

332. Id. at 1311.
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their schools. Parents are quite limited in their ability to insulate children from types of teaching in public schools that they find objectionable from a religious point of view. Even the ability to receive an exemption from religious instruction is limited. These outcomes reflect a view of autonomy based on the interdependence of church and state.

E. The Right to Proselyte

A conception of autonomy based upon independence would provide a broad guarantee of the right to engage in proselyting activities and other forms of religious persuasion. A conception of autonomy based upon interdependence would provide protection for public dissemination of preferred religious viewpoints, although equal access would not necessarily be guaranteed to less favored religious groups. Inter-independence would provide broad protection for religious persuasion, but some narrow limitations might be allowed that would not be permitted by a view of autonomy based upon independence, particularly when the autonomy interests of other individuals or of the state were significantly compromised by such activities.


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333. See Evans, Freedom of Religion, supra note 3, at 89 (citing cases).
334. Kjeldsen, Busk Madsen and Pedersen v. Denmark, 23 Eur. Ct. H.R. (ser. A) 26, para. 53 (1982), http://hudoc.echr.coe.int. In Kjeldsen, the court held that Denmark could impose integrated sexual education curriculum over parents’ religious objections, although it “must take care that information or knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner. The State is forbidden to pursue an aim of indoctrination that might be considered as not respecting parents’ religious and philosophical convictions.”
336. 310 U.S. 296 (1940) (reversing the conviction of a Jehovah’s Witness convicted under a statute forbidding solicitation without a license). While the Cantwell Court invoked the belief/action distinction, and reiterated that actions may be regulated for “the protection of society,” it stated that such regulation must not “unduly infringe” upon religious practice. Id. at 296, 304.
337. 319 U.S. 105 (1943) (striking down a license tax imposed on door-to-door proselytizers).
the Supreme Court struck down license and occupation taxes imposed on Jehovah’s Witnesses who sold religious reading materials through door-to-door proselytizing. In the summer of 2002, in another case involving the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Supreme Court held that a city regulation requiring religious door-to-door solicitors to receive a state license violated their free exercise rights.339 The Supreme Court’s decisions in this area reflect a conception of autonomy based upon independence.

Europe: The first case in which the European Court held that there had been a violation of the right to freedom of religion and belief was Kokkinakis v. Greece,340 which involved a Jehovah’s Witness convicted of violating the Greek law prohibiting proselytism.341 Minos Kokkinakis was convicted of proselytism after he went to the house of the local Greek Orthodox cantor and told his wife about the Jehovah’s Witnesses. While the cantor’s wife was not persuaded by Mr. Kokkinakis’ appeals and did not even remember much about the conversation, which she said had not affected her religious beliefs, and even though there was no evidence that she was particularly naïve or vulnerable, Mr. Kokkinakis was convicted of improper proselytism, and his conviction was upheld in a series of appeals through the Greek courts. The European Court ruled that the Greek law violated Article 9 on the grounds that the law was an unnecessary limitation on Mr. Kokkinakis’s right to manifest his religious beliefs.

This holding reflects a view of autonomy based upon inter-independence. The court did not hold that Mr. Kokkinakis’s proselyting activities were absolutely protected by Article 9(1), which states that everyone has the “freedom to change his religion or belief.”342 Such a holding would have reflected a view of autonomy

338. 321 U.S. 573 (1944) (reversing a conviction for selling religious tracts door-to-door without a license).
341. The Greek law in question defined proselytism as: in particular, any direct or indirect attempt to intrude on the religious beliefs of a person of a different religious persuasion (eterodoxoi), with the aim of undermining those beliefs, either by any kind of inducement or promise of an inducement or moral support or material assistance, or by fraudulent means or by taking advantage of his inexperience, trust, need, low intellect or naivety.
Id. at 404.
342. European Convention, supra note 72, art. 9, para. 1.
based upon independence. Instead, the Court held that the case involved an impermissible limitation on the ability of Mr. Kokkinakis to manifest his religion and belief because the limitation was not “necessary in a democratic society.” The Court noted that “the Greek courts established the applicant’s liability by merely reproducing the wording of section 4 [of the governing Greek law] and did not sufficiently specify in what way the accused had [violated the law].” Thus, it was not “shown that the applicant’s conviction was justified in the circumstances of the case by a pressing social need.” In Kokkinakis, the European Court balanced the state’s autonomy interests in protecting public safety, order, health, and morals on the one hand against Mr. Kokkinakis’s autonomy interests in manifesting his religious beliefs, and the balance was found to weigh in favor of Mr. Kokkinakis. This type of balancing analysis is what one would expect from a conception of autonomy based upon inter-independence.

The Kokkinakis case, however, brought to the fore strong differences of opinion in the European Court about the scope of the freedoms protected by Article 9, including the right to change one’s religion. Judge Martens, in a concurring opinion, noted that under the Convention, freedom of religion is an “absolute” value and stated that the Convention “leaves no room whatsoever for interference by the State” in freedom to have or change religions.

In principle, however, it is not within the province of the State to interfere in this ‘conflict’ between proselytizer and proselytized. First, because—since respect for human dignity and human freedom implies that the State is bound to accept that in principle everybody is capable of determining his fate in the way that he deems best—there is no justification for the State to use its power ‘to protect’ the proselytized (it may be otherwise in very special situations in which the State has a particular duty of care but such situations fall outside the present issue). Secondly, because even the ‘public order’ argument cannot justify use of coercive State power in a field where tolerance demands that ‘free argument and debate’ should be decisive. And thirdly, because under the Convention all religions and beliefs should, as far as the State is concerned, be equal.

The dissenting opinion of Judge Martens, which goes beyond what the majority of the Court was willing to hold, evidences a real concern for the independence-based autonomy of the individual that is mostly missing in European Court cases.
Judge Martens would have placed Mr. Kokkinakis’s activities within Article 9(1)’s sphere of absolute protection, which would reflect a conception of autonomy requiring a high degree of *independence* between the state and individuals’ decisions with respect to religious belief and association. The Greek member of the panel, Judge Valticos, in a dissenting opinion, expressed a broad willingness to permit the suppression of the evangelical efforts of Mr. Kokkinakis. He described Mr. Kokkinakis’ activities as a “rape of the belief of others” and concluded that his behavior did not constitute a manifestation of religion or belief. This view reflects a particularly strong take on the *interdependence* of church and state, where the interests of a favored church are seen as being highly integrated with the state’s interest. Thus, in the set of opinions in the *Kokkinakis* case we see all three conceptions of autonomy reflected in the respective opinions of the majority, concurring, and dissenting judges.

