

Comment for

PUBLIC PULPITS

Methodists and Mainline Churches
in the Moral Argument of Public Life

In a crowd of critics piling on the religious right, this is a call to contention to the Christian center and left. That's refreshing.

Rich in allusion and illustration, Tipton's revelatory study of conflict and crisis in the United Methodist Church at the heart of mainline Protestantism enables us to come to terms with the place of churches in the American polis, and evaluate their political moves and moral advocacy, as no non-partisan has done to date.

The fissure within Methodism goes back almost to its beginnings: soul-savers vs. world-changers. So at home with the theory, history and sociology of American public religion that they flow into the drama of the story, Tipton offers a masterly overview of the whole. Amazingly fair-minded and alert to cultural nuance, he enables us to keep our heads and our cool in a complex of partisans who shoot from every direction, while feeling how hot the water in the teapot is; tempestuous to those up close.

With a gift for finding the issues behind the issues, this book brings into full focus the churches' seething struggles. All the way from the Cold War through the culture wars to the war in Iraq, it shows how alive these struggles are for the faithful on every side, and how fateful they are for our society.