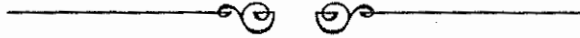


Introduction



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The time is ripe for a cosmopolitan inquiry into the interactions of Christianity and democracy. The world is still celebrating the centennials of its greatest democratic triumphs—the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), the American Bill of Rights (1791), the French Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen (1789), the English Bill of Rights (1689). The world is witnessing a democratic metamorphosis of near apocalyptic proportion. The Berlin Wall has crumbled. Eastern Europe has been liberated. The Soviet Union has dissolved. African autocrats are flinching. Apartheid is fading. Latin American dictators are falling. More than thirty new democracies have been born since 1973. Democratic agitation has reached even Tiananmen Square. It is time for the Christian church to take stock of the role that it has played and can play in this drama of democracy. It is time to shake off parochial nostalgia and to assess democracy in the light of tradition and Scripture, in the context of other cultures and countries.

In the past, Christianity has had both positive and negative influences on democracy. Christian churches have served as benevolent agents of welfare and catalysts of political reform. But they have also served as belligerent allies of repression and censors of human rights. Christian theologies have helped to cultivate democratic ideas of equality, liberty, and responsibility. But they have also helped to perpetuate

repressive ideas of statism, elitism, and chauvinism. In the future, traditional Christian attitudes and actions concerning democracy will face formidable challenges—both from inside and outside of the Christian community. From inside, new liberation and ecumenical movements will continue to challenge Christianity to lend greater aid to the poor and oppressed and greater support to the cause of political reform and renewal. From outside, the collapse of socialist ideologies, the emergence of Islam, and the growing secularization of the West will challenge Christianity to develop a more comprehensive, coherent, and consistent teaching on democratic law and politics.

The essays collected in this volume focus on the contributions that Christianity has made to democracy in the past and the challenges that Christianity and democracy will pose to each other in the future. The collection is decidedly international and interdisciplinary in character. The articles move from the old frontier in Europe to the "first colony" in Latin America, to the "second colony" in North America, and end with discussions of developments in Africa, the Soviet Union, and India. The writings of high churchmen and statesmen stand alongside those of liberationists and freedom-fighters. The perspectives of Protestants and Catholics, Africans and Americans, jurists and theologians, ethicists and political commentators all find a place.

No consensus of views emerges from this inquiry, far less a charter of Christian action respecting democracy. Yet a number of persistent patterns prevail in the encounters between Christianity and democracy in the past, and a number of common challenges face Christianity and democracy in cultures throughout the world, these themes are taken up in this Introduction.

Past Contributions

The term "democracy" does not admit of easy or universal definition. It can perhaps best be understood today as a system of distinctive social and political ideas and institutions.¹

The cardinal *social* ideas of democracy are equality and freedom, pluralism and toleration. Democracy confirms the individuality and equality of persons and their inherent freedoms of life, belief, and

¹ For other attempts to define "democracy," see the collection of statements in Saul K. Padover, ed., *Sources of Democracy: Voices of Freedom, Hope, and Justice* (New York, 1973) as well as John H. Hallowell, *The Moral Foundation of Democracy* (Chicago, 1954); Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*, repr. ed. (San Francisco, CA, 1986); Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago, 1956).

expression. It confirms the diversity of persons and tolerates diverse values, beliefs, and lifestyles. It confirms the interdependence of persons and protects the freedoms of family, church, school, and other associations. It confirms the capacity and responsibility of persons to govern and ensures their participation in the public square, their representation in the political process, their access to political offices and officials.

The cardinal *political* idea of democracy is that government must be limited and self-limiting. The political office must be distinct from the political official and defined narrowly by external standards, whether constitutional or customary. Political authority must be distributed over multiple branches, each with a measure of control over the others. Political officials must be popularly elected to limited terms of office and accountable and accessible to the constituents they represent. They must serve to promote the values of equality, liberty, and diversity of individuals and associations.

