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 INTRODUCTION BY DANIEL STEINMETZ-JENKINS, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

After World War II, Christian Democratic parties in Italy, Belgium, Germany, Austria, and elsewhere played the major political role in the rebuilding of the old continent after its political catastrophe. The establishment of post-war welfare states, the writing of new constitutions, and the process of European unification in Western Europe were all driven by Christian Democratic actors, thinkers and ideas. Until recently, there has been relatively little scholarly research in English devoted to the history of Christian Democracy, and specifically to the ideology which inspired it. As Thomas Kselman and Joseph Buttigieg wrote in an edited volume on the historical legacy of European Christian Democracy in 2003: “Virtually all the studies that have appeared over the past few years acknowledge the crucial role that Christian Democratic parties have played in the history of Europe since the end of the Second World War, but express surprise at the paucity of previous work on this topic.”¹ The dearth of scholarship devoted to Christian Democracy at that time reflected the loss of the movement’s hegemony throughout Europe and also coincided with peak levels of enthusiasm for the European Union (EU).

Twenty years later, European unity has been rocked by Brexit and the rise of anti-EU rightwing parties throughout Europe, the European Debt Crisis, the refugee crisis, and high-profile European Court of Human Rights cases involving the banning of Muslim religious symbols in public. This in turn has led historians and political scientists to investigate the intellectual origins of the EU, the Council of Europe, and other European international bodies in the hope of making sense of the present crisis. Many of these scholars have located the origins of all that plagues Europe today in Christian Democracy, which they hold responsible for injecting cultural conservatism, neoliberalism, anti-democratic elitism, and colonialism into the institutional foundations of Europe’s international governing bodies.²

Perhaps, though, the story can be told differently, namely that a revival of Christian Democracy is exactly what is needed to stave off the nativist populist revolt in Europe. Carlo Invernizzi Accetti’s important new book, *What Is Christian Democracy? Politics, Religion and Ideology*, which arguably provides the most comprehensive account of Christian Democracy so far written, defends something like this argument.

Invernizzi Accetti’s account provides a panoramic view of Christian Democracy: a history of its origins and an analysis of the various parties that have represented it in Europe and Latin America. His main aim, however, is to show the underlying ideology of Christian Democracy which he sees as threefold. The first concerns Christian Democracy’s commitment to the Christian tradition of natural law, which entails Accetti claims, a baseline commitment to the idea of the inherent dignity of the human person. The second is a moral critique of capitalism based on the assumption that Christianity is incompatible with materialism and commands a duty of charity towards the poor. Here is the foundation for post-war welfare states in Europe, he argues. And third, Christian Democratic ideology embraces internationalism, which translates into an embrace of supranational cooperation. Hence the involvement of Christian Democratic parties with the creation of the United Nations, the European Union, etc.

Invernizzi Accetti seeks to move beyond historical reconstruction to ideological engagement by suggesting that Christian Democracy has normative implications for contemporary politics. And here is where the book enters into debatable territory. Invernizzi Accetti himself is not a Christian Democratic. Nevertheless, he aims to revive Christianity Democracy as a viable alternative to right-wing populist parties that have sprung up throughout Europe, Latin America, and the United

¹ Notre Dame Press, “European Christian Democracy” (webpage), n.d., <https://undpress.nd.edu/9780268022761/european-christian-democracy/>

² Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); Samuel Moyn *Christian Human Rights* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Marco Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican’s Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2019).

States. All three countries, he claims, have Christian democratic traditions (in the case of the U.S., something analogous to it) that can resist the nativism and anti-internationalism that mark today's right-wing populist movements.

But one wonders whether Invernizzi Accetti offer a too rosy account of Christian Democracy? Did not its cultural conservatism, specifically its conservative views of gender and sexuality, lead to its gradual demise across Europe? Does not its elitism and anti-democratic fear of the masses map onto today's critics of the EU, who see it as being an out of touch technocratic elite institution—one which does not reflect the will of the people?

To discuss these questions, and the general argument of this book, H-Diplo is honored to host this roundtable, which involves the participation of three distinguished scholars. In her response, Florence Haegel pushes Invernizzi to explain the failure of the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP)—France's Christian Democratic Party which emerged in 1944—to achieve the success of other post-War European Christian Democratic parties. This is instructive insofar as the MRP did not prove much of a success with the French Right. Haegel asks what can be learned from this failure, specifically in light of Invernizzi Accetti's attempt to revive Christian Democracy today..

Eric D. Weitz calls attention to the variegated contexts in which post-War Christian democracy emerged. As such, he gently criticizes Invernizzi Accetti for giving the impression that Christian Democratic beliefs smoothly unfolded from Catholic theology and philosophers like Jacques Maritain. In reality, Weitz observes, the origins of Christian Democracy in Germany (CDU) really only makes sense against the backdrop of the Third Reich, and the desire to move away from merely reincarnating the old pre-War German Catholic Center Party. Given the difference in context between post-war Christian Democratic parties and contemporary politics, Weitz does not seem to think that there is much of a future for the kind of Christian Democratic ideology that Invernizzi Accetti still sees as valuable.

Finally, Fabio Wolkenstein points out that Christian Democratic thought leaders were not, in principle, that committed to democracy. "If this is true," he rightly asks, "then perhaps Christian Democracy holds more risks for democracy than Invernizzi Accetti allows in *What is Christian Democracy?*" To drive the point home, he points to those today who claim allegiance to the Christian Democratic tradition, such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who are critics of modern secular democracy.

Invernizzi Accetti offers an enriching response to his interlocutors, one which shows both the contemporary relevance of his arguments about Christian Democracy and the future direction the study of Christian Democracy might take.

