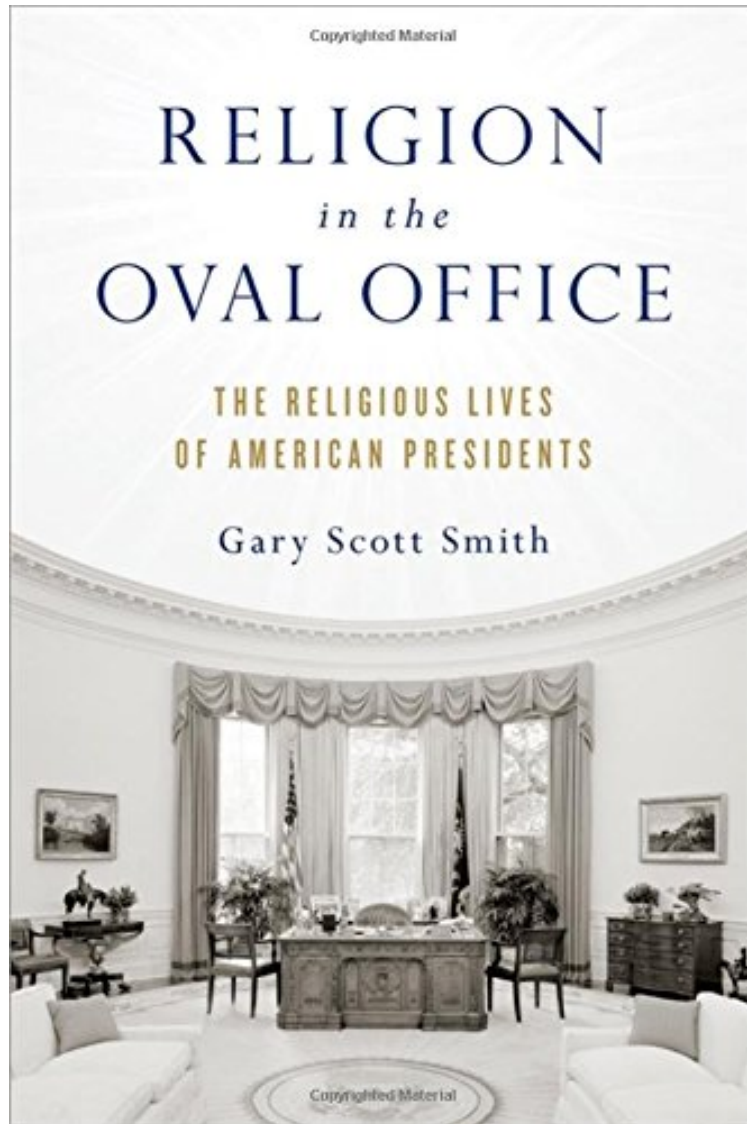


Religion in the Oval Office: The Religious Lives of American Presidents

Gary Scott Smith

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Gary Scott Smith : Religion in the Oval Office: The Religious Lives of American Presidents before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Religion in the Oval Office: The Religious Lives of American Presidents:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy Eric F.Everything arrived on time and as advertised.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding and we need moreBy Dan JensenVery thorough treatment

of an important subject. Hopefully there will be another book on some of the other presidents.³ of 3 people found the following review helpful. Let's Make This Book a Bestseller. By Tom Allain I loved this book and wish more people knew about it. The author takes 12 of our 44 Presidents and delves into how their faith impacted the way they led. I give kudos for many things, but let me begin with this: he didn't choose the obvious Presidents. I appreciate that he avoided the glamour of speaking about George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, John Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, or George W. Bush. Instead he focused on Presidents that don't command the limelight: among them John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, William McKinley, Herbert Hoover, and Harry Truman. Gary Scott Smith wrote an intensely well researched book that explores the impact of belief in our history and how these beliefs informed our history. I can only imagine how many hours/days/weeks/months/years it took him to complete all the research. In an era where the politicization of faith grabs an undue proportion of our public dialogue this book stands as a beacon of thoughtfulness and reflection. That said, the reader will benefit greatly from a background in Western Philosophy. I am familiar with the writings of John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, John Calvin, George Fox, and Reinhold Niebuhr and it helped me immensely in making the author's connections. But even if you aren't familiar with these philosophers, please read this book. It's worth it.

In his highly praised book *Faith and the Presidency*, Gary Scott Smith cast a revealing light on the role religion has played in presidential politics throughout our nation's history, offering comprehensive, even-handed examinations of the role of religion in the lives, politics, and policies of eleven presidents. Now, in *Religion in the Oval Office*, Smith takes on eleven more of our nation's most interesting and influential chief executives: John Adams, James Madison, John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, William McKinley, Herbert Hoover, Harry Truman, Richard Nixon, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama. Drawing on a wide range of sources and paying close attention to historical context and America's shifting social and moral values, he examines their religious beliefs, commitments, affiliations, and practices and scrutinizes their relationships with religious leaders and communities. The result is a fascinating account of the ways in which religion has helped shape the course of our history. From John Quincy Adams' treatment of Native Americans, to Harry Truman's decision to recognize Israel, to Bill Clinton's promotion of religious liberty and welfare reform, to Barack Obama's policies on poverty and gay rights, Smith shows how strongly our presidents' religious commitments have affected policy from the earliest days of our nation to the present. Together with *Faith and the Presidency*, *Religion in the Oval Office* provides the most comprehensive examination of the inseparable and intriguing relationship between faith and the American presidency. This book will be invaluable to anyone interested in the presidency and the role of religion in politics.

