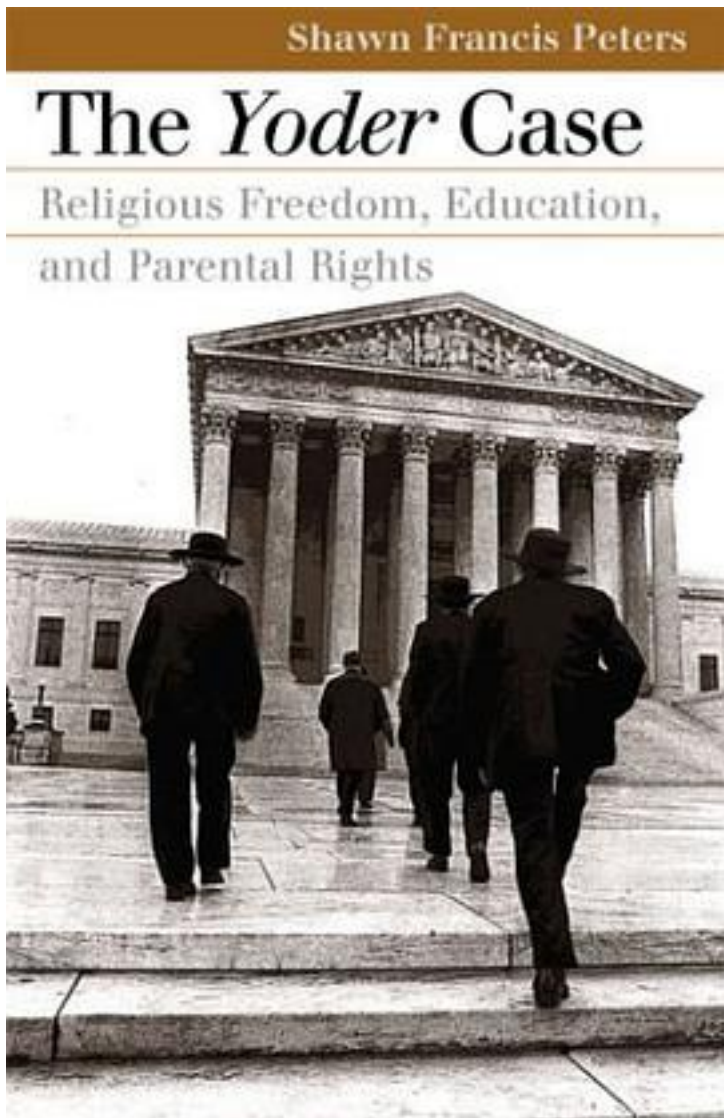


The Yoder Case



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出版者:Univ Pr of Kansas

出版时间:2003-10

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780700612734

Compulsory education has always been in the best interest of the state, as it fosters good citizenship and self-sufficiency. But what if a segment of society considers state education detrimental to its own values? In the late 1960s, one Wisconsin Amish community held that view and removed its children from public schools. When the state claimed truancy and took Jonas Yoder and two other parents to court, a legal battle of landmark proportions followed. Prize-winning historian Shawn Peters now offers a complete and compelling account of the "Yoder case and of the tortured decision of simple Amish folk to break tradition and "go to law." He examines the breadth of First Amendment protections, the validity of compulsory school attendance, and the fundamental rights of parents and children. He also takes readers deep into the world of the Old Order Amish to show how their beliefs were often at variance with the very measures being undertaken to protect them. While most accounts of "Wisconsin v. Yoder have focused on its origins and implications, Peters lays out all the facts of the case to reveal their intrinsic importance. He draws on trial transcripts and in-depth interviews with participants to fully explore the backgrounds, motivations, and strategies of the people who shaped the case--particularly the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom and its attorney William Ball. He then describes in riveting prose how the trial unfolded, explains the impact of First Amendment jurisprudence on ordinary citizens involved, and shows how a relatively obscure dispute became a conflict of national importance. When the U.S. Supreme Court in 1972 ruled in favor of the Amish, its decision was hailed by many as a victory for religious freedom but was also criticized for conferring special protection on the faith. "Yoder was subsequently cited in fundamentalist Christian efforts to excuse children from public schooling, but faith-based exemption to law was ultimately defeated in other tests. Peters traces the progress of such cases into the 1990s to show how "Yoder in some ways marked the beginning of the end of an era for religious liberty jurisprudence. In exploring the meaning and legacy of "Yoder, Peters reveals not only the human element of a landmark case but also its continuing relevance for our times.

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