Participants:

Carlo Invernizzi Accetti is Associate Professor of Political Theory at The City College of New York (CUNY); Associate Researcher at the Center for European Studies of the *Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris* (Sciences Po); and Visiting Associate Professor of European Politics at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA).

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Florence Haegel is Full Professor in political science at Sciences Po, Paris. She currently heads the Center for European Studies and Comparative Politics at Sciences Po. She worked on French right-wing parties in a comparative perspective and on citizen's attitudes towards Europe. She is currently working on the participation of precarious people within association of care sector in France.

Fabio Wolkenstein is Associate Professor of Political Science at Aarhus University and Affiliated Researcher in Political Theory at the University of Amsterdam. His research focuses on democratic theory, in particular the theory of political parties and representation, as well as the theory and history of political ideologies. His latest book, *Rethinking Party Reform*

(Oxford University Press, 2019) lays out the case for radically democratizing political parties and sketches several pathways for reform.

Eric D. Weitz is Distinguished Professor of History at City College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. He is the author, most recently, of *A World Divided: The Global Struggle for Human Rights in the Age of Nation-States* (Princeton University Press, 2019).

Four years after the publication of his first book on *Relativism and Religion*,¹ Carlo Invernizzi Accetti continues to reflect on the relationship between religion and politics from a different angle. He has shifted his focus to Christian Democracy, a political family that is somewhat neglected in political science. It is mainly as a political theorist that he is interested in this current of thought, which might be considered outdated in relation to more debated political notions such as ‘populism’ and ‘neo-liberalism.’ But one could say that Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, in true fashion, considers Christian Democracy worth analyzing as a constellation of “political concepts”—as Michael Freedon² put it—that is full of potential.

His book is divided into two parts. The first presents core arguments showing that Christian Democracy is an ideology in the full sense of the term, that is, a coherent and distinctive system based on six key concepts: anti-materialism, personalism, popularism, subsidiarity, social capitalism, and Christian inspiration. He sheds light on the historical and intellectual founding principles of Christian Democracy, and on how they are linked and distinct from other closed concepts originating from other ideological constellations. This very analytical and clear section is highly convincing if one accepts that the objective is to develop a conceptual map rather than a precise and therefore more sinuous and complex history of these concepts’ genesis. In fact, the interest in undertaking this ambitious conceptual clarification is fleshed out in Chapter 8, which shows the persistence of key Christian democratic concepts in EU institutions.

In the second part, Invernizzi Accetti takes off his political theoretician’s hat—albeit only partially—and addresses not only the history of Christian democracy but also its future. I say “only partially” because only a theorist would risk tackling such a normative “question of the persistent value of Christian Democracy ideology,” assuming that “it is not necessarily in the process of disappearing as a partisan phenomenon, and also that it remains a useful category to describe distinctive features of both the EU and USA” (317).

As a French political scientist working on political parties in a European comparative perspective, with a particular focus on the right side of the spectrum, I would like to focus on the discussion in the second part of the book. I am aware that my reading of his work resurfaces classic debates between, on the one hand, historians and empiricist political scientists, who are more attentive to the complexity of historical and social processes, and, on the other hand, political theoreticians who embrace the clarity of conceptual systems.

Chapter 8 focuses on the history of Christian Democracy in continental Europe, and more precisely draws particular attention to Catholicism (at the expense of Protestantism in the multi-faith country such as Germany) in Italy, Germany, and France. Inevitably, it is a little frustrating, because it is less rooted in socio-historical analysis than would be expected. For instance, comparison between the three cases is not placed at the heart of the chapter’s argument. While justifying his case selection, Invernizzi Accetti underscores the French paradox that results from the fact that “while the country has had a longstanding and influential social and especially *intellectual* tradition of Christian Democracy, the latter’s political translation has always lagged behind those of other continental European countries” (195), but the absence of well-organized and established Christian Democratic parties in France is not subsequently frontally addressed. In this respect, beginning the history after World War II is too late, at least for France, since the key developments played out in the nineteenth century. It could even be suggested that the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire’s* (MRP) ephemeral success in 1945 success is an exception, since it was primarily attributable to the burnished reputation of Christian Democrats as a result of their involvement in the French Resistance.

¹ Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, *Relativism and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

² Michael Freedon, *Ideologies and Political Theory, A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

As I argued in a book on French rightwing parties,³ the Christian Democratic movement's failure to structure the French right as it had done in other European countries is a real puzzle which might shed light on contemporary challenges such as the ones Invernizzi Accetti addresses in the last chapter of his book. It is intriguing because, as Pierre Letamendia⁴ highlighted and Invernizzi Accetti quotes, the Christian Democratic movement's doctrine is of French origin. What is more, Catholic circles have indeed constituted the biosphere of the French partisan right. French historians have pointed to the many attempts to politically structure French Catholicism. Some of them purposefully remained at the margins of the political and electoral system, alongside the Catholic youth movement and social work organizations; others sought to influence elections without participating in them⁵; finally, some organizations did enter the electoral fray in response to the call of Pope Leo XIII in 1892 for a Rally to the Republic of French Catholics. But these organizations never succeeded in mobilizing the bulk of Catholic voters.

The most classical explanation for this failure lies in the rejection of the Republican regime by the Church and its followers after the French Revolution. Institutional issues so deeply divided Catholic circles that it slowed and weakened their partisan consolidation. If one shares Carlo Invernizzi Accetti's functionalist definition of Christian Democratic ideology as one aiming to reconcile "Christianity (and in particular Catholicism) with modern democracy" (20), some French Catholics' reluctance to support the Republic explains why Christian Democracy was marginalized, or marginalized itself. A complementary explanation emphasizes socioeconomic divisions and resistance of French Catholics to capitalism, leading them to reject a liberal bourgeoisie that could have lent them support, as was the case in Germany⁶. It points to the weight of intransigence in a Catholic movement that was built around hostility towards the French Revolution and the political, economic, and religious liberalisms that it established. Far from being marginal, this intransigent current has propagated in both Catholic and Christian Democratic circles in France.