These social and political ideas of democracy have historically drawn to themselves a variety of institutions—a constitution or compendium of written public laws; a charter of freedoms of religion, speech, assembly, and press; a guarantee of procedural rights and protections in court; a commitment to majoritarian rule and minority representation; a system of regular, contested, popular political elections; a system of education and social welfare; a recognition of structural and confessional pluralism; a predilection for market economies, for social and economic rights, for federalist structures of government.

Democracy, however, has no paradigmatic form. Democratic ideas and institutions are cast in different ensembles, with different emphases and different applications. The arrangement of the ensemble is determined by the customs and beliefs of the community being governed. Mature democracies differ from nascent democracies. Democracies born of bloody revolution differ from those born of diplomatic convenience. Democracies rooted in heterogeneous cultures differ from those rooted in homogeneous cultures. Democracy is modest in its minimal requirements and thus malleable in form.²

A number of democratic ideas and institutions are of considerable vintage. Small historical communities like the Greek polis, the Catholic monastery, and the cathedral chapter and chantry all practiced forms of "direct" democracy. Legal documents from the Edict of Milan in Rome (313) to the Declaration of Right in England (1628) spoke of liberties,

² See, e.g., Samuel P. Huntington, "The Modest Meaning of Democracy," in Robert A. Pastor ed., *Democracy and the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum* (New York, 1989), 11-18; Hans Kohn, *Political Ideologies of the Twentieth Century*, 3d rev. ed. (New York, 1966), 191-192.

rights, privileges, and toleration. Greek writers from Cleisthenes to Aristotle extolled the virtues of liberty and democracy, and their discussions were echoed by dozens of medieval canonists, civilians, and scholastics.³ Prior to the seventeenth century, however, these instances of democracy remained incidental and isolated. Monarchical and aristocratic theories and forms of government dominated both state and church. Democracy emerged as a formal theory and form of civil government and social organization only in modern times.

Three "waves" of political democratization have broken on the modern world, Harvard political savant Samuel Huntington argues.⁴ The first wave built on the English, American, and French Revolutions and swept over more than thirty European and British Commonwealth countries by the end of World War I. The second wave, following World War II, restored democracy to much of Western Europe and brought new democratic governments to several nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The third wave, building since the early 1970s, has swept over more than thirty African, Latin American, and Eastern European nations. These three waves of political democratization, Huntington shows, have been "cumulative," one building on the momentum and advances of the other. They have also been "regressive," invariably experiencing anti-democratic backlashes and undertows.

Three waves of Christian democratic impulses, I would suggest, have anticipated and accompanied these three waves of political democratization. The first was a Protestant wave that broke into political form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries principally in Western European nations and their colonies. The second was a missionary wave that broke in Africa and Asia and a related Christian political wave that broke in Europe and Latin America in the middle third of the twentieth century. The third is a Roman Catholic wave that has emerged since the Second Vatican Council and effectuated political change principally in Latin America and Eastern Europe. These three waves of Christian democratic impulses, like their political analogues, have been both "cumulative" and

³ See, e.g., Mogens H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles and Ideology* (Cambridge, MA, 1991); Moses I. Finley, *Democracy: Ancient and Modern*, rev. ed. (New York, 1985); Brian Tierney, *Religion, Law, and the Growth of Constitutional Thought, 1150-1650* (Cambridge, 1982); Christian Meier, *Demokratie: Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart, 1972); T.R. Glover, *Democracy in the Ancient World* (New York, 1927); and representative documents collected in Padover, ed., *Sources of Democracy*.

⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK, 1991), with summaries in Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave," *Journal of Democracy* 2 (1991): 12; Samuel P. Huntington, "Religion and the Third Wave," *The National Interest* 24 (Summer, 1991): 30.

"regressive." They have provided an important, even indispensable, impetus to the three waves of political democratization.