A few years later, in *Larissis v. Greece*, the European Court upheld limitations on proselytizing activities of military superiors of their subordinates. According to Professor Evans, “In this case, the Court was willing to accept that any attempt at proselytism by senior officers was an abuse of power, despite the arguments in the dissenting judgment of Judge Van Dijk, who considered this absolute approach to be disproportionate.” Although the outcome

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347. *Id.* at 429–32 (Valticos, J., dissenting).
348. Judge Valticos characterized the situation in the *Kokkinakis* case as follows: Let us look now at the facts of the case. On the one hand, we have a militant Jehovah’s Witness, a hardbitten adept of proselytism, a specialist in conversion, a martyr of the criminal courts whose earlier convictions have served only to harden him in his militancy, and, on the other hand, an ideal victim, a naïve woman, the wife of a cantor in the Orthodox Church (if he manages to convert her, what a triumph!). He swoops on her, trumpets that he has good news for her, what a triumph! He swoops on her, trumpets that he has good news for her (the play on words is obvious, but no doubt not to her), manages to get himself let in and, as an experienced commercial traveler and cunning purveyor of the faith he wants to spread, expounds to her his intellectual wares cunningly wrapped up in a mantle of universal peace and radiant happiness. Who, indeed, would not like peace and happiness? But is this the mere exposition of Mr. Kokkinakis’s beliefs or is it not rather an attempt to beguile the simple soul of the cantor’s wife? Does the Convention afford its protection to such undertakings? Certainly not. *Id.* at 430–31 (Valticos, J., dissenting).
350. *Evans, Freedom of Religion*, supra note 3, at 145. Judge Van Dijk felt there should be a presumption of abuse in such cases but that it should be rebuttable. He decided that the presumption should have been rebutted in regard to
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in Larissis is opposite of the outcome in Kokkinakis, the Larissis case also reflects a conception of autonomy based upon inter-independence. The European Court weighed the autonomy interests of the state against the autonomy interests of the individuals involved. In the military context, however, the autonomy interests of the state and of individuals are weighed differently than in the civilian context. In Larissis, the European Court justified limitations on proselyting based upon the state’s autonomy interests of maintaining order and discipline, which in the military are particularly acute, and upon individual autonomy interests, which also have a different complexion in the military context, where subordinate military personnel might feel pressured or coerced to be positively responsive to the proselytizing activities of superior officers. The court notes that because of the hierarchical structure of the military, “what would in the civilian world be seen as an innocuous exchange of ideas which the recipient is free to accept or reject, may, within the confines of military life, be viewed as a form of harassment or the application of undue pressure in abuse of power.”

F. Exceptions to Generally Applicable Laws

A conception of autonomy based upon independence would provide broad exceptions to generally applicable laws based upon religious belief, with possible limitations based only upon the serious threat that granting an exemption would pose to the autonomy of others or the autonomy of the state. A conception of autonomy based upon interdependence would not recognize exceptions to generally applicable laws, although laws that accommodate the religious beliefs and needs of adherents of preferred faiths would be expected. Autonomy based upon inter-independence would subject laws that placed burdens upon religious belief or practice to heightened scrutiny, examining carefully the effects upon the autonomy of other individuals and the state of failing to recognize an exemption.

one junior officer who claimed that he first approached the senior officers, that they never pressured him, and that he converted to the Pentecostal Church of his own free will.


United States: Early U.S. free exercise jurisprudence was very skeptical about recognizing exemptions based upon religious conviction from generally applicable laws. For example, in *Reynolds v. United States*, the Court rejected the argument of a Mormon who claimed that the Free Exercise Clause provided an exemption from laws prohibiting polygamy because the practice was mandated by church doctrine. The Court cited Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptist association that made a distinction between beliefs and actions and held that while religious beliefs receive absolute protection, religious actions are not protected when they are “in violation of social duties or subversive of good order.” This outcome was consistent with a view of autonomy based upon the *inter-independence* of church and state, with the balance found weighing in favor of state autonomy, which appeared to be jeopardized by the practice of polygamy. Individual autonomy interests were discounted because they were limited to the sphere of belief and held inapplicable to the sphere of action.

Beginning in the 1960s, the Supreme Court for a time adopted a different approach to free exercise claims for exemptions from generally applicable laws. Beginning in *Sherbert v. Verner*, a case involving a Seventh-Day Adventist who was denied unemployment compensation for refusing to work on Saturday, the Court subjected state action that placed a substantial burden on religion to

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352. 98 U.S. 145 (1878). The Court also upheld Congress's right to seize the Church's property, calling the claim that polygamy is a religious belief that falls under the Free Exercise Clause "altogether a sophistical plea," and stating, “No doubt the Thugs of India imagined that their belief in the right of assassination was a religious belief; but their thinking so did not make it so.” *Late Corp. of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints v. United States*, 136 U.S. 1, 49 (1890); see also *Davis v. Beason*, 133 U.S. 333, 341–42 (1890) (“Bigamy and polygamy are crimes by the laws of all civilized and Christian countries,” and “[t]o call their advocacy a tenet of religion is to offend the common sense of mankind.”).


354. *Id.* at 166–67 (“So here, as a law of the organization of society under the exclusive dominion of the United States, it is provided that plural marriages shall not be allowed. Can a man excuse his practices to the contrary because of his religious belief? To permit this would be to make the professed doctrines of religious belief superior to the law of the land, and in effect to permit every citizen to become a law unto himself.”).

355. This holding reflected strong Protestant assumptions about the centrality of belief in contrast with action to religious obligation, since upon a Protestant view salvation can be accomplished through proper belief alone. In other religious traditions, including Catholicism, protecting only belief and not action might not be sufficient to enable an adherent to do everything necessary to assure his or her salvation.

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heightened scrutiny if it placed a substantial burden on religion. This meant that the state was required to show that its actions were justified by a compelling state interest and that there was no less restrictive means for affecting that interest. In Wisconsin v. Yoder, this approach resulted in an exemption for Amish schoolchildren from state compulsory education beyond the eighth grade, and, in Thomas v. Review Board, it resulted in unemployment compensation for a Jehovah’s Witness who quit his job because his religious convictions prevented him from participating in the production of war materials. These cases also reflect a view of autonomy based upon inter-independence, although the outcomes favored the autonomy interests of those seeking passive exemptions based upon religious beliefs.

In the 1980s, the Supreme Court became more reluctant to recognize exceptions to general and neutral laws based upon religious freedom claims. For example, in Goldsboro Christian Schools, Inc. v. United States, the Court rejected the free exercise claim of a school that refused admission to blacks based upon a reading of the Bible; in Bob Jones University v. United States, the Court held that the state had a compelling interest in preventing racial discrimination and rejected the free exercise claim of a university that did not allow interracial dating or marriage; in Goldman v. Weinberger, the Court upheld a military regulation that forbade the wearing of a yarmulke while on duty; in Bowen v. Roy, the Court denied an exemption for religiously motivated objections to the use of Social Security numbers in welfare programs; in Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective As’n, the Court allowed the U.S. Forest Service to build a road through a Native American burial ground in spite of the religious objections of three tribes that used the grounds for religious rituals; and in Hernandez v.

Commissioner, the Court rejected a claim by members of the Church of Scientology who argued their free exercise rights were violated when the Internal Revenue Service denied a tax deduction for their payments for “auditing” on the grounds that the payments did not represent a contribution but rather a quid pro quo exchange. Although religious exemptions were not permitted in these cases, the analysis was nevertheless based upon the *inter-independence* of church and state, with the Court usually subjecting laws burdening religious beliefs to heightened scrutiny. While these cases illustrate that heightened scrutiny does not guarantee that a religious claim will be vindicated, the cases weighed state autonomy claims against individual autonomy claims as one would expect from a conception of autonomy based upon *inter-independence*.

About a decade ago, the Supreme Court abandoned altogether its method of subjecting claims for an exemption from general and neutral laws to heightened scrutiny. In *Employment Division v. Smith*, the Court held that a law that burdens religion is constitutional as long as it is general and neutral. This standard is not entirely incapable of protecting religious liberty interests, as demonstrated a few years later in *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah*, in which the Supreme Court held that ostensibly neutral laws setting standards governing animal slaughter violated the Free Exercise Clause because they had been drafted to apply only to the ritual sacrifice of animals by the Church of Lukumi. Nevertheless, the Court in *Smith* moved sharply toward a conception of autonomy based upon the *interdependence* of church and state.