This Catholic reservation about the socioeconomic and political Republican order did not prevent clergy from politically intervening by seeking to influence and control the French Catholic vote: "electoral clericalism", as Yves Déloye⁷ put it, did indeed exist in France, but it did not lead to partisan clericalism. One explanation lies in the fact that the French and Vatican Catholic hierarchies sought to exercise the most direct control possible over the French Catholic vote, and prevented any collective attempt to organize Catholic influence within the political sphere, confining lay Catholics to the care sector.

By making this point on the French case, I aim to more broadly discuss how Invernizzi Accetti grasps the socio-historical phenomenon of Christian Democracy and draw some consequences on contemporary issues. First, it shows that institutional configuration matters a lot in explaining the fate of Christian Democracy in different countries. The presence of two strong and rival institutions, the State and the Church, left no room for the structuring of a Christian democratic party in France whereas the more open situation in Germany and Italy allowed it.

Further, by showing that Christian Democracy is far from having established a monopolistic or even a dominant position among French Catholics, the French case attests to a competitive space in which Catholic conservatism has played a central

³ Florence Haegel, *Les droites en fusion* (Paris : Presses de Sciences Po, 2007).

⁴ Pierre Letamendia, *Le Mouvement Républicain Populaire - Le MRP. L'histoire d'un grand parti français*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1997.

⁵ *La Fédération Nationale Catholique*, which was created in 1924, acted like a true interest group.

⁶ François-Georges Dreyfus, *Histoire de la démocratie chrétienne en France : De Chateaubriand à Raymond Barre* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, Paris, 1988).

⁷ Yves Déloye, *Les voix de Dieu : pour une autre histoire du suffrage électoral : le clergé catholique français et le vote, XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris : Fayard, collection « L'espace du politique », 2006).

role and continues to do so. This historical reminder is a key element in the discussion about the current role of Christian Democracy in counteracting far-right populism. In many European countries, the practice of Catholicism used to be an antidote of sorts to the far-right vote. This is no longer the case, and Invernizzi Accetti is right when he argues that a new battlefield is forming around the use of religion, as far-right populism attempts to capture religious references.⁸ In Western as well as in Eastern Europe, a fierce competition is taking place to attract the shrinking Christian electorate that opposes the radical populist right, catholic conservatism and Christian democracy, and the latter has already lost ground although one might want to consider the potential of its ideology.

⁸ Such as Matteo Salvini, Deputy Prime Minister of Italy from 1 June 2018 to 5 September 2019.

REVIEW BY ERIC D. WEITZ, CITY COLLEGE AND THE GRADUATE CENTER, CITY
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It is a strange thing. Christian Democracy has been one of the most important social and political movements of Europe's postwar era, rivaled only by Social Democracy and Communism (liberalism rather less so, I would argue). Yet historians have barely paid any attention to it. To be sure, there are exceptions. Paul Ginsborg's wonderful volumes on postwar Italy are revelatory about so much, including the patronage networks that the Italian Christian Democratic Party (DC) created that ensured its continual support for decades.¹ Maria Mitchell wrote one of the first histories of the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and an increasing number of historians have followed in her path.² But the generalization holds. Communism and Social Democracy have held far greater appeal for historians than Christian Democracy. The left-wing parties and states appear far more prominently in the great histories of the twentieth century by Eric Hobsbawm, Mark Mazower, and Konrad Jarausch, and in the important post-1945 history by Tony Judt.³ The result is something of a skewed picture, to say the least, of the post-World War II era.

Carlo Invernizzi Accetti aims to right the ship, not as an historian but as a political theorist who gives full weight to Christian Democracy's outsize contribution to the shaping of Western Europe after World War II (Eastern Europe after 1990 remains somewhat on the margins). Invernizzi Accetti works at certain level of abstraction, distilling Christian Democracy into a number of fundamental precepts that, together, define its essence. He works off political and philosophical treatises, notably by Luigi Sturzo and Jacques Maritain, as well as everyday writings and speeches by Christian Democratic political figures. Invernizzi Accetti's exposition is remarkably lucid and vital reading for anyone who wishes to understand the nature of postwar Western Europe's most important political movement.

Invernizzi Accetti begins with that fundamental element of Christian thought: its anti-materialism. While socialism and Communism were Christian Democracy's main targets in the postwar period, anti-materialism's reach was far broader, going back at least to the seventeenth and eighteenth century and including hostility to science and economics as well as to liberal political thought, anything that denied or minimized the spiritual element of life. Christian Democracy's understanding of materialism was even more wide-ranging and came to encompass everything that was hostile to the power and influence of the Catholic Church, since Christian Democracy was essentially a Catholic movement (we shall get to the big exceptions shortly). Materialism could also signify the singular focus on power, enabling the German CDU leader and long-governing chancellor Konrad Adenauer to define Nazism as a materialist ideology and movement, placing it in the same basket as communism (45).

But no political philosophy succeeds only in the negative, by the things it opposes. Invernizzi Accetti also provides a notably insightful exposition of Catholic personalism, most generally understood as the doctrine that places the dignity of the individual at the center of Christian beliefs. Yet this position entails not an elevation of the individual above the community, but his or her embeddedness in the social order. Any individual's dignity is necessarily tied to the recognition that others deserve and exercise the same dignity (60-63). Nor does Catholic personalism mean the individual's complete submission to the community, which is one of Christian Democracy's sharpest arguments against the totalitarianism of

¹ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin, 1990), and *Italy and its Discontents: Family, Civil Society, State, 1980-2001* (London: Allen Lane, 2001).

