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Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 226 pages

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- 1 Bringing together contributions from leading scholars in religion and politics in the United States, this 226-page book explores the role played by Catholics in American politics, with a particular focus on the 2016 presidential election. Demonstrating that the Catholic electorate is not a monolithic power, the introduction by Mark J. Rozell sets the scene for the nine articles collected in the volume. Often considered as a key “swing voting group”, Catholic voters can go from one party to the other depending on the political context. Once a reliable component of the New Deal Democratic Party coalition, Catholics have become independents and even Republicans. The Catholic swing vote, concludes M. J. Rozell, “remains a potent force.”
- 2 The volume is organized in three main parts. The first part examines U.S. Catholicism from an ideological perspective. It is divided into three chapters which converge on the developments that have been going on in the recent past. The first chapter, entitled “Catholic Patterns in the American Left,” is devoted to the rise in the United States of the Catholic left since the mid-2000s. The author, Amandine Barb, argues that since the 1970s there has been an active counter-mobilization among progressive Catholics who

have revealed an interest in such issues as social welfare, the environment, immigration, and health care. Among religious progressives, Catholics are nowadays the largest and perhaps most politically active group. In the following chapter, “Catholic Colonization of the American Right,” Blandine Chelini-Pont gives us an overview of the rise and evolution of the modern post-WWII Catholic Right. She particularly insists on the emergence in the 1950s of the Catholic-led intellectual conservative movement and its role in the ideological building of the contemporary American Right. Ever since the 1950s, Catholic conservative ideas have exerted a great influence on the political debate. According to Chelini-Pont, the alliance of conservative Catholics with the evangelical Protestant-led Right has greatly contributed to the “Catholization” of the Republican Party. The last chapter in this part, “Catholics and Evangelicals: Does Donald Trump Mean the End of the Religious Right?” focuses on the speculations about the Religious Right’s demise brought on by Trump’s victory. Neil J. Young asserts that while Evangelicals supported the candidacy of Trump, the other two pillars of the Religious Right, conservative Mormons and Catholics, largely rejected him. Rather than signaling the end of the Religious Right, Young maintains that Trump’s victory highlights the Religious Right’s history of division and disunity. Therefore, Trump’s victory should be understood as another moment that reveals “the challenges and complications inherent to the coalitional nature of the Religious Right.”

- 3 The second part of the book proposes two chapters on the U.S. Catholic Bishops and the Holy See. In the first chapter, “The US Catholic Bishops: From Separatism to Public Intervention,” Marie Gayte analyzes the complex position of the Bishops toward the American political process. Up to the 1960s, when the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) was set up, U.S. Bishops had refrained from political involvement, and when they became involved at the national level, they tended to pull Catholic voters in opposite directions of the political spectrum. Even more confusing was the fact that during the 2016 election campaigns, the bishops made statements that were critical of Donald Trump, at the same time insisting on their reluctance to intervene in the political process. The Catholic voters themselves have become more inclined to form their own opinions, irrespective of the bishops’ messages. Entitled “The Holy See and the Catholic Community in the 2016 Presidential Elections,” the second chapter deals with the role of the Holy See in American politics, and more specifically the diplomatic relations with the Vatican. As evidenced by the creation of the office of personal representative to the Pope, it was the Vietnam War that provided the context for setting up closer diplomatic ties with the Holy See. The election of Kennedy and Vatican II brought, to a large extent, a sense of achievement to American Catholics. Besides, Gerald P. Fogarty S. J. explains how the changing status of American Catholics and their assimilation into American society have largely contributed to their shift to the GOP. Although Donald Trump has alienated Catholics by his attacks on immigrants, he won 52 % of the Catholic vote. It is Trump’s opposition to abortion that seems to have been the overriding motive for the Catholic support he gained.
- 4 The third and last part offers four chapters that provide insights into the role played by Catholics in the 2016 presidential elections. In the first chapter, “The Catholic Vote in the Election of Donald J. Trump,” Douglas W. Kiemec argues that Trump’s Catholic contingent came essentially from the conservative wing of the Catholic Church. This support is mainly due to Trump’s strong pro-life posture on abortion, a posture which was even stronger than that of the Catholic hierarchies in the United States. On the

other hand, the author rightly insists on the fact that Trump is consistent in his preference for policy choices that are the exact opposite of those advanced by Barack Obama. Olivier Richomme proposes in his essay, “A Catholic Latino Vote?”, an exploration of the Catholic Latino vote. Latinos, the largest ethno-racial group (34 %) in the Catholic community, do not share the behavior of their white counterparts. So far, they have had no real electoral impact during presidential elections; one of the reasons being that, unlike White Catholics, they are concentrated in noncompetitive states. So, logically, in 2016 the Republicans did not need the Latino vote to win. The fact still remains that the impact of the Catholic vote in the USA will become more dependent on the evolution of the Latino vote. More importantly, the Latino community seems in the process of reshaping the entire American political dynamic. In the third chapter, Ted G. Jelen sets out to answer the following question raised by the title of his article: “‘Can We Get the Catholic Vote?’ The Effects of Catholic Running Mates in Presidential Elections.” According to Jelen, the effects of Catholic running mates do not play a central role in specific national elections. Catholics are likely to support presidential tickets with Catholic vice-presidential nominees whereas evangelical Protestants are less likely to do so. The last essay is a summary that basically recaps the main characteristics of the Catholic vote that have already been highlighted in the volume. First of all, Mark M. Gray in “Catholics and the 2016 Elections” underlines the diversity of the Catholic vote, and secondly its importance as a “swing” vote in determining election outcome. A third characteristic set forth by the author is that the Catholic vote is made of two sub-groups —White Catholics and Hispanic Catholics— that have different political tendencies. While White Catholics lean conservative and Republican, Latino Catholics identify as moderate or liberal Democrats. Finally, Catholic voters may vote for a candidate or party that supports policies that are not consistent with the churches.

- 5 Taken together, these articles constitute a timely and valuable contribution towards a better understanding of the Catholic vote in the United States. The volume presents an authoritative and well-organized view of changes that pertain to the political behavior of Catholics. On a wider scale, the book is also a major contribution to Trump scholarship, which is flourishing both within the United States and abroad. Finally, the essays are excellent, in so far as they point the way toward further work that will extend the ongoing enterprise of investigating changes in religion and politics in the United States.

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