In 1993, Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFR), designed to restore the compelling state interest test to free exercise jurisprudence. The Supreme Court, however, declared the RFR unconstitutional in *City of Boerne v. Flores* and rejected the claim of a church seeking a free exercise exemption from a prohibition on enlarging its church, in contravention of a historic landmark preservation ordinance. Under the Supreme Court’s

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369. 521 U.S. 507 (1997). The Court held that RFR was unconstitutional because it exceeded Congress’s remedial authority under Section 5 of the Fourteenth Amendment.
current view, general and neutral laws that burden religion are permitted. Thus, concerning religion-based exemptions, the Supreme Court’s jurisprudence has shifted from a view of autonomy based upon \textit{inter-independence} to a view that reflects a conception of autonomy based upon \textit{interdependence}.

\textit{Europe:} According to Professor Evans, the Commission and the Court have adopted three different approaches for dealing with neutral and general laws that have the effect of burdening religious belief or observance. “The first approach is to hold that, as long as a law is genuinely neutral and applied in a nondiscriminatory manner, it cannot breach Article 9.”\cite{370} A second approach “is to hold that restricting a person’s freedom of religion under a general and neutral law could breach Article 9(1), but that this breach could be justified in appropriate circumstances under Article 9(2).”\cite{371} A third approach, illustrated in cases involving conscientious objection to military service, is to deal with such issues by “specific reference to another article of the Convention.”\cite{372} I will focus here primarily upon the second approach, in which the limitations clause of Article 9(2) is invoked to determine whether a restriction on a “manifestation” of religious belief is permissible.

In deciding whether to grant an exception to a generally applicable law based upon freedom of religion or belief, the Commission and the court have developed a test which focuses upon whether a particular manifestation is necessary in order for someone to practice his or her religion (in which case an exemption is available), as opposed to situations in which the behavior in question is simply inspired by religious motives or beliefs (in which case an exemption is unavailable). This test was first articulated by the Commission in \textit{Arrowsmith v. the United Kingdom},\cite{373} a case involving the right of a pacifist to distribute leaflets to soldiers urging them to refuse a tour of duty. In \textit{Arrowsmith}, the Commission

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
  
  \bibitem{370} \textsc{Evans, Freedom of Religion, supra note 3}, at 169.
  
  \bibitem{371} \textit{Id.} For example, in \textit{Seven Individuals v. Sweden}, 29 Eur. Comm’n H.R. Dec. & Rep. 104 (1982), 5 E.H.R.R. 147 (1983) (Westlaw), parents were unsuccessful in arguing for a religious exemption from a state law prohibiting corporal punishment based upon a biblically-based belief that corporal punishment of children was biblically mandated, on the grounds that a prohibition of corporal punishment was permitted by Section 9(2)’s limitation on manifestations of religious belief on the grounds of health and safety.
  
  \bibitem{372} \textsc{Evans, Freedom of Religion, supra note 3}, at 169.
  
\end{thebibliography}
concluded that distributing leaflets did not constitute a “practice” of pacifism, but rather political opposition to a particular government policy.374

According to Professor Evans,

[t]here have been a large number of claims made in relation to general and neutral laws (such as laws on taxation, compulsory vaccination, pension schemes, and planning) on the basis that they interfere with religion or belief. In the vast majority of these cases, the Commission has utilized the Arrowsmith test to hold people claiming exemptions from such laws were merely influenced or motivated by religion or belief rather than practicing their religion or belief.375

For example, in Khan v. United Kingdom,376 the Commission upheld the criminal conviction of a twenty-one-year-old man who was married in an Islamic ceremony to a fourteen-year-old girl against her parents’ wishes. Under Islamic law, a girl is permitted to marry without the consent of her parents at age twelve, whereas under British law the age is eighteen. In dismissing his complaint that his conviction for abducting the girl violated his rights of religious freedom, the Commission reasoned that his actions did not constitute a manifestation of religious belief because while Islamic law permitted marriage at an earlier age than British law, it did not require it.377

On other occasions, the Commission seems to distort the necessity test in order to reach outcomes that are deferential to state actions that burden religious expression. In Karaduman v. Turkey,378 a Muslim woman who declined to remove her headscarf for an identity photograph was refused the right to graduate from a university. Departing from the approach outlined in the Arrowsmith case, the Commission did not focus, as one might expect, upon whether wearing the headscarf was necessary under Islam. Rather, the Commission focused on the taking of the photograph, stating that “[t]he purpose of the photograph affixed to a degree certificate

374. Id. at 228–30.
375. EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 116.
377. Id.
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is to identify the person concerned. It cannot be used by the person to manifest his religious belief.379

One difficulty that arises under Arrowsmith's necessity test is that the Commission and the court are put in the position of determining whether a particular action is required by one's religion or belief, or whether an action is merely motivated by one's religion or belief. In practice, this has resulted in the Commission and the court being dismissive of petitioners' claims about whether an action is required by their religious beliefs.380 A second difficulty under the Arrowsmith approach is that it may be more difficult to establish necessity for petitioners who base their claims on beliefs or religions that are nonhierarchical, or when petitioners' beliefs depart from those of their church.381 A final difficulty that arises is that despite a general law's ostensibly neutral language, a law may actually be targeted at limiting particular religious practices, either as the law is written, or as it is enforced.382

379. Id. at 109. Evans notes that,

While the decision was ultimately made on other grounds, the Commission indicated that the refusal of the University to allow Miss Kazaduman to wear a headscarf in her photograph was probably not a restriction on her right to manifest her religion... The normal, Arrowsmith approach to this question would have been to question whether the wearing of the headscarf and refusing to remove it for a photograph was required by Islam. The shift of emphasis away from the issue of religious apparel, which seemed to be at the heart of the application, and on to the taking of the photograph, suggests a level of conceptual confusion within the Commission as to the appropriate way to apply the Arrowsmith case.

EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 118.


381. See EVANS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, supra note 3, at 122–23.

The *Arrowsmith* necessity test looks like a paradigmatic balancing test that would be expected from a conception of autonomy based upon *inter-independence*, but in practice the European Court has weighed state interests so heavily that the jurisprudence seems to reflect a conception of autonomy based upon the *interdependence* of church and state.

G. Summary of Individual Autonomy Issues

Issues involving religion and individual autonomy are summarized in Figure 3.
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The story with respect to individual autonomy issues is more complex than that regarding institutional autonomy. In Europe, while a conception of autonomy based upon interdependence is still dominant, at least with respect to several issues including whether the state can require religious oaths and the availability of exceptions to generally applicable laws based upon religious belief, the European Court has relied upon a conception of autonomy that reflects the concerns of inter-independence.

In the United States, the story is also more muddled. With respect to some of the most significant issues involving the
autonomy of individuals, the Supreme Court has moved sharply away from a conception of autonomy based upon independence, or even inter-independence, toward a conception of autonomy based upon interdependence. There are two areas where this movement is most evident. The first involves the right to religious education, where the Court has moved from the view that there is a right to religious education to a view that the state can indirectly provide large amounts of funding to support religious education. This would seem to rest upon a significant discounting of the core Establishment Clause concern that financial appropriations from the state to churches jeopardize both the autonomy of churches and the autonomy of the state. The second area involves the availability of exemptions from generally applicable laws based upon religious grounds. With the Smith decision, the Supreme Court has moved away from subjecting claims for a free exercise-based exemption from generally applicable laws to heightened scrutiny, as suggested by a conception of autonomy based upon inter-independence, toward presuming that such burdens are permissible as long as they are based upon laws that are neutral and general. These developments represent significant movement in the direction of a conception of autonomy based upon interdependence that, while influential in Europe, has for the most part not been influential in the United States, due to fears that it runs counter to the core Establishment Clause concerns about independence of church and state.