Protestantism provided the *first wave* of Christian democratic impulses.⁵ To be sure, the early Protestant reformers had little sympathy with democratic government. Martin Luther and Richard Hooker favored monarchy. Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin favored aristocracy. Peter Rideman and Menno Simmons eschewed politics altogether. Their early followers were notorious for their intolerance, exclusivity, and chauvinism, for their active participation in persecution, slavery, and religious war. Yet early Protestant doctrines of the person and society, particularly in Calvinist form, were filled with democratic implications.⁶

Building on earlier Roman Catholic doctrines, the reformers taught that the person is both saint and sinner. On the one hand, the person is created in the image of God and justified by faith in God. He is called to a distinct vocation, which stands equal in dignity and sanctity to all others. He is prophet, priest, and king and responsible to exhort, minister, and rule in the community. Every person, therefore, stands equal before God and before his neighbor. Every person is vested with a natural liberty to live, to believe, to serve God and neighbor. Every person is entitled to the vernacular Scripture, to education, to work in a vocation. On the other hand, the person is sinful and prone to evil and egoism. He needs the restraint of the law to deter him from evil and to drive him to repentance. He needs the association of others to exhort, minister, and rule him with law and with love. Every person, therefore,

⁵ Within the vast body of literature on Protestant political thought in general, see John Tonkin, *The Church and the Secular Order in Reformation Thought* (New York, 1971); Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1978), vol. 2; Thomas G. Sanders, *Protestant Concepts of Church and State: Historical Backgrounds and Approaches for the Future* (New York, 1964). On Lutheran theories, see Harold J. Berman and John Witte, Jr., "The Transformation of Western Legal Philosophy in Lutheran Germany," *Southern California Law Review* 62 (1989): 1573 and sources cited therein. On Anglican theories, see Frederick J. Shirley, *Richard Hooker and Contemporary Political Ideas* (London, 1949); Gottfried Michaelis, *Richard Hooker als politischer Denker: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der naturrechtlichen Staatstheorien in England im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, repr. ed. (Vaduz, 1965). On Anabaptist theories, see Robert Kreider, "The Anabaptists and the State," in Guy Hershberger, ed., *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale, PA, 1957), 180. On Calvinist theories, see Josef Bohatec, *Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche* (Aalen, 1961); John T. McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought," *Church History* 18 (1959): 153.

⁶ In G.P. Gooch's words, "Modern Democracy is the child of the Reformation, not of the Reformers." G.P. Gooch, *English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century*, 2d repr. ed. (Cambridge, 1959), 7.

is inherently a communal creature. Every person belongs to a family, a church, a political community.

These social institutions of family, church, and state, the reformers taught, are divine in origin and human in organization. They are created by God and governed by godly ordinances. They stand equal before God and are called to discharge distinctive godly functions in the community. The family is called to rear and nurture children, to educate and discipline them, to exemplify love and cooperation. The church is called to preach the word, administer the sacraments, educate the young, aid the needy. The state is called to protect order, punish crime, promote community. Though divine in origin, these institutions are formed through human covenants. Such covenants confirm the divine functions, the created office, of these institutions. Such covenants also organize these offices so that they can be protected from the sinful excesses of officials who occupy them. The family, church, and state are thus organized as public institutions, accessible and accountable to each other and to their members. They are to be governed by a plurality of officials, each available to check the sinful excesses of the other.

Later Protestant groups in Europe and America cast these theological doctrines into political forms. Protestant doctrines of the person and society were cast into democratic social forms. Since all persons stand equal before God, they must stand equal before God's political agents in the state. Since God has vested all persons with natural liberties of life and belief, the state must ensure them of similar civil liberties. Since God has called all persons to be prophets, priests, and kings, the state must protect their freedoms to speak, to worship, and to rule in the community. Since God has created persons as social creatures, the state must promote and protect a plurality of social institutions, particularly the church and the family. Protestant doctrines of sin were cast into democratic political forms. The political office must be protected against the sinfulness of the political official. Power must be distributed among self-checking executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Officials must be elected to limited terms of office. Laws must be clearly codified, and discretion closely guarded. If officials abuse their office, they must be disobeyed; if they persist in their abuse, they must be removed, even if by force.⁷

⁷ For this political radicalization of Protestant theology see, e.g., Gooch, *English Democratic Ideas*; Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 1965); Harold J. Berman, "Law and Belief in Three Revolutions," *Valparaiso Law Review* 18 (1984): 569, 590-613; John Witte, Jr., "How to Govern a City on a Hill: The Early Puritan Contribution to American Constitutionalism," *Emory Law Journal* 39 (1990): 41.

