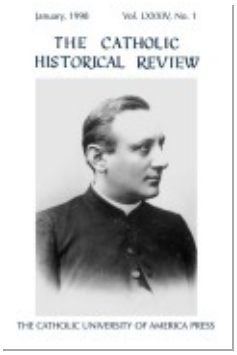
The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe by Stathis N. Kalyvas (review)



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powers, including their support of the war effort after 1939, only further compromised their stance.

Beck does not claim that his study of Hesse breaks new ground. This regional press in fact differed little from that of other areas. But his thorough analysis of the editorial utterances is a useful addition to our general knowledge. His conclusion, with hindsight, that the failure to confront the evils of Nazism more forcibly owed much to the continuity of Catholic attitudes from the 1920's with its disapproval of democratic liberalism is certainly correct but only reinforces the view that German Catholics were caught up in an ambivalent and ultimately morally disastrous conflict of loyalties. His claim that the church press should be recognized as having played a significant role in resisting Nazi ideological pretensions is in line with the view adopted by other authors in this series of volumes. But even so, the general failure of German Catholics to take a stand against this nefarious government and its atrocities cannot be denied. The record is a sobering example of the weakness of religious convictions when confronted by the criminal acts of a totalitarian regime.

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The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe. By Stathis N. Kalyvas. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press. 1996. Pp. xi, 300. $45.00 clothbound; $19.95 paperback.)

Most scholars agree that Christian Democratic parties are anomalous in a modern, secular age; not only do they represent a curious hybrid of secular and sectarian interests, but they can also embody electoral coalitions that transcend economic, regional, and even ethnic differences to maintain political power over long periods of time. Stathis Kalyvas has a theory to explain these curiosities.

Kalyvas proposes that Christian Democratic parties in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands originated from decisions of nineteenth-century political actors, namely, the Church and conservative political elites. Though these actors may not have initially intended to create confessional parties, Kalyvas asserts that they "set the process in motion" by creating a new political consciousness or identity amongst lay Catholics. Fueling the long-term political separation of Catholics from non-Catholics and of conservative Catholics from more liberal-leaning ones, this unique political identity has become mobilized and institutionalized in Christian Democratic parties. According to Kalyvas, this is the source of the parties' longevity, even in the secular context of modern European politics.

Unlike other theories on this subject, Kalyvas' is a rational actor model; it considers Christian Democracy in the political context of actors, preferences, and strategies. Bringing together two separate traditions in the literature, Kalyvas ar-

gues that the Church *and* conservative elites joined forces to confront nineteenth century Liberal attacks on Catholicism. The Church, with its extensive network of literate and active clergy, brought a depth of organization to the conservative causes whereas the lay conservative leadership gave the Church something it was neither willing nor capable of achieving on its own—parliamentary representation through a political party. Unfortunately for them, the two forces unintentionally combined to produce political Catholicism, a self-sustaining movement, which eventually embued the lower clergy, the press, and the leaders of the new political party, and its many ancillary organizations with mass-based authority. In this way the parties were transformed from Catholic political parties to Christian Democratic ones.

In this very detailed text, Kalyvas does an impressive job of systematically addressing the anomalies of Christian Democracy's existence in modern politics. Perhaps this is his greatest contribution to understanding their continued existence: by asking what caused confessional parties to arise in some circumstances and not in others and by focusing on the voluntary (i.e., not inevitable) process of party formation, he opens avenues for more rigorous research. Devoting one entire chapter to France, where Catholicism did not take on political dimensions, he explains that the Church had not chosen initially to organize the laity and, as a consequence, could not enter politics effectively.

Unfortunately, Kalyvas' theory overlooks the very context in which these "rational" decisions were made. Arguing that the strategies of both sets of elites were defensive receptions to liberal anti-Catholicism, Kalyvas neglects to note the changing environment in which these elites restructured their objectives. The transformation of a confessional party into an organization with secular priorities, independent of the direction of the Church and open to outside membership, could not have occurred in the context of ongoing intense anti-Catholicism, liberal or otherwise. At some point, the political effects of anti-Catholicism had changed.

In Kalyvas' theory, anti-Catholicism is the *independent* variable which affects party formation. In reality, however party formation also affects anti-Catholicism. In Germany, for example, the activities of the Zentrumspartei greatly influenced the political fortunes of the Liberal party and, through successful application of pressure, altered Bismarck's strategy regarding the anti-Catholic campaign. Only when the threat of *Kulturkampf* legislation disappeared (in part through the strength of Catholic resistance) could the party consider alternative formulations and coalitions. Only when anti-Catholicism lost its political power could a secular party take shape.

Kalyvas' text is well-documented, well-argued, and well-written. It deserves the attention not only of scholars in Catholic history but of anyone interested in comparative historical analysis and social theory.

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