VI. IMPLICATIONS OF THESE CONCEPTIONS IN AREAS OF DISPUTE

Parts IV and V addressed the implications of the three conceptions of autonomy on a number of issues involving institutional and individual autonomy. I also discussed the approaches taken to these issues by the Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights and the conceptions of autonomy that underlie these outcomes. In this Part, I will discuss five significant current controversies in the United States involving the interactions of church and state and consider how each of the three conceptions of autonomy addresses these issues. These highly charged issues include school prayer, the use of educational vouchers at religious schools, charitable choice, public displays of the Ten
Commandments, and the constitutionality of the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance.\footnote{My discussion of the Pledge of Allegiance issue is somewhat more detailed than my discussion of other issues because this issue was the subject of an important recent Supreme Court case, Elk Grove Unified Sch. Dist. v. Newdow, 124 S. Ct. 2301 (2004), and remains unsettled, since the Supreme Court in Newdow dismissed the case for lack of standing and did not address the merits of the case. In addition, I believe the Pledge issue is an area where the value of focusing upon autonomy and competing conceptions of autonomy is a promising way to break the doctrinal logjam that surrounds establishment and free exercise issues.}

\textbf{A. Prayer in Public Schools}

Daily classroom prayer raises significant issues for the autonomy of the state as well as of individual children. As noted above,\footnote{See supra Part IV.B.1.} the centrality of public education to the state’s mission, the possibility of religious domination, and the vulnerability of children combine to make public schools a particularly interesting context to consider the implications of different conceptions of autonomy for church-state and religious liberty issues. This is in part due to the importance of public schools in the state’s mission of educating children and inculcating in the rising generation a set of attitudes and attributes that will be conducive to good citizenship. Additionally, public schools are a place where the state is particularly vulnerable to the influence or even domination by a particular religious group, since even in a large and religiously pluralistic society such as the United States, many particular locales are very religiously homogeneous. The possibility of one religious perspective dominating is heightened when the religious convictions of individual teachers are taken into account, and because for the most part there is very little oversight or supervision of what takes place within individual classrooms. Given the age and impressionability of young children, autonomy concerns about the individual children also loom large in primary and secondary school classrooms.

In contrast, it might seem that graduation prayer would present much less of a threat to the autonomy of the state. Adult supervision and oversight of the school’s practice is assured, the possibility of ensuring that a broad spectrum of religious viewpoints are represented in invocations and benedictions is much easier, and the solemn and ceremonial nature of the occasion might seem to make prayer an appropriate component of the proceedings. Graduation
prayer would also seem to pose less of a threat to the religious autonomy of children, since a large number of adults are present and aware of what is taking place, and since the possibility of indoctrination through daily repetition of a particular viewpoint does not exist.

From the perspective of independence, both daily classroom prayer and graduation prayer would be prohibited, since each would represent an intrusion of religion into the public sphere. From the perspective of interdependence, both daily classroom prayer and graduation prayer would be unproblematic, since approved prayer would be viewed as supportive of the purposes and roles of both church and state. In addition, interdependence might not object to preferences being granted to one or a small number of select churches in deciding whom to invite to offer prayers.

From the perspective of inter-independence, however, daily classroom prayer and graduation prayer might be treated differently, since each has different implications for the autonomy of the state and of individuals present in classrooms and at graduation ceremonies. Inter-independence would focus upon the context and the specific implications for the independence of the state, of churches, and of individuals. Rather than entirely excluding prayer from ceremonial occasions such as public school graduation (as an independence model would dictate), or including only prayers of a religious majority (as an interdependence model might allow), an understanding of autonomy based upon inter-independence would recognize the importance of independence, of inclusion, of mutual respect, of commitment to a discourse of public reason and justification, and of empowerment of all members of the political community. Rather than striving completely to exclude religion from public life, or seeking a lowest common denominator that is designed to offend no one (and probably succeeds in offending nearly everyone), such a vision would encourage each of us to listen with reverence and respect to the prayers of others with religious backgrounds and faith traditions to which we do not belong. A vision of autonomy based upon inclusion would replace a vision of autonomy based upon separation.

The Supreme Court’s case law on the subject of school prayer has not been sensitive to such possible distinctions but has hewn a separationist course based upon a conception of autonomy requiring
independence of church and state. In 1962, in Engel v. Vitale, the Supreme Court held that a state-composed prayer read aloud in public school classes violates the Establishment Clause. A year later, in School District of Abington Township v. Schempp, the Court held that daily Bible reading and daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer violates the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses. And two decades later in Wallace v. Jaffree, the Court held that a state law authorizing a moment of silence at the beginning of the school day in public schools violates the Establishment Clause. These cases all reflect a conception of autonomy based upon independence of church and state. From these cases it was clear that daily classroom religious observances violated the Establishment Clause. What remained unclear was whether prayer on occasions such as school graduation or at sporting events was permissible or impermissible.

The Court answered the question regarding graduation prayer in 1992, in Lee v. Weisman, holding that a nonsectarian prayer offered by a Rabbi at a middle-school graduation ceremony violated the Establishment Clause because it was impermissibly coercive. The Court reasoned that “[s]tate officials direct the performance of a formal religious exercise at [the] graduation ceremonies,” and students’ “attendance and participation in the state-sponsored religious activity are in a fair and real sense obligatory, though the school district does not require attendance as a condition for receipt of the diploma.” The emphasis on the coercive nature of the state action illustrates the Court’s underlying autonomy concerns. In a subsequent case, the Supreme Court held that student-sponsored prayer at a high school football game also violated the Establishment Clause. The outcome in these cases reflects a conception of autonomy based upon the independence of church and state.

B. Vouchers and Other Forms of Indirect Aid to Churches

One very controversial issue over the past several decades involving the relationship of church and state has centered on

389. Id. at 586.
whether parents should be able to utilize education vouchers to send their children to schools sponsored by or affiliated with a church, or that reflect a particular religious viewpoint. An extensive literature has been written assessing the advantages and disadvantages of voucher programs and the constitutionality of including religiously affiliated schools in such programs. In 2002, the Supreme Court held in Zelman v. Simmons-Harris that religiously affiliated schools could be included in a city voucher program. The key to the Supreme Court’s analysis was the concept of neutrality and the fact that the vouchers were issued to parents who in turn decided whether or not to use the vouchers at religiously affiliated schools. While the Court acknowledged that in Cleveland ninety-six percent of vouchers would be used to send children to religiously affiliated schools, that seventy-six percent of the religiously affiliated schools participating in the program are affiliated with the Catholic Church, and that this would constitute a significant indirect benefit to religion, vouchers were permitted. As noted above, in 2004, the Supreme Court decided that a student studying for religious ordination can be excluded from a state-funded scholarship program.

Autonomy based upon independence of church and state would not allow religiously affiliated schools to participate in voucher programs, since indirect as well as direct benefits to schools would be prohibited. While certain very general benefits, such as police and fire protection, and inclusion in public utilities, are not prohibited under independence, programs that result in public funds ending up


392. 536 U.S. 639 (2002). The Court reasoned that the government aid program was neutral with respect to religions because the funding was dispersed to the parents who then directed the funds to religious schools in accordance with their private choice: “The incidental advancement of a religious mission, or the perceived endorsement of a religious message, is reasonably attributable to the individual recipient, not to the government, whose role ends with the disbursement of benefits.” Id. at 652.

