

not perfect *powers* within the person (pace Aquinas) but perfect the *relationships* we have with one another. Harrington's contribution shows how justice is first "an attribute of God" (129). Harrington presents sharing as a way for the rich to ameliorate poverty, wealth as a possible obstacle to the kingdom, and material poverty as possibly a stimulus to greater reliance on God.

Chapters 10–13 treat, respectively, embodiment and community (the "new family of Jesus") as the context for sexual ethics ("by being embodied and by being redeemed," Christians are "called to a dynamic personal integration as well as to a full incorporation into the community," 138); marriage and divorce; celibacy, homosexuality, abortion; and nature. Usually, the authors take "moderate" to "conservative" positions on these issues but also with some ambiguity. For instance, Harrington notes the "absolute" character of Jesus' condemnation of divorce but then says that it "appears" that Matthew and Paul admitted "exceptions" (see 154; 158–59). The same is true of their treatment of homosexuality, especially in Romans 1:26–27 (see 16–67; 170–73). For example, not once is it said that the Catholic Church condemns homosexual acts; indeed, Keenan seems to agree with moralist Stephen Pope's assertion that homosexuals "can rightly realize [their] homosexual orientation" (173). The statement is vague but seems to imply something at odds with magisterial teaching.

The best treatment (although not without its flaws) of a specific moral issue in the book is, in my opinion, Keenan's discussion of abortion (see 173–76), where he relates the "sanctity of life" ethic to John Paul II's teaching on abortion in *Evangelium Vitae*.

Overall, despite the serious concerns that I have raised, the book is useful and achieves its purpose of helping to build bridges between moral theology and the Bible.

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Christian Faith and Modern Democracy: God and Politics in the Fallen World

Robert P. Kraynak

Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press,
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Robert Kraynak, a Harvard-trained professor of political science at Colgate University, is clearly not afraid of creating controversy. In this well-researched and thought-provoking book, he questions our commonplace assumption that democratic government is morally demanded by contemporary Christian theology (at least in its Protestant and Catholic flavors). As Kraynak points out, the word "democracy" never appears in the New Testament, despite its being written in the language (Greek) that provided the word (*demokratia*) to us. Further, until very recently, almost all major figures in Church history—Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin—were, at best, suspicious of democratic government.

Provoked by this “Illiberal and Undemocratic Christian Tradition,” Kraynak investigates how, and why, recent Christian thought has come full circle on this important political question. Kraynak is particularly concerned because he sees great peril for Christians living under liberal democracy. He claims that modern Christians have erred “in drastically misjudging the negative side effects of [embracing modern democracy]—in underestimating the corrosive effects of a culture of rights and the leveling effects of mass democracy on the human soul and on the institutions that are necessary to sustain a sense of the sacred” (168). In short, Kraynak believes that while liberal democracy is perhaps not *fatal* to faith, it is certainly not *conducive* to faith.

How did this reversal of Christian thought come about? Kraynak discusses six factors that various observers have credited in changing the Christian political concept: Medieval constitutionalism, the Protestant Reformation, neo-Scholastic concepts of sovereignty, the role of the Enlightenment and “religions of reason,” the churches’ struggles against colonialism, slavery, and industrial exploitation, and the response to twentieth-century totalitarianism. Kraynak concedes that all these ideas and movements had some effect in the Churches’ warming to liberal democracy, but in the end, Kraynak believes that the development of what he calls “Kantian Christianity” bears the bulk of the causality and responsibility.

Kantian Christianity, for Kraynak, is dangerous at best and heretical at worst. Kraynak recognizes that Kant has been central to the development of much of modern theology (incontrovertibly) and goes so far as to claim that the entire “personalist” movement is simply a Kantian-Christian fusion (a more tendentious claim). Kraynak maintains that while certain modern theologians and philosophers have utilized these developments while successfully keeping the errors of Kantianism at bay—he here singles out Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II—the inclusion of Kantian ideas is “playing with fire.” In Kraynak’s reading, Kant’s anthropology—the strict correlation of human dignity with human autonomy—is radically and fundamentally antithetical to such basic Christian doctrines as original sin and grace. Further, Kraynak wonders if this “Kantian risk” is required, as he maintains that the promotion of human dignity is possible without resorting to a “rights-bearing” concept of the human person.

