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Introduction

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On February 18 and 19, 2016, nineteen scholars of religion, theology, philosophy, English, sociology, political science, art history, and law gathered to share conversation and research on the intersection between religion and politics. We met in that twilight before the most combative presidential contest since the 1828 election of Andrew Jackson. The assumption, at the time, was that religion would play an outsized role in the 2016 election, as it had in many elections before. John F. Kennedy's 1960 speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association on his Catholic faith was the direct result of Protestant challenge to his candidacy (JFK Library). Mitt Romney's 2007 speech on how his Mormon faith would and would not influence his theoretical presidency was prompted by Evangelical opposition to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Barack Obama's 2008 speech on the Black church tradition stemmed from accusations of anti-Semitism, anti-Americanism, and radical friendships (namely with Louis Farrakhan) leveled against his pastor and, by association, Obama (Pew Research Center 2008). The last quarter of the twentieth century saw the rise of the large Evangelical voting bloc that was very influential in setting American policy and directing the course of American politics, an influence that has continued into the twenty-first century (Pew Research Center 2007). In the middle of the parties' debate cycles, major news

outlets were still talking about the influence of religion (particularly Evangelicals) on the election (Burke), despite the public's belief that religion was losing its hold on America (Pew Research Center 2016). While large-scale analysis of the voting trends of 2016, particularly involving religion, is still forthcoming, 2016 may have seen a decline in religion's influence on American politics.

Perhaps the symposium participants presciently anticipated the understated place of religion in 2016's political turmoil, because more than half of the dozen papers in this supplement involve religious *responses* to political concerns or what perspective religion can provide to society and politics. Bergman, Fleming, Kelly, Miller, O'Keefe, Salzman and Lawler, and Simkins all take on hot topics and major legislation. Economics (Kelly; Simkins) and climate change (Miller; O'Keefe) are the two biggest topics, while issues of conscience in war (Bergman), justice and the death penalty (Fleming), and social equality (Salzman and Lawler) are also explored through the lens of the Jewish and Christian religious traditions. Still other papers explore how late antique (Smith), Enlightenment (Wendling), and contemporary (Carney) religion has engaged with, disengaged from, or influenced politics. Malik unpacks a piece of literature that carves a path for minority Muslims integrating into non-Muslim societies as full citizens without sacrificing their religious identity. Finally, Mattson and Reed-Bouley elaborate on a program they created to integrate curriculum on Catholic Christian thought and practice with curriculum on citizenship and civic engagement.

All of these papers are expressions of the deep concern that scholars in the first quarter of the twenty-first century have about the relationship between religion and politics, or how religion is used in political and social discourse. They are a product of their time. However, they utilize deep roots in major religious traditions to elucidate contemporary concerns, revealing that religion, no matter the period, still has something to say when it comes to contemporary politics. Given that most major religious movements currently practiced – including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism – all interact with modern politics, and given the increased mixing of the world's religions in modern societies, we are reaching a point where the question of how religion and politics should relate requires more concerted discussion.

So another way of categorizing these papers is to see them as partial answers to this question. One answer is to find the elements of religion that are useful for informing social and political structures (Bergman; Carney; Fleming; Kelly; Malik; O'Keefe; Salzman and Lawler; Simkins). Another answer suggests that the two domains may be incompatible (Smith; Wendling). The final answer requires inserting a third element into this equation and considering the role of the faith-affiliated educational institution, something that is at once religious, political, and neither (Mattson and Reed-Bouley; Miller).

Both approaches to the papers in this supplement are keyed, however, to a single idea – religion and politics have been related for millennia, and their relationship is far from over. In the time they have remaining as partnered ideas for social formation, it is imperative to explore their relationship historically and contemporarily in order to chart a way forward. So while these papers are very much a product of their specific geographic and temporal situation, the ideas they contain are timeless, influential for debates to come on the companionship between religion and politics.

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