These Protestant democratic teachings were revolutionary in their time and helped to inaugurate what R.R. Palmer has called "the age of democratic revolutions."⁸ They were the driving ideological forces behind the proto-democratic revolts of the French Huguenots, Dutch pietists, and Scottish Presbyterians against their monarchical oppressors in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They were critical weapons in the arsenal of the revolutionaries in England, America, and France. They were important sources of inspiration and instruction during the first great age of democratic construction in later eighteenth and nineteenth century Western Europe and America.

Protestantism was not, of course, the only ideological source of this first wave of democratization that finally broke into political forms in the later eighteenth century. Secular Enlightenment theories of democracy coursed through this wave as well, sometimes diluting and even drowning out the Protestant theories. Yet it is not accidental that more than two-thirds of the nations that adopted democracy during this first wave of political democratization were predominantly Protestant in confession.⁹

The *second wave* of Christian democratic influences broke in the middle third of the twentieth century and helped to spread democracy to new nations and to restore democracy to war-torn Europe. Two independent movements within Christianity produced this wave—one led by Christian missionaries, the second by Christian political activists.

Christian missionaries from Europe and America helped to catalyze democratic movements in Africa.¹⁰ To be sure, many foreign missionaries did not preach or practice a pure democracy. Some clerics and churches were accomplices in the belligerent policies of both the colonial establishments and the post-colonial dictatorships. Others insisted on soulcraft to the exclusion of statecraft. Still others sought to impose Western ideas and institutions of democracy on African culture. Despite these shortcomings, Christian churches and Christian teachings provided a fertile seedbed for African democracy which has begun to flower in the past half century.

⁸ R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolutions*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1959, 1964).

⁹ See Huntington, *Third Wave*, 13-17, 75-76; James H. Nichols, *Democracy and the Churches* (Philadelphia, PA, 1951), 29-41.

¹⁰ This section draws on the essays of Kwame Bediako, Richard Joseph, and John Pobe included herein as well as essays of Sulaiman Z. Jakonda, Stephen Talitwala, and Godwin O. M. Tasié on file with the editor.

Christian churches sometimes served as "zones of liberty" in African society, to use Richard Joseph's phrase.¹¹ Some Protestant mission churches were organized democratically. Ecclesiastical authority was distributed among pastors, elders, deacons, and teachers. Communicant members elected the clergy to their offices and had ready access to those who were elected. Churches served as centers of poor relief, education, health care, and social welfare in the community. Churches catalyzed the formation of voluntary associations, like youth groups, women's groups, and business associations. Churches provided a sanctuary for political dissidents and a sanction for movements of political reform and renewal. By so doing, churches provided both models of democracy and bulwarks against autocracy in Africa.

Christian teachings helped to "lower" political officials and to "elevate" political subjects in African culture. Many African religions, Kwame Bediako argues, "sacralized" political rulers, viewing them not only as preeminent authorities in the present but also preeminent interpreters of the past, of an ancestral tradition that had to be obeyed. Christianity "desacralized" politics, Bediako argues, by showing that all human authorities are subordinate to and empowered by divine authority. Christianity also "dignified" political subjects by giving each person access to the ancestral wisdom of the vernacular Scripture.¹² The vernacular Scripture liberated Africans both from their political rulers and from their Christian missionaries. It gave the Africans a common point of departure and reference to create a new belief system that combined Scripture with native traditions and a new political system that combined Christian political doctrines with indigenous lore.

