

The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe. By Stathis N. Kalyvas. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Pp. x+300. \$45.00 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

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Over the past decade, there has been an increasing tendency to examine religious phenomena from a rational choice perspective. With the publication of his first book, Stathis Kalyvas brings this theoretical approach to bear on the topic of religion and politics. Interestingly, Kalyvas picks up on the utility of rational choice without having dipped into the works of Rodney Stark, Roger Finke, or Laurence Iannaccone, the most preeminent proponents of this new paradigm. In many respects, Kalyvas's findings can be declared a theoretical victory for the "religious economy" school.

Kalyvas investigates the following paradox: Why did confessional (i.e., Catholic-based) political parties arise in Western Europe during the late 1800s against the desires of the Catholic Church and "religion friendly" conservative parties? The paradox is theoretically interesting, since it raises the question of how actors rationally pursuing well-defined goals can produce outcomes contrary to their own interests. Rational choice theory is often criticized for its failure to explain unintended consequences within a strategic action framework. Kalyvas's model of confessional party formation demonstrates how strategic choices at one period of time can generate new actors who are important in subsequent periods. These new actors may possess autonomous interests and, given sufficient power to act upon those interests, may produce outcomes that differ significantly from the desires of those who created them.

Specifically, Kalyvas shows how the Catholic Church (along with conservatives), mobilized lay Catholics to combat anticlerical attacks from liberals in a democratic environment. Although Catholic bishops intended for these lay groups to remain under strict episcopal control, the need to rally votes against liberals provided lay organizers an independent source of power and legitimacy—that is, voters. Furthermore, the electoral success of incipient confessional organizations provided lay leaders with a stake in expanding democratic governance, something both the church and conservatives tried to prevent. Thus, examined in a dynamic context, where actors and interests are created or destroyed over time, unintended consequences are perfectly understandable from a rational choice perspective.

Kalyvas further details the creation of a new political identity among lay Catholics. The choice of an ambiguous "Christian" identity resulted from the need to develop a source of legitimacy autonomous from the church, while simultaneously preserving the religious "glue" that bonded members of different economic classes together. (The success of the Christian Democrats followed largely from their ability to appeal to voters

across class cleavages.) In other words, identity formation can result from the strategic choice of political entrepreneurs. Moreover, he convincingly argues that the secularization of European politics resulted not from social “modernization” (à la traditional secularization theory) but, rather, from the conscious choice of strategic actors seeking to broaden their base of political support. By moving away from a strictly religious platform and distancing themselves from the Catholic episcopacy, Christian Democrats could appeal to a wider array of voters and win seats in government, the primary objective of all democratic political parties. These two findings should generate serious debate among scholars investigating identity politics and secularization.

Methodologically, Kalyvas generates a deductive model of party formation and tests it using comparative historical analysis. His cases include countries where confessional parties successfully were formed (i.e., Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, and Italy) and one outlier—France—where Christian Democracy never took hold. His examination of France actually bolsters his theoretical model as he points out how the church never provided the proper environment for lay Catholics to build autonomous political organizations. Kalyvas’s excellent command of European history and of several languages allows him to rely on a diverse range of primary and secondary sources. Although much of the evidence is anecdotal, he carefully arranges it in such a way that substantiates the causal linkages in his model.

The primary weaknesses of this work are relatively minor. First, although Kalyvas shows how the behavior of Catholics and conservatives was strategically motivated, he ascribes ideological motivations to liberal actors. In explaining the reasons behind the anticlerical attacks that provoked bishops to defend their institutional interests, Kalyvas asserts that liberals acted out of “myopia, caused by the . . . blind belief in secular progress” (p. 106). This problem remains minor only in that the actions of liberals are taken as exogenous to his model. The study could be improved by addressing the strategic concerns behind anticlerical attacks (he briefly hints at some on pp. 172–73), but failing to do so does not damage the central thesis. Second, Kalyvas implicitly overestimates the degree of religiosity in Europe prior to the 1800s and incorrectly claims that Christian Democracy caused the secularization of *society* (p. 261), as opposed to merely the desacralization of government. The theoretical leap to explaining society’s loss of religiosity is slightly beyond the purview of his model. Nonetheless, I concur with his general finding that secularization results from conscious political decisions.

Kalyvas’s work demands a wide audience. This is a superb piece of scholarship that works at many levels. Methodologically, it provides an exemplary blend of deductive theory building and empirical analysis. Theoretically, Kalyvas widens the scope of rational choice theory with his focus on explaining unintended consequences. Substantively, it should interest scholars studying a wide array of topics, including secularization, the intersection of religion and politics, and the formation of social move-

ments. Any work that manages to cross this many boundaries in such a well-founded manner deserves high praise.

The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy. By Emilio Gentile. Translated by Keith Botsford. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996. Pp ix+208. \$49.95.

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Fascist Italy has occupied a privileged place in the development of research on the symbolic dimension of politics. Such studies were once largely an anthropological preserve, the focus of such classics as Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard's *African Political Systems* (Oxford University Press, 1940). However, scholarly reactions to the rise of fascism and Nazism ultimately helped bring the issues of the power of symbol, rituals, and myths in modern Western political life to center stage.

Although Nazi Germany has received the most attention from this perspective with the Soviet Union perhaps in second place, many studies are now available that concern the rise of Mussolini and the Italian fascist regime in these terms. Emilio Gentile, a professor of contemporary history at the University of Rome, joins the fray attempting to shed light on the "institutionalization of the 'Fascist religion' as a collective cult seeking to involve the whole Italian people in the myths and rituals of the régime" (p. x). In this effort he builds self-consciously on George Mosse's classic examination of the rise of Nazism as a mass religion.

The Italian case is of particular interest because, as Gentile argues, the modern Italian nation-state was formed in the 19th century in the absence of any strong identification by Italians with the nation. The new state's inability to foster a civil religion—and with it, any sense of allegiance to the "fatherland"—continued to plague Italian governments in ensuing decades, all the more so because of the fierce opposition of the Vatican to the existence of an Italian state. Gentile traces the ineffectual attempts of government leaders in the late 19th century to construct a civic liturgy based, in part, on the monarchy and the military and argues that it was the cult of the fallen, which arose from World War I, that offered modern Italy its first broadly felt opportunity for the sacralization of secular politics. "A new altar to the nation had been raised" (p. 18), Gentile concludes, a cult that the fascists expropriated in their first step toward constructing a complex political liturgy tying the masses to the fascist state.

Gentile proceeds to examine the rise and evolution of what he refers to as "fascist religion." It is based on a set of myths that centered on the sacrality of the nation, and the symbols and rites that were given a central place in planning political activity. He tells of the symbolism of the *squadristi*, the bands of fascists whose violent sorties helped destabilize the