² Maria Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy: Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).

³ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1994); Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf, 1999); Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2006); and Konrad Jarausch, *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

Nazism and Communism. This *via medea* has enabled Christian Democracy to support a realm of freedom and human rights for the individual.

Invernizzi Accetti goes on to explain how these fundamental precepts became manifest in politics. Christian Democrats navigated the swerving river of democracy that was filled by a host of political obstacles, including fascism, communism, socialism, and liberalism. Even the highly managed, as opposed to popular, form of democracy that Christian Democrats propagated marked a rather astonishing transformation that Invernizzi Accetti perhaps underplays. As he writes, anti-modernism, with its virtually complete rejection of every manifestation of politics and society in the wake of the French and Industrial revolutions, defined the Catholic Church. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 was the start of the accommodation with modernity, as were early twentieth-century movements like Marc Sangnier's Social Catholicism and the reform wing of the German Catholic Center party. Both, however faced intense hostility from the Church hierarchy. But the giant forces of Nazism, fascism, and Communism, and even a limping liberalism, forced Christians to come to terms with democracy and all it entailed in the postwar era, including constitutions, new legal codes, and representative government.

Christians argued that this democracy had to be substantive, as Invernizzi Accetti shows. It had to be imbued with strong elements of Christian beliefs. And that meant, notably, the defense of the family and opposition to abortion, but also the regulation of capital and the expansion of the social welfare state. Here the doctrine of subsidiarity was critical, because it granted to the state only the realms that the church, family, and individual could not, by themselves, fully develop. Christian Democrats went so far as to critique the hallowed doctrine of state sovereignty. Only a Christian-infused state deserved support.

On these bases, Christian Democrats could make common cause with Social Democrats. The result was the vaunted postwar economic boom coupled with social security, unemployment insurance, state-run or regulated health insurance, public housing construction, and other measures that vastly improved the lives of Europeans. There is no doubt that the fear of Communism was an essential element here. Italy and France already had substantial Communist parties. Were a 1930s-style economic depression to return—a common fear in the immediate postwar years—nothing might save Christians and Christian Democracy from Communism. Yet social welfare also had deep roots in Christian beliefs, as Invernizzi Accetti notes, and the social welfare state was by no means only the work of the various Social Democratic parties (including the British Labor Party). This commitment led also to the Common Market, European Community, and European Union as a supposed bulwark of the western Christian (or Judeo-Christian in some formulations) world. Social Democrats only belatedly embraced European integration, since they viewed it first as an agent of capitalism and Americanism (which it surely was). Invernizzi Accetti is correct to see integration as a Christian Democratic project, though this perhaps misses some of those Social Democrats who early on did play a key role in its creation, like the Belgian Paul-Henri Spaak.

Invernizzi Accetti is a political theorist with excellent historical sensibilities. It is not a criticism to note, nonetheless, that the book sometimes neglects the historical context. This is especially true regarding the German Christian Democratic Union and its Bavarian sister-party, the Christian Social Union (CSU). The DC had it relatively easy: in an overwhelmingly Catholic Italy, it only had to worry about its political, and not its confessional, opponents. And as awful as Italian Fascism was, the depth of its barbarity still paled in comparison to that of Nazism. The towering figures of the CDU, Konrad Adenauer, Helmut Kohl, and Angela Merkel, all had to deal with Nazism's legacy and other burdens of German history.

German unification in 1871 was the creation of Protestant Germany. Catholics constituted a minority, a substantial one to be sure, but with roughly 40 percent of the population, still a minority. (Jews, by the 1933 census, comprised only 0.75 percent of the population.) Chancellor Otto von Bismarck ensured Protestant domination by excluding Austria and its dominions from the unified nation. Catholics in Bavaria joined the new Germany because they had little choice, squeezed between an expanded Prussia and the Habsburg Empire. Bismarck, determined to brook no substantial opposition to his semi-democratic, semi-authoritarian creation, soon banned the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and launched the *Kulturkampf*, the 'cultural struggle' against the institutions of Catholic power in Germany. This struggle was not aimed at

Catholics as such, but rather at the Catholic Center Party, Catholic social organizations, and the Church itself. Needless to say, the distinction between Catholics and Catholic institutions was a rather difficult one to maintain. Ultimately, Bismarck failed and called off the *Kulturkampf*, but not before instituting long years of repression.

Catholics and their institutions then became a fixed feature of German politics and society. Yet Catholic memories of the *Kulturkampf* were long and Catholics felt themselves to be a minority. As such, when, in the wake of the Nazi disaster, Adenauer sought to create a unified Christian party, he faced immense opposition, both among his fellow Catholics and Protestants as well. With the division of Germany, the arithmetic had changed. West Germany's population was now split 50-50 Catholic-Protestant. Adenauer made the case that only a unified Christian party could counter the threat of Communism in the East and Social Democracy at home. CDU/CSU propaganda consistently and speciously painted the SPD as, essentially, an arm of Marxism in the East.

Adenauer prevailed over intense opposition. The old Catholic Center Party was transformed into a party of Catholic-Protestant unity. The founding of the CDU took place just six weeks after the end of the war, in June 1945. However, Catholics in the South, especially Bavaria, remained hostile to the union with Protestants and formed their own party, though it always stayed aligned with the CDU.

Three major issues dominated West German politics in the 1950s. The first was economic. Here the famed social market economy was a resounding success. The economy soared and by the end of the decade living standards had improved markedly. Despite continual conflicts with the SPD, West Germany's two major parties, the CDU and the SPD, were able to come together on the expansion of the social welfare state, including co-determination (*Mitbestimmung*) in the factories and the established of a unified trade union movement over the four that had existed prior to 1933 (liberal, Catholic, Communist, and socialist in the Weimar years).