African democracy has grown out of this synthetic tradition. It combines Christian and other Western democratic traditions with African traditions. Many African customs have been conducive to the development of democracy—the strong emphasis upon communal cooperation, participation, and cohesiveness; the general encouragement and toleration of diversity within community; the long tradition of freedom of speech, self-expression, and worship; the healthy respect for the land and activities of others; the expectation that political rulers be accountable and accessible to their subjects.¹³ This combination brought democratic aspirations to many African nations in the 1940s and 1950s. New

¹¹ Richard Joseph, "The Christian Churches and Democracy in Contemporary Africa" included herein, quoting J.F. Bayart, "La fonction politique des Eglises au Cameroun," *Revue Française de Science Politique* 33:3 (June, 1973): 516.

¹² See the essay of Kwame Bediako included herein.

¹³ See the essay of John Pobee included herein.

democratic governments emerged a generation later, first in Nigeria and eventually in several countries in Western and Central Africa.¹⁴

Concurrent with this missionary movement in Africa, both Protestant and Catholic political activists helped to restore democracy to war-torn Europe and extend it overseas.¹⁵ Protestant political activism emerged principally in England, the Lowlands, and Scandinavia under the inspiration of both social gospel movements and neo-Calvinism. Catholic political activism emerged principally in Italy, France, and Spain under the inspiration of both *Rerum Novarum* and its early progeny and of neo-Thomism. Both were principally lay groups. Both formed political parties, which now fall under the general aegis of the Christian Democratic Party movement.

Both Protestant and Catholic parties inveighed against the reductionist extremes and social failures of liberal democracies and social democracies. Liberal democracies, they believed, had sacrificed the community for the individual; social democracies had sacrificed the individual for the community. Both parties returned to a traditional Christian teaching of "social pluralism" or "subsidiarity," which stressed the dependence and participation of the individual in family, church, school, business, and other associations. Both parties stressed the responsibility of the state to respect and protect the "individual in community." Both agitated strongly for the recognition of social, economic, and political rights.¹⁶

These Christian democratic parties had a formidable influence on the democratization initiatives that followed World War II. They helped to destroy the totalitarian philosophies and politics that had plagued Europe. They played a part in the constitutional reformation of France, Germany, Italy, and Iberia. They helped to catalyze new democratic movements in Chile, Venezuela, Brazil, and Central American nations. They were critical advocates, alongside ecumenical organizations, for the development of the Universal Declaration of Rights in 1948 and subsequent international covenants on civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

¹⁴ See Richard Joseph, "Africa: The Rebirth of Political Freedom," *Journal of Democracy* 2 (Fall, 1991): 11; Claude Ake, "Rethinking African Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 2 (Winter, 1991): 32.

¹⁵ See generally, Nichols, *Democracy and the Churches*, 60-266; Michael P. Fogarty, *Christian Democracy in Western Europe, 1820-1953* (Notre Dame, IN, 1974); Hans Maier, *Revolution and Church: The Early History of Christian Democracy*, trans. E. Schossberg (Notre Dame, IN, 1969); Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, 3d ed. (New York, 1950); James W. Skillen and Rockne M. McCarthy, *Political Order and the Plural Structure of Society* (Atlanta, GA, 1991), 137-298.

¹⁶ See particularly the essays of Wolfgang Huber and Roberto Papini included herein.

The *third wave* of Christian democratic impulses began with the radical changes in Roman Catholicism introduced by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).¹⁷ Prior to Vatican II, the Catholic Church had stood at a considerable distance from democracy. Democratic teachings on liberties, rights, and separation of church and state conflicted directly with traditional Catholic teachings on natural law, the common good, and subsidiarity. Notwithstanding the social teachings of the encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1934), the Catholic Church had little patience with democratic reforms or democratic regimes. It readily acquiesced in the authoritative regimes and policies that governed the European, Latin American, and African nations where Catholicism was strong.¹⁸

