Catholics are the largest voting bloc in American politics, representing one quarter of the voting population. In twelve of the last thirteen presidential elections, Catholics backed the winning candidate, often providing the margin of victory. Yet, there are few comprehensive analyses of this voting group and its impact on the electoral process.

Fortunately, political scientists Marie Gayte, Blandine Chelini-Pont, and Mark Rozell are working to fill this void. In Catholics and US Politics After the 2020 Elections, the editors and nine of their colleagues examine the influence of the Catholic vote on the 2020 presidential race and its aftermath. The 223-page book is concise, informative, and, at times, provocative.

This election narrative is a sequel to their 2016 work, Catholics and US Politics After the 2016 Election. It comprises of eight essays divided into three sections that explore the ideological moorings of the Catholic community, the political involvement of the hierarchy, and Catholic voting patterns. While these themes guide the book, the authors cover an eclectic range of topics.

Renowned scholar Mark Rozell sets the stage with an in-depth, insightful overview of Catholic political activity, past and present. He convincingly argues there is no monolithic Catholic vote but instead distinctive subcultures—one that emphasizes traditional morality, is religiously observant, and votes Republican and another that promotes social justice, is less observant, and votes Democrat.

Amandine Barb follows with an examination of the new Catholic left, asserting that younger, more progressive Catholics align with the Democrats. She suggests that President Joseph Biden’s views are representative of this group as both reject Church teaching on abortion and marriage, while embracing its doctrine on the poor and marginalized.

Conversely, Blandine Chelini-Pont explores the relationship between Catholics, the Christian Right, and European populists. She suggests that Donald Trump, with the help of conservative Catholics, transformed the religious right into a monolithic movement that uses nationalism, racial resentment, and Christian symbolism to garner political support.

Neil Young challenges this view, however. He argues that the religious right remains a coalition of diverse religious traditions in support of shared
cultural values. Young points out that many Mormons and Catholics initially opposed Trump in 2016 but later backed the candidate because of his conservative views on faith-based issues.

Marie Gayte explores the Church hierarchy’s role in American politics. She suggests that the *Roe v. Wade* (1973) abortion decision motivated bishops to become more engaged in politics. The pro-life hierarchy criticized Catholic politicians, many of whom were Democrats who backed the ruling. Democratic party leaders accused the bishops of partisanship and narrowly focusing on abortion at the expense of other issues.

Gayte states that the election of Pope Francis altered this political dynamic as the pontiff’s priorities conflicted with those of his American bishops. Whereas the Pope emphasized social justice issues and climate change, local prelates stressed abortion and religious liberty. Gayte suggests that Biden used this public rift between the pontiff and his bishops to neutralize the hierarchy’s criticism of his discordant views.

The scholars also explored the Latino Catholic vote in the United States. The academics argue that although the Democrats are winning among this subgroup, its size and influence is declining as many Latinos are joining evangelical faiths supportive of the Republican party or becoming part of the growing segment of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated.

*Catholics and US Politics After the 2020 Election* is an important addition to the limited assessments of Catholic voting behavior. While this account addresses a wide range of topics and provides keen insights into evolving group political preferences, there are some areas where greater examination and analysis would have been helpful.

For example, President Joseph Biden and his supporters assert that he is a devout Catholic, even though he disagrees with the Church on key issues pertaining to the family. This claim is made throughout the book. However, there is no effort to define devout nor assess the use of this term as a political strategy. This oversight is a missed opportunity, particularly since other Catholic Democratic politicians make similar assertions.

Also, there have been two Catholic major party nominees for president this century—John Kerry and Joseph Biden. An examination of how each candidate portrayed their faith, its influence on their policy views, and how Catholics responded to their candidacies would have been a valuable addition to the study.

While *Catholics and US Politics After the 2020 Election* has its limitations, the book does provide new insights into current Catholic voting behavior and fosters debate within the academic community on the importance and direction of the Catholic vote—a key objective for any scholarly
work. Hopefully, the editors and authors will continue this series into the 2024 election and beyond.

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James Hankins, the leading scholar of Renaissance political thought in the English-speaking world, is a historian at Harvard University. He is the general editor of the *I Tatti Renaissance Library* and an associate editor of the *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*, a multi-volume project initiated in 1945 by Hankins’s mentor, Paul Oskar Kristeller, to document the influence of Greek and Latin authors on medieval and renaissance writers. *Virtue Politics* offers a new, coherent interpretation of Renaissance political thought, capping a project that has lasted for over two decades.

This book boldly enters an established debate over whether Renaissance humanism focused on philological and literary techniques (Kristeller) or on its own substantive philosophy (as argued by Eugenio Garin). It also takes on historiographic representations of humanists as either rootless propagandists-for-hire or committed republicans. For Hankins, humanists were united in their commitment to “virtue politics”—the idea that the political reform required by a post-plague Italy riddled with legitimacy crises amongst its rulers was to be secured by producing virtuous leaders through training in ancient literature and philosophy. The result would be a new generation of leadership—whether in republican or princely polities—whose legitimacy would be founded on personal virtue. This basic approach, according to Hankins, united humanists who varied in other respects and tied together the work of individual humanists whose careers spanned different constitutional contexts. Such scholars were not hypocrites; they believed that virtuous leadership was more important than institutional type.

In his preface and first several chapters, Haenkins presents his argument and discusses his sources: texts that have been overlooked because they were untranslated and/or in manuscript form, not focused on republicanism, or drawn from informal sources (fiction, correspondence, histo-