The other two issues are related. Far more so than with the case of fascism in Italy, in Germany there had to be some coming to terms with the Nazi past. Adenauer, from the depths of his Catholic beliefs, argued that Germans had to recognize the deep immorality of Nazism. He had an instrumental goal as well. West Germany could only survive and thrive through integration into the West, and that required some coming to terms with Nazism. He pursued a dual strategy. He supported the integration of huge numbers of ex-Nazis into the state apparatus, business, and academia. At the same time, Adenauer forced through a program of reparations with Israel. The treaty signed in 1952 faced immense opposition from his own party—and from many Israelis, who rejected 'blood money' from Germany—but it nonetheless passed. Billions of marks flowed from West Germany to Israel over the succeeding years.

My point here is that Invernizzi Accetti's exposition of Christian Democratic beliefs sometimes leaves the impression that it was a more or less autonomous unfolding from Catholic theology and great Catholic philosophers like Maritain and Sturzo. But everyone in the postwar years was operating in the shadow of the Third Reich, the annihilation of the Jews (even when this was unacknowledged as the defining crime of Nazism), the ravages of World War II, and the success of the Red Army and the creation of the Soviet bloc. In Germany, at least, that situation compelled Adenauer and others to create a Christian Democratic Party rather than a mere revival of the Catholic Center Party that had been a fixed feature of unified Germany from 1871 to 1933. The historical context also made for a more generous social market economy than would have previously existed. And it also led to a very conservative society in the 1950s, one that became, ironically enough, a breeding ground for the revolt of the 1960s, which finally gave West Germany a democratic society and not just democratic institutions.

What of the future? Invernizzi Accetti warns against sounding the death-knell of Christian Democracy. He wrote the book amid the decomposition of Italian politics and the decline of the DC and the socialist and Communist parties. In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel's star might have lost some of its luster, but she still reigned supreme. Now the CDU is immersed in crisis and the SPD has virtually collapsed. It is hard to see much of a future for the old-line parties that created

the very successful postwar western order out of the ashes, as Konrad Jarausch writes, of Nazism, fascism, two world wars, and the Holocaust.⁴

Carlo Invernizzi Accetti has written a singularly important book on Christian Democracy. But we still need more work by historians to explicate the forces that shaped the movement and allowed it to thrive in the postwar era.

⁴Jarausch, *Out of Ashes*.

REVIEW BY FABIO WOLKENSTEIN, AARHUS UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

Carlo Invernizzi Accetti's *What is Christian Democracy? Politics, Religion and Ideology* is a major contribution to the contemporary study of political ideologies in general, and political Catholicism in particular. Like all great and original books, *What is Christian Democracy?* is informative, thought-provoking, and opens up multiple avenues for further research and debate. In this brief review, I want to focus on what struck me as one of the most interesting arguments discussed in the book—an argument that, in my view, deserves more attention than Invernizzi Accetti pays to it, and has the potential to inspire a new research agenda on the relationship between political Catholicism and democracy.

The argument I am referring to appears early in the book, towards the end of chapter 1. This chapter shows that the ideology of Christian Democracy emerged from attempts to reconcile Christianity with (secular) modern democracy, and that the pro-reconciliation arguments that were advanced by Christian Democratic theologians and philosophers were fundamentally historical, appealing to the fact that, as Hans Kelsen put it, the “bourgeois revolutions of 1789 and 1848 made the democratic ideal an almost self-evident fact of political discourse.”¹ The crucial point, however, is that because “the link between Christianity and democracy is not posited as a necessary aspect of the Christian faith itself, but rather an ‘adjustment’ or ‘adaptation’ of the latter to the particular historical circumstances of the present time...it would be a mistake to assume this reconciliation is either *definitive* or *irreversible*” (50).

This is an intriguing argument, and it provides us with an opening to reflect on an aspect of political Catholicism that I have never seen systematically discussed. This is that the orientation towards concrete historical circumstances and political practice may make some Catholic political thinkers and actors *reject* modern democracy at one point in time while *accepting* it at another point, or may make some Catholic political thinkers and actors *endorse* modern democracy in their own country, whilst readily *accepting* non-democratic forms of rule in other countries provided that they were informed by Catholicism—*without risking inconsistency*.

To get a better sense of the issues at stake, two historical excursions are necessary. The first leads us to the interwar years. As Invernizzi Accetti demonstrates, this was a time when major intellectual figures in political Catholicism like Jacques Maritain advanced arguments in support of democracy, and several important Christian Democratic Parties like the Italian People's Party (*Partito Popolare Italiano*, PPI) adopted a straightforwardly pro-democratic profile. It was also a period, however, where some Catholic parties quite clearly *rejected* democracy in favor alternative forms of coping with the ‘crisis of civilization’ that manifested itself in increasing tensions between social classes, and the concomitant rise of materialist political doctrines, i.e. socialism. A case in point is the Austrian *Christlichsoziale Partei* (Christian-social party), the predecessor of the contemporary *Österreichische Volkspartei* (Austrian People's Party, ÖVP).

The *Christlichsoziale Partei* was heavily influenced by corporatist thinking, ideas that were already intimated in Leo XIII's encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Singularis quadam* (1892). In essence, the aim of Catholic corporatism was to enable political representation not via representative-democratic channels and universal suffrage, but via interest groups that were defined by their members' occupation plus top-down leadership; the ‘social reference model,’ as Paolo Pombeni puts it, was the “community of orders and social corporations that has allegedly existed in the Christian Middle Ages.”² In the words of the *Christlichsoziale Partei*, it meant overcoming the democratic *Volksstaat* (people's state) and establishing a new social order that took the shape of a “correctly understood *Autoritätstaat* (authority-state)” —or so the Party's 1926 manifesto

¹ Hans Kelsen, *The Essence and Value of Democracy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 25.