393. For a critique of the concept of neutrality in religion clause jurisprudence, see Steven D. Smith, Symbols, Perceptions, and Doctrinal Illusions: Establishment Neutrality and the ‘No Endorsement’ Test, 86 MICH. L. REV. 266 (1987).


in the hands of church-sponsored institutions would be prohibited. Autonomy based upon interdependence would allow public funding of religiously affiliated schools, both indirectly and directly. In Europe, where a model of autonomy based upon interdependence prevails, the European Convention does not prohibit a broad array of types of state aid to religious schools.

Autonomy based upon inter-independence would be very skeptical of indirect aid to religiously affiliated schools, since financial aid affects the core autonomy value of independence. From the perspective of inter-independence, indirect aid to parochial schools would be critically evaluated based not upon the principal of neutrality or whether parents served as an intervening mechanism, but based upon the possible effects such aid would have upon the independence of the state, the independence of churches and church-sponsored schools, and individual autonomy. A variety of threats to the independence of both institutions might militate against including parochial schools in such programs. For the state, if a large percentage of voucher recipients opt for religiously affiliated schools, this might have a negative impact upon the state’s ability to conduct the core public function of educating children and inculcating in children the attitudes and attributes deemed desirable for good citizenship. Poorly performing public schools, in particular, might be further incapacitated or killed by a reduction in funding. The state’s autonomy could also be undermined if a particular religious constituency wielded sufficient political power to enact voucher programs that resulted in significant financial resources being channeled to one or a few religions. For churches, their autonomy could be seriously undermined if they become dependent upon state largess, in which case they may become vulnerable to demands upon the curriculum and teaching that conflict with or even directly contradict religious tenets.

On the voucher issue, the Supreme Court has not only eschewed a conception of autonomy based upon independence, it has also been quite dismissive of the core autonomy concerns raised by a conception based upon inter-independence. In allowing religiously affiliated schools to participate in state-funded programs, and in allowing a large percentage of available funds to be channeled to a small number of religious groups, the Court has moved towards a conception of autonomy based upon interdependence.
C. Charitable Choice

Many of the same issues that come up in the voucher context are mirrored in the charitable-choice context. Excluding religiously affiliated service providers from participation in social service programs would seem to violate the principle of neutrality. On the other hand, allowing religiously affiliated organizations to receive direct state aid in furtherance, at least indirectly, of their religious mission raises significant concerns for both the autonomy of the state and of the religious groups.

A conception of autonomy based upon the independence of church and state would not allow religiously affiliated groups to receive direct or indirect funding to participate in social service programs. A conception of autonomy based upon interdependence would welcome such cooperation and integration of efforts to address serious social ills. A conception of autonomy based upon inter-independence would analyze the issue based upon the principles of independence, inclusion, mutual respect, and empowerment.

D. Public Displays of the Ten Commandments

In August of 2001, the Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, Judge Roy Moore, placed a 5200-pound statue of the Ten Commandments in the rotunda of the Alabama State Judicial Building396 and later refused to obey an injunction from the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama to remove it.397 As a result of Judge Moore’s actions, a highly publicized controversy erupted over whether the public display violated the Establishment Clause.398 On one side of the debate, Judge Moore and his supporters argued that “[t]he real purpose of the First Amendment was and is to protect the states’ and their citizenry’s rights to


398. Judge Moore’s prominent supporters felt so strongly about the issue that “they surrounded the State Judicial Building in hopes of preventing the removal of the monument . . . compar[ing] their struggle with that of the civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.” Id. at 2.
acknowledge God according to the dictates of their own conscience.”399 Others argued that a strict separation between church and state prohibits a religious display in a public building, especially one that favors a particular religion.400 Before Judge Moore placed the statue in the rotunda, he had already sparked an earlier controversy by displaying the Ten Commandments in his courtroom and inviting local clergy to open court sessions with prayer.401 Responding to public reaction following Moore’s original actions, Governor Fob James even “vowed to call out the militia to defend the Commandments if necessary.”402 Moore was eventually removed from office for his defiance.

A conception of autonomy based upon independence would prohibit all religious displays on public property, including the Ten Commandments. A conception of autonomy based upon interdependence would permit religious displays on public property and would not demand equal treatment of minority religious viewpoints. Some religious viewpoints could be included and others excluded, based upon the state’s assessment of whether the display was desirable or not. A conception based upon inter-independence would focus upon the impact of the display on the autonomy of the state and of religion, based upon the principles of independence, inclusion, mutual respect, and empowerment.

Jurisprudence based upon inter-independence might result in nuanced differences between situations that might appear similar. For example, in the case of a state supreme court justice who is aggressively trying to make a political statement about the supremacy

399. See Hon. Roy S. Moore, Religion in the Public Square, 29 CUMB. L. REV. 347, 349 (1998). Moore’s supporters justified disobeying the federal court injunction because they were under a higher “legal and moral duty to acknowledge God.” Pryor, supra note 397, at 2.

400. One commentator noted:
If we do yield to a system such as Moore’s, we quickly are relegated to a system in which the Christian majority determines what type of prayers or documents will be posted, the result of which is a continuation and enlargement of Christian privilege. Moore’s idea that it is coercion to require Christian majority silence is mistaken. Requiring the majority, and everyone for that matter, to be silent in regards to religion in public settings is simply the removal of a privilege unsupported by any right.


401. See id. at 630.

of God’s law over the Constitution—and the idea that judges consider themselves to be subject to a law higher (one that is not democratic) than the Constitution, which could reasonably be interpreted as an effort to communicate to dissenters and those of minority faiths that they are not equal before the law—by placing a large monument conspicuously in a state courthouse, such a display might be deemed unconstitutional based upon the effect it has on the independence of the state from the undue influence of a particular religious viewpoint.\(^{403}\)

On the other hand, a relatively inconspicuous Ten Commandments monument in a public park or other place where state judicial or legislative authority is less omnipresent might be permitted. Allowing such a monument would not necessarily create a public forum in which all “religious” expressions, no matter how odious and harmful, must be allowed. The Supreme Court will have an opportunity to address a comparable situation in *Van Orden v. Perry*,\(^{404}\) in which it will consider whether a monument displaying the Ten Commandments on the state capitol’s grounds violates the First Amendment. The monument, according to the district court and Fifth Circuit decisions, is one of many monuments on the grounds displaying the secular and religious history of the state. It might be the type of situation in which the Supreme Court might conclude, “a reasonable viewer would not see this display either as a State endorsement of the Commandment’s religious message or as excluding those who would not subscribe to its religious statements.”\(^{405}\)

If a view of autonomy based upon *inter-independence* were adopted, a complete elimination of religion from public life is not required, as would be demanded by a view of autonomy based upon total independence of church and state. Indeed, complete content neutrality might not be required under *inter-independence*, either. Rather, religious monuments and other forms of religious expression in public life would be assessed based upon the effect they have upon

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\(^{403}\) The Supreme Court will be taking up a similar issue when it decides *ACLU v. McCreary County*, 354 F.3d 438 (6th Cir. 2003), *cert. granted*, 2004 U.S. LEXIS 6693 (Oct. 12, 2004). In *McCreary*, the Sixth Circuit held that the Ten Commandments had been posted in the courthouses not for a secular purpose, or as part of some historical display, but to promote a particular religious belief. *Id.* at 449.