Building on the work of John Courtney Murray, Jacques Maritain, and others,¹⁹ Vatican II and its progeny transformed the Catholic Church's *attitude* toward democracy. In a series of sweeping new doctrinal statements—beginning with *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and ending with *Centesimus Annus* (1991)—the Church came to endorse the very same democratic principles that it had traditionally spurned. First, the Church endorsed human rights and liberties. Every person, the Church taught, is created by God with “dignity, intelligence and free will . . . and has rights flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature.”²⁰ Such rights include the right to life and adequate standards of living, to moral and cultural values, to religious activities, to assembly and association, to marriage and family life, and to various social, political, and economic benefits and opportunities. The Church emphasized the religious rights of conscience, worship, assembly, and education, calling them the first

¹⁷ See the essay of J. Bryan Hehir included herein together with Huntington, *Third Wave*, 74-85; George Weigel and Robert Royal eds., *A Century of Catholic Social Thought: Essays on 'Rerum Novarum' and Nine Other Key Documents* (Washington, DC, 1991); David Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition* (New York, 1979); George Weigel, *Catholicism and the Renewal of Democracy in America* (Washington, DC, 1989); and the collection of the most critical documents in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and the Postconciliar Documents* (Wilmington, DE, 1986).

¹⁸ For a good summary with documents, see Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, eds., *Church and State Through the Centuries* (Westminster, MD, 1954), 281-285, 298-355.

¹⁹ See, e.g., John Courtney Murray, *The Problem of Religious Freedom* (Westminster, MD, 1965); Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*; Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago, 1951).

²⁰ “Pacem in Terris,” Para. 9, reprinted in Joseph Gremillion, ed., *The Gospel of Peace and Justice: Catholic Social Teaching Since Pope John Paul* (Maryknoll, NY, 1976), 201.

rights of a civic order. The Church also stressed the need to balance individual and institutional rights, particularly those involving the church, family, and school. Governments everywhere were encouraged to create conditions conducive to the realization and protection of these inviolable rights and encouraged to root out every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social distinction, language, or religion. Second, as a corollary, the Church advocated limited constitutional government, disestablishment of religion, and the separation of church and state. The vast pluralism of religions and cultures, and the inherent dangers in state endorsement of any religion rendered such democratic forms of government mandatory.

Vatican II and its progeny also transformed the Catholic Church's actions concerning democracy. After Vatican II, the Church was less centralized and more socially active. Local bishops and clergy were given greater autonomy and incentive to participate in local and national affairs, to bring the Church's new doctrines to bear on matters political and cultural. The Catholic Church was thereby transformed from a passive accomplice in authoritarian regimes to a powerful advocate of democratic reform.²¹

The Catholic church has been a critical force in the third wave of political democratization that has been breaking since the early 1970s—both through the announcements and interventions of the papal see and through the efforts of its local clergy. New democracies in Brazil, Chile, Central America, The Philippines, South Korea, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania and elsewhere owe much of their inspiration to the teaching and activity of the Catholic church. Catholicism, of course, has not been the only Christian force behind this third wave of political democratization. The explosion of Pentecostalism in Latin America,²² and the political revival of the Lutheran, Hussite, and Free Church traditions in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have also had an influence. Yet, it is not coincidental that twenty-four of the thirty-two new democracies born since 1973 are predominantly Roman Catholic in confession.²³

²¹ See particularly Huntington, *Third Wave*, 77-80 and J. Bryan Hehir's essay included herein.

²² See particularly David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley, CA, 1990); David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).

²³ See thorough discussions of recent democratization movements in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, 4 vols. (Baltimore, MD, 1986); Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries* (Boulder, CO, 1988-89). On the predominant role of the Catholic church in this democratization

Future Challenges

Christianity and democracy complement each other. Christianity provides democracy with a system of beliefs that integrates its concerns for liberty and responsibility, individuality and community. Democracy provides Christianity with a system of government that balances its concerns for human dignity and depravity, social pluralism and progress. This complementarity has brought Christianity and democracy together. It has led to something of a confluence between the three waves of Christian democratic impulses and the three waves of political democratization.