² Paolo Pombeni, “The Ideology of Christian Democracy.” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 5:3 (2000): 289-300, here 294.

argues.³ This was seen as consistent with the above-mentioned encyclicals and provided a way of counterposing to socialism a model of social organization that was informed by Christian social ethics. Pius XI's 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* equally made the case for corporatism, reinforcing support for the aforementioned "authority-state" among party officials and church leaders.

It is tempting to say that the *Christlichsoziale Partei* of the interwar years was simply not a democratic party, and that Austrian Christian Democracy was only born after World War II, when the more democratically-minded People's Party came into existence. But this would overlook the many personal and ideological continuities between the two organizations, as well as the People's Party's long-lasting reluctance to distance itself from anti-democratic interwar figures like Engelbert Dollfuss, the *christlichsoziale* chancellor who attempted to establish a regime based on authoritarian corporatism between 1934-1938 (the portrait of Dollfuss in the party's parliamentary offices was removed only in 2017, and in 2004 the ÖVP commemorated the seventieth anniversary of Dollfuss's death with a church service). What is more, the idea that the authoritarian corporatism, which is sometimes called *Ständestaat*, was the last line of defense against the materialistic doctrine of National Socialism is still accepted by many within the party.⁴

Perhaps the best way to make sense of this is to see it as reflecting the contingency of the link between Christianity and modern democracy that Invernizzi Accetti draws to our attention. Perhaps we can even interpret it as consistent with the practical orientation towards concrete historical circumstances that, according to *What is Christian Democracy?*, is such an important feature of Christian Democratic ideology. Clearly, in the concrete historical circumstances of the interwar years, democracy was not the only game in town, and, as the intellectual and political debates of that time reveal, it was seen by many as a weak alternative to the totalitarian models advocated by Berlin and Moscow, respectively. Against this background, it is not surprising that corporatism, which even enjoyed the support of the Holy See, was seen as a better way forward. This changed after World War II, and political Catholicism adapted accordingly.

This leads us to the second historical excursus which concerns the support of key German Christian Democrats for fascist regimes after World War II. Consider that Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, one of the European Union's 'founding fathers' and arguably one of the most important Christian Democratic politicians of the twentieth century, not only saw Spain as a *Kernland* (core country) of the *abenländisch* (occidental) Europe, but also wanted to include it in the European Defense Community. In fact, already in the 1950s, the Adenauer government welcomed the growing international acceptance of the Franco regime, seeing it as a potential future ally.⁵ Adenauer dispelled all doubts about his personal views on Franco's Spain when he visited the country as a 91-year old in 1967, on the invitation of minister Manuel Fraga Iribarne. In two speeches, Adenauer emphasized the close connection between Spain and Germany, and that Spain 'must' be part of a unified Europe aimed at preserving Christian civilization.⁶ The fact that Spain was governed by a fascist regime did not appear to worry him whatsoever.

After Adenauer's death, the conservative Christian Social Union in Bavaria (*Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern* CSU) politician Franz Josef Strauß became the main figure cultivating ties between German Christian Democracy and clerical fascists around Europe. Strauß's express ambition was to establish political Catholicism as a global *dritte Kraft* ('third force'), meaning a counter-weight to the liberal and materialist United States on the one hand, and the equally materialist

³ Bertrand Michael Buchmann, *Insel der Unseligen: Das autoritäre Österreich 1933-1938* (Vienna: Molden Verlag, 2019), 25.

⁴ Anton Pelinka, "Die ÖVP und ihr Diktator." *Die Zeit*, 13 February 2014.

⁵ Walter Lehmann, *Die Bundesrepublik und Franco-Spanien in den 50er Jahren*. (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2006), 59-60.

⁶ Konrad Adenauer, "Rede im Atenao in Madrid" (16 February 1967), <https://www.konrad-adenauer.de/quellen/reden/1967-02-16-rede-madrid> (accessed 21 February 2020).

and hence troublesome Soviet Communism, on the other. During the Franco era, he suggested amongst other things to create German military bases in Spain and sought to foster firmer ties with Latin American countries, many of which at the time were mostly right-wing dictatorships. After the end of the Franco regime, he furthermore provided financial support to the (unsuccessful) Catholic reactionary parties that sought to re-establish the previous authoritarian order, such as the *Accion Democratica Espagnola* and the *Allianza Popular* of which the very same Manuel Fraga Iribarne who invited Adenauer to Spain was a key member.⁷

Again, it seems to me that Invernizzi Accetti's insight that "the link between Christianity and democracy is not ... a necessary aspect of the Christian faith itself, but rather an 'adjustment' or 'adaptation' of the latter to the particular historical circumstances of the present time" can help us make sense of this. The key point is that the actions of Adenauer and Strauß are *fully consistent with Christian Democratic ideology*, when we conceive the latter as being in line with Jacques Maritain's assertion that "the important thing for the political life of the world and for the solution of the present crisis of civilization is by no means to pretend that Christianity is linked to democracy in the sense that the Christian faith compels every believer to be a democrat."⁸ This also raises questions about the common view that "Christian Democrats in post-war Europe were no longer in the business of grudgingly and resentfully accommodating the modern world—[they] really became democrats."⁹ Perhaps the commitment of Christian Democrats to democracy is—or, put more circumspectly, has historically been—weaker than might at first appear.