"*Religion in the Oval Office* is an impressive work that fully presents for the reader the different ways in which faith has helped shape presidential character, political philosophy, and the interplay between beliefs and policies. Smith conducted extensive archival research, and the notes and sources make up about one third of the book. This fascinating book will have particular appeal to readers interested in the presidency and the role of religion in politics." --*The Journal of American Studies* "*Religion in the Oval Office* is meticulously researched, drawing on primary sources as well as previous scholarship. Mr. Smith ... has a nice way of upending readers' assumptions about various presidents' religious views." - *Wall Street Journal* "This work is valuable not only for Smith's excavation of the religious lives of these 11 presidents, but even more so because Smith asks us to take them seriously. . . . One great feature of Smith's work is that . . . each chapter can stand alone as an essay on an individual president." --Christian Scholar's "The religiosity of American presidents has been a subject of great interest among historians, political scientists, religion scholars, and lay persons alike. I always appreciate sound, historical research that tries to understand presidents contextually, taking into account the whole breadth of their lives and not merely select quotations. Gary Smith of Grove City College has produced a magisterial work that surveys the religious lives and beliefs of 11 presidents, beginning with John Adams, and ending with Barack Obama. In some ways this book is a follow up to [*Faith and the Presidency*]. Yet it stands on its own in terms of readers being able to pick it up, and read about any particular president who interests them. Smith has done a great service to those genuinely interested in this topic." --*Helwys Society Forum* explicating the Presidents' career trajectories by means of their religious convictions that the book is in fact far more than this." - *Journal of American Studies* "The book is well researched, balanced, and relentlessly interesting. Smith covers 11 presidents (Adams, Madison, Adams, Jackson, McKinley, Hoover, Truman, Nixon, Bush 41, Clinton, Obama) and makes a compelling case that religion--though vastly different in many instances--was nevertheless genuinely important for each of these men." --*The Gospel Coalition* "At over 600 pages, this may be Smith's magnum opus. This new book [is as] equally meticulous and exhaustively researched, as his *Faith and the Presidency*." --*Center for Public Justice* "[Smith's] thorough and thoughtful book is a welcome reminder that political positions informed by religious faith have been a part of the fabric of this nation from its founding." --*Booklist* "[Smith explains how eleven presidents' religion influenced their]... 'political and policy choices . . . with admirable fairness.'" --*First Things* "[*Religion in the Oval Office*] not only provides a wealth of information, but it is also a delight to read. Smith excels in portraying the religious traits of presidents." --*Congress and the Presidency* "[Smith's]

prodigious research features meticulous documentation. Readers broadly interested in religion and politics will find this book to be informative and insightful as will aficionados of presidential biography. Smith succeeds in making his case that students of the presidency should pay more attention to the role that religious belief plays in the lives of the occupants of the White House." --Politics and Religion Praise for Faith and the Presidency: "Smith draws on extensive archival research to describe how faith helped shape presidential character, political philosophy and the interplay between beliefs and policies. What resounds on page after fascinating page is that, despite all the handwringing over the role of religion in American public life, in reality we've known very little about the steadfast beliefs of our past presidents."- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette "A magisterial work-exhaustively researched, comprehensive in scope, and pitch-perfect in its critical analysis... [T]his book will be the standard by which future volumes on religion and the U.S. presidency should be judged."- Journal of Law and Religion "This brief review only scratches the surface of Smith's meticulously crafted tome, one that will likely become a standard reference work on the subject"- Journal of American History "Wonderfully informed...one could do far worse than approach his text as an alternative biographical portrait of certain chief executives. But he does such a fantastic job of explicating the Presidents' career trajectories by means of their religious convictions that the book is in fact far more than this." --Journal of American Studies "Perceptive, engaging, and richly documented... Smith deftly penetrates the mythology surrounding various presidents, independently evaluating their public images in search of their authentic faiths... Few works demonstrate a greater command of the broad sweep of American political history and a deeper understanding of presidential politics or Christian beliefs and practices."-Journal of American History "At a time when presses (and readers) groan under the weight of panicky punditry on religion and the presidency, it is a welcome relief to possess Smith's well-researched, balanced and fair-minded study of a perennially interesting topic."- Christian Century "This book offers important insights on American religiosity and the presidency."--Peter J. Kastor, Journal of Church and State "Like its predecessor, [Religion in the Oval Office] is built on extensive archival research combined with a comprehensive mounding up of popular and scholarly published sources too. The author uses sources with great care; he is careful to consult not only what presidents said for public consumption but also their private musings and the observations of colleagues and critics alike. The result is a very sturdy, benchmark sort of work."--Journal of Ecclesiastical History

About the Author Gary Scott Smith is Chair of the History Department at Grove City College. He is the author of numerous books on history and religion including Faith and the Presidency: From George Washington to George W. Bush, and Heaven in the American Imagination.