

Review

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Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996)

Review by Clay Clemens, Government, College of William and Mary

How is it that one of modern Europe's most successful political movements, arguably its most successful, has generated such minimal scholarly attention? Surely Christian Democracy has earned at least half as much serious scrutiny as socialism and social democracy, yet the share of books and articles devoted to it is far less. Presumably a force that has dominated government in postwar Germany, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands, while playing a major supporting part in Austria, as well as—for some time—France, deserves as much examination as, say, Green parties, the radical right, or Marxist splinter groups. But each of the latter has in turn generated as much, if not more, serious study.

A review is not the place to analyze the reasons for this scholarly neglect but instead to celebrate a recent renaissance of interest in Christian Democracy. Noel Cary's history of the German Center Party, *The Path to Christian Democracy* (1996)—the Center's rise, internal divisions, and eventual collapse into the even more successful CDU—is one valuable contribution. Stathis Kalyvas's *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* offers a somewhat broader thematic and geographic inquiry, albeit one restricted largely to a briefer period of time. His aim is to explain the early origins of this movement in Western Europe during the late 1800s. Specifically, the book grapples with several puzzles, including the rise and continuing success of Christian Democratic parties in an ever more secular time and place, as well as their presence in some but not all European countries.

Kalyvas considers, but rejects, two widely accepted accounts of Christian Democracy's emergence—one depicting it as a vehicle of the Catholic clergy and a second describing it as the tool of conservative political leaders. Instead, he shows Christian Democracy to be the almost entirely unplanned, undesired by-product of efforts by clerical and secular elites to deal with liberalism and socialism. Also implicit in this explanation is a premise that political actors gave rise to Catholic political identity, rather than the other way around. Kalyvas contends that there was nothing inevitable about religious affiliation spawning party ties and voting behavior, instead suggesting that elite actions inadvertently generated such a linkage.

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Nineteenth-century liberal anticlericalism is the key to understanding early Christian Democracy. Eager to counteract this secular challenge, church leaders sponsored mass-based organizations of their laity; but reluctant to legitimize parliamentary democracy or immerse themselves in politics, they “contracted out” the political dimension of this struggle: they offered the electoral support of their congregations to secular conservatives who would in turn make the defense of Catholic interests a central issue. As in the partnership between trade unions and socialist parties, then, lay groups would in theory remain under clerical control while their activity and votes benefited allied candidates.

But, Kalyvas argues, having helped to mobilize a Catholic political identity, these elites were unable to control it. Once the support of lay activists proved highly valuable to secular conservative candidates in key elections, the former realized that their mass organization could be even more potent when mobilized on behalf of strictly Catholic politicians. With time, they formed their own party in several countries. Defense of church tradition and values provided a political identity for voters of, for example, the German Center, while vital infrastructure came from mass-based lay organizations supported and led by lower-level clergy such as parish priests. Both secular conservative politicians and the higher clergy—bishops and cardinals—saw this development as alarming but, with the franchise expanding, could not thwart it. Ultimately, each set of elites then found itself displaced as spokesmen for the Catholic electorate. For secular conservative politicians, that setback required joining the team or facing extinction; for Church leaders it meant accepting an uneasy partnership with organizations whose own agendas could not easily be dictated from the pulpit and whose success would now legitimize parliamentary democracy—something the bishops had sought to avoid all along.

Kalyvas suggests that these developments resulted from a step-by-step process in which the Catholic Church slowly enmeshed itself in the party politics of parliamentary democracy. This process started with an organization strategy, during which the Church sponsored mass-based lay groups to help defend Catholic interests; that step prompted anticlerical retaliatory attacks, which in turn prompted a participation strategy, by which these lay groups were employed to foster involvement in electoral politics; after a key first success at the polls (at a different point in each country), Catholic parties then took part in government, after which they became permanent fixtures of the emerging democratic system. While each stage plainly occurred at a different point in time in different coun-

tries—separated by decades in some cases—the same general pattern emerged in Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, and Italy.

Kalyvas does devote an entire chapter to the dog that did not bark—Christian Democracy in France. Conditions in France should have been ripe for the emergence of a Christian Democratic Party, yet no such organization evolves (at least in the late 1800s). Kalyvas first considers standard explanations for this seeming anomaly but finds them unsatisfactory. Rather, he suggests that the significantly greater prospect of regime change in France—the long Third Republic seemed more likely to collapse than neighboring monarchies—emboldened French Church leaders to eschew organizing their laity at all and count instead on an apparently impending royal restoration. When that did not occur and anticlerical attacks only mounted, Catholic laity had little choice but to fall in belatedly behind conservative elites in an unorganized fashion. A religious-based political identity eventually did emerge in France, but only after two world wars and the fall of the Third Republic.

Having elaborated a model of party formation grounded in theory, Kalyvas then marshals a mountain of historical evidence to defend his claim that it can account for the rise of Christian Democracy. Even a well-read political scientist will recognize only a few of the organizations, events, or names since they are all drawn from the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century political life of six different countries. This information is also somewhat poorly organized. Rather than beginning with a brief historical overview to familiarize the reader with early Christian Democracy in each nation, Kalyvas first uses his data to help vindicate his model of party formation: the result is an, at times, overwhelming array of individuals, groups, or events not organized chronologically or by country. One paragraph, chosen at random, for example, refers to elections in five different states, mentions a dozen parties, names five politicians, and includes fifteen citations. But even though it would take an entire conference of European historians to assess how well this welter of fact actually bears out Kalyvas' central thesis in each specific case, I found the evidence convincing.

Moreover, his specific analysis of the Center Party, which will most interest German specialists, also seems persuasive. Though no reader of this journal should skip past Kalyvas' first three chapters if he really seeks to understand Christian Democracy, some may want to focus on Chapter Four, where the author summarizes party formation on a country-by-country

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basis: a brief section therein devoted to Germany traces the Center's rise according to his general model, but concedes that—in a slight deviation—it actually predated the first anticlerical attacks (though Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* still provided vital momentum).

In short, *The Rise of Christian Democracy* offers a theoretically-grounded model of party formation that persuasively accounts for a significant, often-ignored political phenomenon and defends that explanation with dauntingly thorough research. It is hard to ask more of a scholarly work.

Lamar Cecil, *Wilhelm II: Emperor and Exile, 1900–1941*, vol. 2 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996)

Review by Dietrich Orlow, History, Boston University

It is ironic that Wilhelm II, the last German emperor, continues to fascinate English and American historians. After all, as this superb biography of the Kaiser reveals, Wilhelm was himself obsessed with Great Britain and Anglo-German relations.

Biography as a form of historical writing is not much in vogue these days, and Lamar Cecil is one of the few contemporary practitioners. Fortunately he is very good at his craft, having demonstrated his skills earlier in a superb life of the Hamburg shipping magnate (and friend of the Kaiser), Albert Ballin, and in the first volume of this two volume biography of Wilhelm II. The other “Wilhelm specialist,” of course, is Professor John G. Röhl who has devoted virtually all of his academic life to the emperor. Interestingly enough, working with much the same source material, the two scholars come to quite different conclusions about their subject.

Biographies traditionally come in two forms, the “life and times” variety and the “a life of” type. This is certainly an example of the latter. Cecil makes it clear in the preface and throughout the book that he is writing a life of Wilhelm, not a history of the momentous time in which he lived. True, life and times can not always be separated, but Cecil resolutely puts Wilhelm's personality and his interests at the center of the narrative.

For understanding Wilhelm as a human being this approach has a number of distinct advantages. The reader sees Wilhelm's life from the emperor's perspective, although at the same time the author subjects that perspective