If this is true, then perhaps Christian Democracy holds more risks for democracy than Invernizzi Accetti allows in *What is Christian Democracy?* Perhaps it is no coincidence that the politicians who are most emphatically claiming allegiance to the Christian Democratic tradition today are politicians who, to put it mildly, have questionable democratic credentials, such as the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Perhaps it is also unsurprising that Orbán presents his political project as of a piece with that of Franz Josef Strauß's CSU party, going so far as to suggest that his own party, *Fidesz*, is the "CSU of the European People's Party," the latter being the EU-level association of Christian Democrats.¹⁰ And perhaps all of this gives us reason to wonder whether accepting democracy just because the "historical circumstances of the present time" seem to demand it, is enough for an ideology to be called 'democratic' to begin with. This final question is arguably of great importance for contemporary European politics, and Invernizzi Accetti must be applauded for providing us with a rich book that can point towards possible ways of answering it.

⁷ Investigative journalists of the German weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* extensively reported about this in multiple articles about Strauss, such as "Dann kommt alles ins Rollen," *Der Spiegel*, 13 September 1980.

⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy & The Rights of Man and the Natural Law* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 21.

⁹ Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 135.

¹⁰ Cabinet Office of the Hungarian Prime Minister, "Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at a conference held in memory of Helmut Kohl," (16 June 2018), <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-a-conference-held-in-memory-of-helmut-kohl/> (accessed 21 February 2020).

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I am deeply grateful to Florence Haegel, Eric Weitz and Fabio Wolkenstein for their insightful and probing comments on my book. They help carry it forward in significant respects, while at the same time highlighting some of its main strengths and limitations. There are, of course, sizable risks in attempting an overall account of the Christian Democratic ideology and its historical evolution. I am thus not surprised that most of their criticisms point to omissions—or at least simplifications—on my part. That is a risk I undertook; and even this kind of broad theorizing cannot afford to ignore particulars and contextual variations. I am therefore happy to engage with the points the reviewers raise, also by way of furthering discussion of a topic that—as all three commentators emphasize—has been sorely under-discussed by academics, relative to its manifest historical and political importance.

Weitz highlights the specificity of the German instantiation of Christian Democracy, pointing in particular to the inter-confessional vocation of the *Christlich Demokratische Union* (CDU), its key role in handling the legacy of Nazism, as well as the distinctiveness of its socioeconomic policy platform encapsulated in the notion of a ‘social market economy.’ I am in agreement on all points; especially the historical importance of Christian Democracy in operating the transition from National Socialism to post-war democracy in Germany. In the book I discuss the role played by Christian Democratic ideas of ‘civility’ and ‘moral regeneration,’ as well as the reassuring figure of West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer himself, in tracing a way out of the Nazi *débauche*, while also meeting a generalized social demand for a ‘return to order.’ However, Weitz is right to point out that the CDU’s management of denazification also involved more concrete measures, often against significant internal opposition—such as the reintegration of Nazi officials in the German administrative apparatus and the decisions to pay reparations to the state of Israel for Germany’s role in the Holocaust.

The one quibble I would have with Weitz’s comments concerns the degree of importance he ascribes to the inter-confessional dimension of German Christian Democracy. While I am certainly in agreement that this is one of the factors that helped distinguish it from the inter-war’s exclusively Catholic *Zentrum* party, I also think its significance should not be overplayed. Inter-confessionalism has been more of a ‘legitimizing myth’ of the post-war German CDU than a substantive difference with the inter-war *Zentrum* party, since it remained consistent with significant internal tensions and disagreements between the confessions for several decades after the end of the Second World War. This is manifested in one of the aspects Weitz finds compelling in my analysis; that is, the importance ascribed to the critique of “materialism” in the German version of the Christian Democratic ideology. As Maria Mitchell has demonstrated¹, the critique of materialism has historically been tied to an attack on the Protestant Reformation, which inscribes it in a trajectory that runs from Martin Luther, to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, up to modern totalitarianism. To the extent that ‘anti-materialism’ was a core component of the post-war Christian Democratic ideology, it therefore seems that the presumptive ‘reconciliation’ between Catholics and Protestants in Germany was operated on distinctively Catholic grounds.

Haegel offers an equally illuminating set of comments on the particularities of the French case (or perhaps I should say ‘non-case’). She is certainly right to point out that it is a real puzzle why France never had a Christian Democratic Party of the same size and influence as the German CDU and the Italian *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC)—especially given that many of the most important theorists of Christian Democracy, from Jacques Maritain to Emmanuel Mounier and Etienne Borne, have been French. She also advances an intuitively plausible explanation for this, based on the idea that the distinctively French tradition of ‘*laïcité*’ set the institutions of the Republic and the Church so deeply at odds with one another that it effectively undercut the ‘grey zone’ of interaction between them, which is the space in which Christian Democratic political parties developed and thrived in other countries. This insight also enables Haegel to underscore another point I to which I should probably have given greater attention in the book, which is the internal variation between different political expressions of

¹ Maria Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy. Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).

Catholicism—and Christian Democracy—in different historical and political contexts. I will return to this important point in my response to Wolkenstein’s comments below.

The one marginal disagreement I have with Haegel’s review concerns her suggestion that the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP) can simply be disposed of as an “exception” to the broader pattern of ‘non-occurrence’ of Christian Democracy in France. While there is no denying that the MRP never held the virtually hegemonic sway that other Christian Democratic parties had elsewhere (and also that it effectively lasted for only around two decades, between its origins in the French Resistance movement and its demise in the mid-1960s), its contribution to the French—and European—post-war orders cannot be so easily dismissed either. MRP officials played a crucial role in drafting the constitutions of both the French 4th and 5th Republics; they consistently occupied government positions throughout the 4th Republic, and did so intermittently also in the first few years of the 5th. Even more importantly, they also played a decisive role in the early phases of the process of European integration, most notably through the figure of Foreign Minister and high-ranking diplomat, Robert Schuman, who is still recognized as one of the EU’s ‘founding fathers.’ For this reason, I would not go as far as to say that France constitutes a ‘non-case’ of continental European Christian Democracy, even though its lesser historical ascendancy and early demise do still require explanation and Haegel’s suggestions in this regard appear convincing.