\(^{405}\) *Van Orden v. Perry*, 351 F.3d 173, 181 (5th Cir. 2003).
the independence of the state and the independence of churches and of individuals. If a type of religious expression jeopardizes or threatens the independence of the state, then that would be a ground for excluding it. If excluding a type of religious expression jeopardizes or threatens the independence of churches or their ability to be reasonably included and accommodated in public life, then that would be a ground for including such an expression. If the autonomy of speakers is unduly thwarted by excluding a type of religious expression, then that would be a ground for including it. If the autonomy of unwilling listeners is unduly thwarted by including a type of religious expression, that would be a ground for excluding it. Of course, some of these considerations will push and pull in different directions, and reasonable people will disagree about where lines should be drawn. But the likelihood of reaching appropriate answers in such disputes is enhanced if we are focusing upon the right questions.

E. The Pledge of Allegiance

In 1954, at the height of the cold war, Congress amended the text of the Pledge of Allegiance to add the words “under God.”406 In a response to a perceived threat of the spread of communism, Congress intended “the inclusion of God in our pledge . . . [to] further acknowledge the dependence of our people and our Government upon the moral directions of the Creator.”407 Including a reference to God in the Pledge of Allegiance would also “serve to deny the atheistic and materialistic concepts of communism.”408 Congress indicated that the phrase “under God” was not intended to promote the establishment of religion, emphasizing that “[a] distinction must be made between the existence of a religion as an institution and a belief in the sovereignty of God.”409 A Supreme Court decision cited in the congressional reports was used to support

408. Id.
409. Id.
the idea that a reference to God does not necessarily establish religion.410

1. *The Newdow* bombshell

In June 2002, in *Newdow v. United States Congress*, a three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held in a split decision that California’s policy requiring the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public school classrooms was a violation of the Establishment Clause because of the inclusion in the Pledge of the words “under God.”411

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle condemned the ruling as “outrageous,” “nuts,” and “stupid.”412 In the immediate aftermath of the decision, “[t]he U.S. Senate was so incensed by the decision that it passed a resolution 99-0 ‘expressing support for the Pledge of Allegiance’ and asking Senate counsel to ‘seek to intervene in the case.’”413 The House of Representatives passed a resolution 416-3 protesting the decision.414 Republican House Speaker Dennis Hastert of Illinois opined, “Obviously, the liberal court in San Francisco has

410. The Court reasons that the First Amendment

[D]oes not say that in every and all respects there shall be a separation of Church and State. Rather, it studiously defines the manner, the specific ways, in which there shall be no concert or union or dependency one on the other. That is the common sense of the matter. Otherwise the state and religion would be aliens to each other—hostile, suspicious, and even unfriendly . . . Prayers in our legislative halls; the appeals to the Almighty in the messages of the Chief Executive; the proclamations making Thanksgiving Day a holiday; “so help me God” in our courtroom oaths—these and all other references to the Almighty that run through our laws, our public rituals, our ceremonies would be flouting the First Amendment. *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306, 312–13 (1952).


413. *Id.*

gotten this one wrong." Democratic Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle called the ruling, “just nuts.”

According to one news account, “[c]ritics of the decision were flabbergasted and warned that it calls into question the use of ‘In God We Trust’ on the nation’s currency, the public singing of patriotic songs like ‘God Bless America,’ even the use of the phrase ‘So help me God’ when judges are sworn into office.” Other commentators focused attention on the source of the ruling, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which has a reputation for liberal activism and which has the highest rate of reversal by the Supreme Court of any of the circuits.

“Where’s a San Francisco earthquake when you really need one?” cracked the New York Post in a lead editorial titled “Left Coast Lunacy.” Even the New York Times, which editorialized that the circuit court decision was “well meaning,” dismissed the bombshell ruling saying it “trivializes” serious constitutional debates about the separation of church and state.

In the wake of the public furor, the author of the opinion, Judge Alfred Goodwin, stayed the panel’s ruling pending a review by the entire Ninth Circuit. In March 2003, the Ninth Circuit denied applications to review the case en banc and issued a modified opinion upholding the decision.

415. See Lawmakers Blast Pledge Ruling, supra note 412.
417. Id.
420. See Newdow v. United States Congress, 321 F.3d 772 (9th Cir. 2003) (denying petitions for rehearing and denying petitions for rehearing en banc). The Washington Post reported:

Over the public dissent of nine members, the 24-judge U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit, based in San Francisco, rebuffed requests from the Bush administration and a California school district to have the court reconsider its decision last June. . . . The court did take one step back, however. Its original ruling not only barred schools from sponsoring the pledge but also struck down the 1954 federal law that officially added the words ‘Under God’ to the pledge—thus making the pledge itself unconstitutional. That was omitted from an ‘amended’ version of the court’s opinion issued yesterday.

Charles Lane, Pledge of Allegiance Ruling Is Upheld, WASH. POST, March 1, 2003, at A01.
2. The Ninth Circuit’s analysis

While one can dispute whether the Ninth Circuit’s decision was a correct interpretation of the Establishment Clause,421 the panel and its defenders can claim that it represents a faithful, unremarkable application of what can only be described as the Supreme Court’s confusing and chaotic doctrine in this area of the law.422 As Professor Jamin Raskin said, “the case is going to have an explosive effect on public opinion but from the legal perspective, I think it’s firmly rooted in the logic of prior cases.”423 Indeed, the panel covers all bases by going to great lengths to analyze the case from every possible doctrinal perspective.

In a dissent from the denial of rehearing in banc, Judge O’Scannlain argues that the Ninth Circuit should have reheard the case en banc, not because it was controversial, but because it was wrong, very wrong—wrong because reciting the Pledge of Allegiance is simply not “a religious act” as the two-judge majority asserts, wrong as a matter of Supreme Court precedent properly understood, wrong because it set up a direct conflict with the law of another circuit, and wrong as a matter of common sense.321 F.3d at 776–77 (O’Scannlain, J., dissenting). Judge O’Scannlain also characterizes the panel’s work as “an exercise in judicial legerdemain which, not surprisingly, produced a public outcry across the nation.” Id. at 776. Judge Reinhardt, who was a part of the original two-member majority in the Newdow case, writes an opinion concurring in the order to deny en banc review, in which he blasts Judge O’Scannlain’s dissent on the grounds that it “reflects a serious misconception of fundamental constitutional principles and the proper role of the federal judiciary.” 321 F.3d at 772 (Reinhardt, J., concurring in the order). According to Judge Reinhardt, “The dissent suggests that this court should be able to conclude that the panel’s holding was erroneous by observing the ‘public and political reaction’ to its decision.” Id. at 775. Judge Reinhardt states that “Article III judges are by constitutional design insulated from the political pressures governing members of the other two branches of government.” Id. “When the federal judiciary is so firmly separated by constitutional structure from the direct influence of politics, we must not undermine that structure by allowing political pressures, polls, or ‘focus groups’ to influence our opinions, even indirectly.” Id. at 776.


422. See, e.g., Philip N. Yannella, Stuck in the Web of Formalism: Why Reversing the Ninth Circuit’s Ruling on the Pledge of Allegiance Won’t Be So Easy, 12 TEMP. POL. & CIV. RTS. L. REV. 79, 80 (2002) (“On its own terms, the opinion is a cogent and proper application of existing Supreme Court case law.”).