Christianity and democracy, however, also challenge each other. Democracy challenges the spirit of the Christian church. On the one hand, democracy's commitment to religious freedom opens new opportunities to Christianity. Once impervious autocracies are open to Christian missionaries. Once inaccessible positions of power are open to Christian influence. Democracy thereby challenges the Christian church to extend its mission and ministry. On the other hand, democracy's commitment to religious neutrality forces Christianity to fight the "battle of spirits" alone. Historically, the state aided the Christian cause by establishing its doctrines, prescribing its morality, protecting its clergy, subsidizing its proselytes. Democracy forbids such favoritism. Christianity must stand on its own feet and on an equal footing with all other religions. Its survival and growth must turn on the cogency of its word, not the coercion of the sword, on the faith of its members, not the force of the law. Democracy thereby challenges Christianity to strengthen its sincerity and tenacity.

Democracy also challenges the structure of the Christian church. While the church has preached liberty and equality in the community, it has perpetuated patriarchy and hierarchy within its own walls. While the church has advocated pluralism and diversity in the public square, it has insisted on orthodoxy and uniformity among its members. The rise of democracy has revealed the seeming discordance of such preaching and practice. It has emboldened parishioners to demand greater access to church governance, greater freedom from church discipline, greater latitude in the definition of church doctrine and liturgy. It has thus chal-

process, see Huntington, *Third Wave*, 21-26; Brian Smith, "Churches and Human Rights in Latin America: Recent Trends on the Subcontinent," in Daniel H. Levine, ed., *Churches and Politics in Latin America* (Beverly Hills, CA, 1979), 155.

lenged the church to restrike constantly its delicate balances between order and liberty, orthodoxy and innovation, dogma and adiaphora.²⁴

Christianity, in turn, must challenge the spirit and structure of democracy. On the one hand, Christianity must challenge democracy to extend itself. Among current political forms, democracy holds the most promise for peace, justice, and a better life. It offers the best hope for those who suffer from persecution and penury, discrimination and deprivation. It affords the greatest freedom to love God, neighbor, and self. Christianity must thus support democratization. It must use its collective power and moral suasion to face down autocrats and put down abuse. It must help to break the hardened soils of totalitarianism and sow the seeds of democracy.

On the other hand, Christianity must challenge democracy to reform itself. For all of its virtues, democracy is far from a perfect system, far from an "earthly form of heavenly government," to quote one exuberant Leveller. It is a human creation and inherently flawed. Democracy has stored up many idols in its short political life—the proud cults of progress and freedom, the blind beliefs of materialism and technologism, the desperate faiths of agnosticism and nihilism. Democracy has done much to encourage a vulgar industrialization that reduces both human beings and natural resources to fungible and expendable economic units. It has done much to impoverish the already poor, to marginalize the already marginal, to exploit the already exploited—all along promising them a better life. Christianity must work to exorcise the idols of democracy, to drive democracy to purge and reform itself.

Democracy needs such opposition to survive. For democracy is an inherently relative system of ideas and institutions. It presupposes the existence of a body of beliefs and values that will constantly shape and reshape it, that will constantly challenge it to improve. Christianity is by no means the only belief system that can offer such a challenge to democracy. But with a long tradition of theological and philosophical reflection on democracy at its disposal, Christianity cannot be silent.

²⁴ See, e.g., Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT, 1989); James A. Coriden, ed., *The Case for Freedom: Human Rights in the Church* (New York, 1969); Eugenio Corecco et al. eds., *Les droits fondamentaux du chrétien dans l'église et dans la société* (Paris, 1981); Charles E. Curran, "Religious Freedom and Human Rights in the World and the Church: A Christian Perspective," in Leonard Swidler, ed., *Religious Liberty and Human Rights in Nations and in Religions* (Philadelphia, PA, 1986), 143, 153-165.