Wolkenstein’s contribution touches on a point of enormous theoretical significance. Since the Christian Democracy’s reconciliation of Catholic Christianity with modern democracy relies on a ‘philosophy of history’ which portrays the modern Democratic political form as a particular historical instantiation of presumptively ‘eternal’ Christian principles and values, the synthesis it operates between them may not be as solid as is generally assumed, inasmuch as it is construed as *historically contingent* and therefore in principle ‘soluble.’ To illustrate this point, Wolkenstein focuses on the case of the Austrian *Christlich Sozial Partei* (CSP) during the inter-war years, which ultimately rallied itself behind Chancellor Engelbert Dolfuss’s attempt to establish a regime based on authoritarian corporatism between 1934 and 1938. While I take Wolkenstein’s general point, I am not sure this is the best example to substantiate it since, as Wolkenstein himself concedes, it is an open question whether the inter-war Austrian CSP can indeed be considered a Christian Democratic party in the sense in which I propose to understand that notion. Apart from the fact that its relinquishment of the commitment to democracy disqualifies it by definition (since I define Christian democracy as a particular strand of Catholic political thought that seeks to reconcile it with the modern democratic form), in Chapter 4 I draw a distinction between ‘corporatism’ and ‘subsidiarity,’ insisting that only the latter belongs to the Christian Democratic ideological horizon, precisely because of the former’s incompatibility with democracy.

This brings me to the issue of the *internal pluralism* between different political expressions of Christianity—and Christian Democracy—which Wolkenstein alludes to and Haegel puts front and center. This is obviously a very important point and I may well have failed to do it sufficient justice in the book, since my overarching intention was to construct an ‘ideal type’ of Christian Democracy bringing out the fundamental ‘unity’ between a variety of different political phenomena and experiences, above and beyond their internal differences. I remain nonetheless convinced that Christian democracy constitutes a sufficiently distinctive and internally coherent intellectual and political tradition to justify treating it as a specific political expression of Christianity, at once distinct from other strands of Catholic modernism—such as Christian Socialism and Liberal Catholicism—and capacious enough to include several internal variations within an overarching unity. Ultimately, whether you choose to focus on what unites or distinguishes various different strands of Christianity—or Christian Democracy—is a question of focus and approach. I chose to focus on the former because before *What is Christian Democracy?* was published there was as of yet no single academic book offering a comprehensive vision of the Christian Democratic ideological tradition as a whole.

Another extremely interesting point raised by Wolkenstein concerns the foreign policy stances adopted by Christian Democratic actors and thinkers, which is admittedly a dimension I completely overlooked in my book (with the exception of a brief discussion of the MRP’s evolving position on the issue of France’s colonial possessions leading up to the Algerian crisis of 1958-62). Wolkenstein offers an intriguing lead by pointing out that both Austrian and German Christian Democrats cultivated relations with various authoritarian regimes, both in Southern Europe and Latin America, well into

the 1960s, which appears to contradict their stated commitment to democratic principles, and therefore further underscores Wolkenstein's point that the marriage between Christianity and democracy proposed by Christian Democrats may not have been so solid after all. I wouldn't, however, go so far as to suggest that this casts doubts on the sincerity of Christian Democracy's commitment to democracy in the places where it did support it since, as Wolkenstein also points out, a distinctive feature of this ideological and political tradition has been its espousals of a form of *principled* pragmatism.

The last point I will address is raised—in one way or another—by each of the three commentators and has also been one of the main areas of focus of other commentaries on my book. I guess I should have expected that the suggestion that Christian Democratic principles and values may still hold some normative potential today in helping to anchor (or at least restrain) the phenomenon of 'far right populism' would attract a lot of attention—while also failing to convince many outside the Christian Democratic camp itself—even though, in quantitative terms, it occupies only about half of one chapter out of ten; that is, less than 5% of the book. I should also underscore that the suggestion is advanced in a tentative tone and framed, as Haegel recognizes, as an "open question" over the way in which religious electorates will be mobilized in coming years: whether along the lines of the identitarian and deeply exclusionary forms of 'far right populism' espoused by figures such as Italy's Matteo Salvini and Hungary's Viktor Orban, or the more recognizably Christian Democratic and therefore inclusive political platforms of leaders such as Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Christian wing of the Italian *Partito Democratico*.

With the benefit of hindsight, I should probably have made clearer that my suggestion was neither intended to formulate a *prediction*, nor to express a political *preference*, but rather to identify a new potential *historical mission* for Christian Democratic ideology in the present political context. While it may very well fail, since Weitz is right to point out that continental European Christian Democratic parties currently appear to be as deeply in crisis as their Social Democratic counterparts, it is perhaps not irrelevant to point out that, at the time of writing, all the hopes for an electoral defeat of President Donald Trump in the United States are pinned on a Democratic candidate whose closest ideological analogue in continental Europe is probably represented by the type of 'centrism' espoused by Christian Democratic parties in the second post-war period. Considering also that Senator Bernie Sanders is routinely described as a 'European-style Social Democrat,' is it not remarkable how much Vice President Joe Biden's attempted 'triangulation' between the far-right and the far-left, as well as his calls for a return to 'civility' and a morally infused idea of 'order' in the wake of the Trumpian adventure, recall the spirit captured by Adenauer's unforgettable slogan '*Keine Experimente*'? And if the latter formula worked once in taming the worst historical expression of far-right populism to date, is it so implausible to suppose that something similar might perhaps go some way towards obtaining a comparable result today? Of course, only time can tell.