The Newdow panel begins by noting that, “over the last three decades, the Supreme Court has used three interrelated tests to analyze alleged violations of the Establishment Clause in the realm of public education.”424 The first approach is the three-prong test set forth in Lemon v. Kurtzman.425 The second approach is the “endorsement” test first articulated by Justice O’Connor in her concurring opinion in Lynch v. Donnelly426 and later adopted by a majority of the Court in County of Allegheny v. ACLU.427 The third approach is the “coercion” test first used by the Court in Lee v. Weisman.428

Rather than attempting to divine which approach the Supreme Court would adopt in analyzing the constitutionality of the Pledge of Allegiance, the panel considered each approach seriatim and concluded that the Pledge violates each of the three tests.429

a. The Lemon test. In order to survive scrutiny under the Lemon test, the challenged conduct or policy (1) must have a secular purpose, (2) must have a principal or primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion, and (3) must not foster an excessive entanglement with religion.430 If any prong of the Lemon test is not satisfied, the Establishment Clause is violated.

In assessing the purpose of the words “under God” in the Pledge, the Ninth Circuit focused on the 1954 Act, which added the words to the Pledge of Allegiance, and concluded that, “[h]istorically, the primary purpose of the 1954 Act was to advance religion, in conflict with the first prong of the Lemon test.”431 While defendants argued that the pledge “as a whole” has a secular

424. Newdow v. United States Congress, 292 F.3d 597 (9th Cir. 2002).
429. 292 F.3d at 597. “In its most recent school prayer case, the Supreme Court applied the Lemon test, the endorsement test, and the coercion test to strike down a school district’s policy of permitting student-led ‘invocations’ before high school football games.” Id. at 607 (citing Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe, 530 U.S. 290, 310–16 (2000)). “We are free to apply any or all of the three tests, and to invalidate any measure that fails any one of them.” Id.
431. 292 F.3d at 609.
purpose—i.e., “solemnizing public occasions, expressing confidence in the future, and encouraging the recognition of what is worthy of appreciation in society”—the Ninth Circuit took the view that it must focus specifically upon the 1954 Act\textsuperscript{432} and concluded that notwithstanding Congress’s statement that the inclusion of the words “under God” was not an establishment of religion, the purpose for including the words “under God” in the Pledge was entirely religious rather than secular, and thus a violation of the purpose prong of the \textit{Lemon} test.\textsuperscript{433}

\textit{b. Endorsement.} In a concurring opinion in the 1984 \textit{Lynch} case, which allowed a nativity scene to be included in a city’s Christmas display, Justice O’Connor wrote to suggest a “clarification” of Establishment Clause jurisprudence. She argued that the establishment clause

\begin{quote}
[P]rohibits government from making adherence to a religion relevant in any way to a person’s standing in the political community. Government can run afoul of that prohibition in two principal ways. One is excessive entanglement with religions institutions. . . . The second and more direct infringement is government endorsement or disapproval of religion. Endorsement sends a message to nonadherents that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community.\textsuperscript{434}
\end{quote}

The Supreme Court later adopted this endorsement test in \textit{County of Allegheny v. ACLU}, which prohibited the display of a crèche at a county courthouse.\textsuperscript{435}

Applying the endorsement test, the Ninth Circuit concluded that, “[i]n the context of the Pledge, the statement that the United States is a nation ‘under God’ is an endorsement of religion. It is a

\begin{footnotes}
\item 432. \textit{Id.} at 610 (quoting \textit{Lynch} v. Donnelly, 465 U.S. 668, 693 (1984)). The panel notes that in \textit{Wallace v. Jaffree}, which struck down Alabama’s statute mandating a moment of silence “for meditation or voluntary prayer,” the Court did so not because the final version “as a whole” lacked a secular purpose, “but because the state legislature had amended the statute specifically and solely to add the words “or voluntary prayer.” \textit{Id.} at 610 (citing \textit{Wallace v. Jaffree}, 472 U.S. 38, 59–60 (1985)).
\item 433. \textit{Id.} at 610–11.
\item 435. 492 U.S. 573 (1989).
\end{footnotes}
profession of a religious belief, namely a belief in monotheism.\footnote{292 F.3d at 607.} According to the Ninth Circuit, the Pledge “impermissibly takes a position with respect to the purely religious question of the existence and identity of God.”\footnote{Id. The panel goes on to say, [a] profession that we are a nation ‘under God’ is identical, for Establishment Clause purposes, to a profession that we are a nation ‘under Jesus,’ a nation ‘under Vishnu,’ a nation ‘under Zeus,’ or a nation ‘under no god,’ because none of these professions can be neutral with respect to religion. Id. at 607–08.} The school district’s practice of teacher-led recitation of the Pledge “amounts to state endorsement” of the ideals set forth in the Pledge, and even though students are not forced to participate in reciting the Pledge, “the school district is nonetheless conveying a message of state endorsement of a religious belief when it requires public school teachers to recite, and lead the recitation of, the current form of the Pledge.”\footnote{Id. at 607.} Citing Justice O’Connor’s concurring opinion in \textit{Lynch}, the Ninth Circuit concluded that the Pledge “is an impermissible government endorsement of religion because it sends a message to unbelievers ‘that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community.’”\footnote{Id. (quoting \textit{Lynch}, 465 U.S. at 688 (O’Connor, J., concurring)).}

\textbf{c. Coercion.} In \textit{Lee v. Weisman}, the Supreme Court utilized a “coercion” test to find unconstitutional the practice of including invocations and benedictions in the form of “nonsectarian” prayers at public school graduation ceremonies.\footnote{505 U.S. 577, 599 (1992).} Rather than applying the \textit{Lemon} test, the \textit{Lee} Court stated that, “at a minimum, the Constitution guarantees that government may not coerce anyone to support or participate in religion or its exercise, or otherwise to act in a way which ‘establishes a [state] religion or religious faith or tends to do so.’”\footnote{Id. at 587 (quoting \textit{Lynch}, 465 U.S. at 678 (alteration in original)).} The Court then held in \textit{Lee} that graduation prayer was unduly coercive in that it put impermissible pressure on students to participate in, or at least show respect during, the prayer.\footnote{Id. at 593.}

With respect to the Pledge, the Ninth Circuit concluded that the
policy and the Act fail the coercion test. Just as in *Lee*, the policy and the Act place students in the untenable position of choosing between participating in an exercise with religious content or protesting. As the Court observed with respect to the graduation prayer in that case: “What to most believers may seem nothing more than a reasonable request that the nonbeliever respect their religious practices, in a school context may appear to the nonbeliever or dissenter to be an attempt to employ the machinery of the State to enforce a religious orthodoxy.”

3. Evaluating the Ninth Circuit’s analysis

There are two primary ways to critically analyze the Ninth Circuit’s conclusions in *Newdow*. The first is to argue that the panel misapplied the Supreme Court’s Establishment Clause doctrine concerning the permissible interactions of church and state in public schools. The second is to argue that although the Ninth Circuit’s opinion is a faithful, or at least plausible, application of that doctrine, the doctrine itself is a misguided understanding of the Establishment Clause.

