



## RELIGION AND THE AMERICAN FUTURE

By Christopher DeMuth and Yuval Levin, Editors

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Religious belief is thriving in America today, even though it appears under assault as seldom before—attacked by secularists, scientists, and increasingly vocal atheists; constrained by judges and civil libertarians; mocked by contemporary artists; and treated mundanely, if not cynically, by politicians seeking votes. Yet faith and religious observance are neither obsolete nor incompatible with modern society; on the contrary, the religious principles that guided the Founders continue to bind the nation and justify human endeavor. *Religion and the American Future* (AEI Press, 2008) explores the enduring strength of religion in American life.

In this insightful volume, a distinguished group of scholars contemplates the relationship of religion to the dominant secular realms of politics, science, law, and art. These authors argue that the religious and the secular realms must be willing to learn from each other's traditions; that faith-based voting is not the threat it may often seem; that science cannot answer humanity's deepest moral inquiries; and that the United States Constitution presupposes the existence of God. The volume concludes with an instructive look at Europe and the troubling implications of turning away from religious belief entirely.

Among the contributors' observations on the role of religion in American life:

- Renowned scholar **Michael Novak** argues that the concept of the secular is part of Christian thought and has only recently been considered in active conflict with religion. Citing thinkers from Aristotle to Habermas, Novak suggests that the present age is not secular but post-secular, a time in which religious and nonreligious Americans must display their willingness to learn from one another.
- **John C. Green**, a senior fellow at the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, examines voting patterns among religious Americans. Dismissing as hyperbole the heated rhetoric that often surrounds faith-based voting—including assertions that America is either becoming a theocracy or waging a war against Christians—Green crunches the numbers for twenty-two groups defined by religious affiliation, belief, and practice to explain what “faith-based” voting actually is.

- **Leon R. Kass** explores the tension between religion and science and concludes that knowledge sought by science is different from knowledge taught by scripture. The strictly scientific view, he argues, is limited by its inability to address profound questions about morality, purpose, and the well-lived human life—questions that are at the heart of religious teaching.
- Former U.S. assistant attorney general **Douglas W. Kmiec** explores questions of religious faith and the American legal system. He reviews interpretations of the First Amendment establishment clause and argues that the Constitution, while never mentioning God explicitly, in fact presupposes the existence of the God cited in the Declaration of Independence as the basis for human rights.
- Art critic **Roger Kimball** examines the relationship of art and beauty to religion and morality. Drawing on aesthetics, ethics, epistemology, and art history, as well as statements by contemporary artists, he explores the ways in which artistic beauty has been considered a transcendent realm that could substitute for faith—and concludes that the realms of art and religion must maintain their essential distinctiveness.
- **Marcello Pera**, former president of the Italian Senate, cautions Americans about the cultural consequences of rejecting religion altogether. Pera suggests that the secular writers of the European Constitution become involved in paradox when they appeal to universal values—where do such values reside if not in religion?—and that Europe’s abandonment of its religious heritage has undermined its status as a pillar of Western civilization.

*Religion and the American Future* is a lively, learned symposium on the role of religion in American society. The contributors rise in opposition to the cynicism, disdain, and constraint that often confront religion in public life; they argue that tolerance, respect, and free expression must shape the future of religion in America.

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