Kraynak further claims that liberal democracy, as endorsed by Kantian Christianity, is itself deceptive in its self-presentation. Liberal democracy proclaims itself to be neutral between competing claims about the good, but Kraynak (in a paragraph that could easily have been written by either Stanley Hauerwas or David Schindler) maintains that “the professed neutrality of the liberal State about the Good Life is merely a pretext for imposing an exclusive view of the Good Life. Though claiming to take no stand on the ultimate purpose of life, modern, liberal democracy, in fact, promotes a life dedicated to middle-class materialism, popular entertainment, and secular humanism” (201). Given liberal democracy’s fundamental hostility to the life of faith and the transcendent, Kraynak claims that Christians should consider the concept of “Christian constitutionalism,” or “constitutionalism without liberalism.” By these terms, Kraynak means a mixed regime that explicitly recognizes the prerogatives of church, family,

and voluntary charitable associations. Kraynak believes that formal recognition by the polity of these three key institutions would tend to educate—and therefore form—the citizenry in the priority of things spiritual and would serve to check the materialistic bent of contemporary liberal democracy.

It must be made clear that Kraynak is, by his own admission, an American patriot, and he goes out of his way to state that he is not calling for a revolution to impose his project. He claims neither that the current American regime is illegitimate nor that it is necessary for Christians to resist it, but Kraynak wishes the Christian citizens of liberal democracies to realize that their allegiance to their regime is conditional and prudential. Liberal democracy is not demanded by Christian faith, and Kraynak clearly finds aspects of the current American regime—abortion on demand, for example—deeply problematic. Kraynak asks his co-religionists to recognize these problems, to realize that they are (at least partially) caused by—and not merely packaged with—liberal democracy, and to temper their enthusiasm accordingly.

I conclude with two challenges to this deeply insightful book. First, Kraynak is, as earlier stated, deeply concerned about both the corrosive nature of rights and the leveling effect of democracy. To summarize, liberalism corrodes, while democracy levels, or makes base. To illustrate this point, Kraynak frequently uses as his incontrovertible example the loss of transcendence in the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic liturgy. And there is no question that the dismal state of the liturgy in many American parishes presents a *prima facie* case that Kraynak is onto something, but it appears to this reviewer that the “dumbing-down” of the Roman rite is not a problem of democratization, as Kraynak asserts. Instead, the oversimplified version of the story is that a corrupt aristocracy of sorts—the liturgical establishment in various Catholic institutions—forced their views on unsuspecting Catholics in the pews using the “spirit of Vatican II” as their justification. In this case at least, the problem is not so much the “Revolt of the Masses” projected by Ortega y Gasset but, instead, a “Revolt of the Elites,” as documented by Christopher Lasch.

This observation leads to a larger criticism. If the leveling effect is overstated, and the problem is really with our new managerial or “Bobo” elite (to use David Brooks’s term for “bourgeois bohemians”), is Kraynak’s quarrel really with “modern democracy,” or might his critique be better aimed at contemporary liberalism? Granted that democracy has its own pathologies (as do all regimes), would they not be much more ameliorable if liberalism could be properly tamed? Even if contemporary, liberal democracy presents a hostile climate for persons of faith, does this necessarily indicate a problem with democracy *simpliciter*? Without disputing the need for preserving an aristocratic element in American society, might not the common-sense realism of the mass public become the natural ally of an aristocratic element?

Finally, without denying the truth of Kraynak’s observations about liberalism and democracy, are there no good things to be said for them? In this book there are moments of almost Manichean intensity that make one wonder how Kraynak can feel the patriotism he so passionately expresses for a country so corrupted. If Kraynak thinks that

life is *in any way* better now than, say, one or two hundred years ago, he does not express it in this work. In this sense, his book becomes an undeservedly harsh polemic against modernity—itsself an amalgamation of numerous societal and intellectual trends—in its totality. But as de Tocqueville, *inter alia*, teaches us, modernity is a mixed blessing, but a blessing nonetheless. Much has been gained in our encounter with modernity, even as much has been lost. How many of us would trade places with our ancestors? If nothing else, in this post-Trent Lott era, can we at least agree that the dramatic diminution of racism in America is an unqualified good? It would strengthen Kraynak's case immensely were he to enumerate modernity's gains that must be preserved even as he seeks to correct the—again, undeniable—defects of the current regime.

These reservations, however, detract little from Kraynak's achievement. This is a masterful work and, at the very least, a necessary corrective to a contemporary Christian tendency to blindly endorse anything that can be labeled "democratic." This book should be required reading for students (let alone teachers) of politics and is heartily recommended for the educated reading public.

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