Judge O’Scannlain’s dissent from the Ninth Circuit’s decision to deny an en banc rehearing of the case adopts the former approach. He argues that in *Engel v. Vitale*, the “fountainhead of all school prayer cases,” the Supreme Court “drew an explicit distinction between patriotic invocations of God on the one hand, and prayer, an ‘unquestioned religious exercise,’ on the other.” After reviewing the Supreme Court’s school prayer cases, Judge O’Scannlain concludes that two fundamental principles may be derived. First, “[f]ormal religious observances are prohibited in public schools because of the danger that they may effect an

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443. 292 F.3d at 608–09 (quoting *Lee*, 505 U.S. at 592).
445. *Newdow v. United States Congress*, 321 F.3d 772, 781 (9th Cir. 2003) (O’Scannlain, J., dissenting from denial of petitions for rehearing and denial of petitions for rehearing en banc).
446. *Id.* at 779 (Judge O’Scannlain, dissenting).
establishment of religion." 448 Second, “[o]nce it is established that the state is sanctioning a formal religious exercise, then the fact that the students are not required to participate in the formal devotional exercises does not prevent those exercises from being unconstitutional.” 449 Judge O'Scannlain concludes that the Pledge does not trigger an Establishment Clause violation because it does not involve the state directing the performance of a “formal religious exercise.” 450

Judge O'Scannlain’s argument is not without merit, and had it not dismissed the case on standing, it is possible that the Supreme Court might have followed his lead and concluded that the Pledge did not raise Establishment Clause issues because it is simply not a “formal religious exercise.” In order to do so, however, it would seem that the Supreme Court would have to ignore or finesse its own doctrinal approaches to Establishment Clause cases. From the perspective of the Supreme Court’s Establishment Clause doctrine, the Ninth Circuit’s arguments in Newdow appear to be quite strong.

The Ninth Circuit stretches to conclude that the Pledge violates the Lemon test, since it is by no means clear that the Pledge should not be considered in its entirety, rather than solely from the perspective of the 1954 Act’s inclusion of the words “under God,” in which case it would seem that the primary purpose and primary effect of the Pledge is patriotic rather than religious. But it is less clear that the Pledge is not coercive, at least in the very broad sense that the Supreme Court has used to find graduation prayer to be psychologically coercive. Most tellingly, if the concepts of “endorsement” and “neutrality” are the lodestars for Establishment Clause jurisprudence, then it is difficult to see how the Pledge can survive Establishment Clause scrutiny. It seems difficult to dispute that the insertion in 1954 of the words “under God” in the Pledge “endorses” religion or is at least not “neutral” with respect to religious belief. If neutrality and endorsement are the appropriate tests for Establishment Clause cases, then the Court may be required to sweep religion completely outside of public life.

448. 321 F.3d at 778.
449. Id. at 782.
450. Id.
4. Autonomy

A second approach to evaluating the Ninth Circuit’s conclusion in *Newdow* is to analyze the case from the perspective of autonomy. If the Establishment Clause requires the *independence* of church and state, then the inclusion of the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance violates the Establishment Clause. On the other hand, if religious liberty rests upon the *interdependence* of church and state, then opposition to “under God” in the Pledge would be nonsensical. *Inter-independence*, in contrast, would focus upon the effects that school-sponsored recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance has upon the autonomy of the state, the autonomy of churches, and the autonomy of individuals.

The Pledge, at least when viewed in its entirety and not just from the perspective of the 1954 addition of the words “under God,” is primarily patriotic in nature, rather than religious. It is difficult to imagine how recitation of the Pledge could undermine the autonomy of the state. Rather, it facilitates the state’s goal of inculcating unity and patriotism in its citizens. It is also difficult to imagine how recitation of the Pledge undermines the autonomy of churches, or of individuals (as long as they are not forced to participate). Listening respectfully to views we may not share, including in government-sponsored speech, does not violate individual autonomy. If I am troubled by the inclusion of the words “under God” in the pledge, I can abstain from reciting it, or I can omit those words when I participate in reciting the Pledge. From the perspective of *inter-independence*, the Pledge case is not particularly difficult, since allowing the Pledge does not pose a serious threat to the independence of either the state or of churches, and the constitutional right to opt out of saying the Pledge provides adequate protection to dissenters.

451. See W. Va. State Bd. Of Educ. v. Barnette, 319 U.S. 624 (1943) (reversing *Minersville Sch. Dist. v. Gobitis*, 310 U.S. 586 (1940)) (holding that a state could compel public school students to participate in a flag salute). In *Gobitis*, the Court emphasized the state’s autonomy interests in facilitating national cohesion. *Gobitis*, 310 U.S. at 595 (“We are dealing with an interest inferior to none in the hierarchy of legal values. National unity is the basis of national security.”). On the other hand, in *Barnette*, the Court focused on whether compulsion can be used to achieve it. *Barnette*, 319 U.S. at 642 (“If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.”).
VII. CONCLUSION

Finding an adequate doctrinal framework for analyzing and deciding cases involving the relationship between church and state and religious freedom claims has proven extremely difficult, both in the United States and in Europe. I have suggested that the primary concern underlying both the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause is autonomy—of the state, of churches, and of individuals. But the cases decided by the Supreme Court over the past fifty years in this area are difficult to reconcile into a coherent body of jurisprudence in large part because the Court has vacillated among different underlying conceptions of autonomy and different assumptions about what is required in order for individuals or institutions to exercise autonomy. Two conceptions of autonomy have vied for preeminence in the United States, one based upon the ideal of complete *independence* of church and state, having separation as its goal, and the other based upon the ideal of *inter-independence*, which tries to ascertain the proper manner in which the state can accommodate religion. The European Court of Human Rights has for the most part based its religious-freedom jurisprudence upon a different conception of autonomy, one that rests upon the *interdependence* of church and state. ⁴⁵²

While differing assumptions about the conditions and requirements of autonomy underlie jurisprudence in this area, to date neither the Supreme Court nor the European Court has devoted significant critical attention to the question of which of the various competing conceptions of autonomy is really the best or most appropriate understanding of what autonomy is, and what the conditions are under which it can thrive. Both courts have been for the most part silent about which conception of autonomy does the best job of capturing the conditions that will facilitate the autonomy of church and state, and the religious autonomy of individuals.

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⁴⁵² In several important areas of the law, however, the Supreme Court has been influenced in recent years by a conception of autonomy based upon *interdependence*. These include allowing parochial schools to receive significant money from the state in voucher programs, and eliminating heightened scrutiny over free exercise claims for exemptions from generally applicable laws. Similarly, the European Court has not exclusively relied on the *interdependence* model of autonomy; for example, with respect to oaths and requirements for office, the right to proselytize, and exceptions to generally applicable laws, the Court has tended toward a conception of autonomy based on *inter-independence*. 
In this Article, I have argued that an important step toward developing a coherent approach to the interpretation of the religion clauses of the First Amendment and the religious liberty provisions of the European Convention is to think critically about the conditions that should exist to enable the state, churches, and individuals to exercise autonomy. Autonomy provides a better framework than existing doctrinal approaches for the resolution of difficult and controversial issues that arise in this area of the law. If one of these three conceptions of autonomy, or perhaps a different conception of autonomy, provides the most compelling understanding of the meaning of autonomy and the conditions and types of relationships that are necessary for autonomy to flourish, that would provide invaluable guidance for analysis and deliberation in cases involving the proper interactions of church and state and cases involving individual freedom of religion or belief.

In order to effectively analyze issues involving religious liberty and the relationship of church and state, courts should engage in a three-step analytical process. First, a court should clearly identify the autonomy interests at stake in a particular case. Sometimes one autonomy interest will be predominately at issue, while at other times there will be more than one. Clearly identifying the autonomy interests and issues in a case will help define and refine what is at stake in a case. Second, the court should define and defend a conception of autonomy to be used in comparing and evaluating the autonomy interests at stake. Since the conception of autonomy that animates the court’s analysis will largely dictate the outcome in a case, it is important that the court understands and explicitly defends the conception of autonomy that it believes to be correct. Third, the court should then assess how the autonomy interests at stake coupled with the particular conception of autonomy that is appropriate apply to the case at hand. For the most part, both the Supreme Court and the European Court have failed to do this. This largely accounts for the fragmented, inconsistent, and ultimately unsatisfying jurisprudence in this area, both in Europe and in the United States.