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Christian Democracy without Romance: The Perils of Religious Politics from a Public Choice Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Christian Democracy is often championed as a romantic means of bringing ethical considerations for the common good into the daily life of politics. Public choice theory, on the other hand, reveals that the search for the common good is quixotic amidst divergent policy preferences within a nation. While there may be a handful of values that are accepted by nearly all citizens (e.g., prohibitions on murder), more mundane policy choices will likely promote differences of opinion. Given the often arbitrary nature of voting procedures, the ability of one faction to manipulate the vote choice, and the self-interested behavior of politicians to be re-elected, political parties will inevitably alienate some portion of the citizenry. Attaching Christianity to short-term political outcomes serves to undermine its long-term goal of promoting God's mission. Nonetheless, the Catholic concept of subsidiarity is congruent with many of the findings of public choice theory and offers a way for Christians to engage in public life without tainting themselves in the political partisan arena of political partisanship.

Those who seek specific descriptions of the “good society” will not find them here.

—Nobel Laureate James Buchanan¹

The quest for good governance has been eternal. From Plato's call for “philosopher kings” to modern theories of the democratic welfare state, history's greatest minds routinely engaged in designing institutions or molding citizens in such a way that the greatest benefit is provided for the greatest number (cf. Plato 2004; Augustine 2003; Rawls 1971), a “good society” indeed. During the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church and other Christian thinkers were challenged by a rising tide of popular democracy sweeping Europe. Initially fearing the menace of mob rule and remembering the ill fate that befell many priests during the French Revolution, Catholic officials resisted calls for parliamentary rule and an expanded electoral franchise. But as popular rule became increasingly inevitable, a number of lay religious leaders (often with the blessing of episcopal hierarchies) sought accommodation with this new governing system by creating political parties steeped in Christian thought.² It was reasoned, after all, that if “the masses” were to be given a choice in their leaders, they best have available options that were morally congruent with the Christian faith. If you couldn't beat 'em, join 'em. Even to this day, the desire to craft a “good society” by selecting governmental representatives of the highest moral integrity

remains strong, which has lured many Christian leaders into the arena of electoral politics by either directly running for office or endorsing politicians and parties believed to be rooted firmly in biblical principles. But is the promotion of a formal political party (or candidates) with explicit ties to Christian theology a worthwhile endeavor for the polity writ large and, more specifically, for the Christian faith itself?

This essay argues that formal attempts to infuse political organizations with Christianity, explicitly and directly, in the form of modern Christian Democratic parties represents not only a futile attempt at “good governance” but will have the likely effect of emaciating the reputation of the Christian faith amongst the broader populace. While Christians should not be discouraged from bringing their faith into the ballot box or public arena as a guidepost for the design of public policy, the *formalization of Christian thought into political institutions* is fraught with great peril. I base this argument on insights garnered from public choice theory, a sub-discipline of economics and political science that demonstrates the difficulty of achieving the “common good” through the political process. Using the work of Nobel Laureates, such as Kenneth Arrow, James Buchanan, and F. A. Hayek, as well as other public choice theorists and Austrian School economists, I conclude that Christians concerned with promoting good governance would be

served better by the principle of subsidiarity, devolving political decision making to the lowest social level possible, and not formally linking their faith to official political parties that are destined to disappoint their constituents and society overall. To borrow from James Buchanan's quote offered in the epigraph, those who seek a theory of the good Christian Democratic society will not find it here.

Christian Democracy and Public Choice

Christian Democracy can imply many things, and for the sake of our argument here it is important to specify the scope of that term. While Christian democracy (small "d") may refer merely to popular political institutions that arose within a Christian culture and based on a set of Christian ideals (cf. Stark 2005), Christian Democracy (capital "D") is specified here as a conscious attempt by Christians to create or co-opt a formal political party based on an explicit appeal to theological identity. In his comprehensive study of the origins of confessional (or Christian Democratic) parties in Europe, Stathis Kalyvas provides a useful starting point. He defines "as confessional those parties that use (or have used when formed) religion (or issues related to religion or the church) as a primary issue for political mobilization and the construction of political identities" (Kalyvas 1996, 19). Carolyn Warner broadens the term to include an ongoing ideological appeal to religious principles as the basis for a policy platform. "Christian Democracy is an ideology that, in brief, evaluates social, economic, and political issues and situations using Christian principles" (Warner 2000, 10). This latter definition allows for the possibility of religious organizations, such as Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority or Ralph Reed's Christian Coalition to capture and shape significant portions of an existing party's platform and, in the process, develop a religious identity around that party and, consequentially, a political identity around certain religious denominations.³ Whether or not the efforts of such groups prove successful, they indicate a "Christian Democratic" correspondence with Kalyvas's definition above, namely, the use of religion as a basis for formal political mobilization. Ideologically, the goal of having a Christian Democratic party would be to implement a vision of, and policies supporting, the common good based on the scriptural teachings of the Bible and subsequent theological interpretations (e.g., Thomas Aquinas) in contradistinction to secular parties that (supposedly) lack, or have drifted away, from such a spiritual foundation. Normatively, Christian Democracy represents a romantic vision of bringing religious virtue to the secular realm of day-to-day governing.

Public choice theory, on the other hand, is an analytical framework for *understanding*, compared to *influencing*, politics (cf. Mueller 2003; Munger and Munger 2015).⁴ It is a theory that sees government "as it is," compared to government "as it should be." As Buchanan bluntly declared, "[p]ublic choice theory has been the avenue through which a romantic and illusory set of notions about the working of governments and the behavior of persons who govern has been replaced by a set of notions that embody more skepticism about what governments can do and what governors will do, notions that are surely more consistent with the political reality that we may all observe about us" (Buchanan 1999, 46). In essence, public choice theory represents an inoculation against the romantic vision of Christian Democracy.

Developed in the middle of the twentieth century by economists, such as Duncan Black (1948) and Anthony Downs (1957), and further advanced by Nobel Laureates, such as Kenneth Arrow (1963 [1951]) and James Buchanan (1975),⁵ public choice seeks to apply basic economic logic to the realm of politics and governance. The theory rests on a number of key axioms about human behavior. The first is methodological individualism wherein individuals, not groups, are considered the primary actor in society. Group activity results from the aggregation of individual choices, giving rise to what Mancur Olson (1965) termed the *collective action problem*, an ongoing situation wherein cooperation is difficult to achieve because individuals are apt to "free ride" on the efforts of others. Second, individuals are considered primarily to be self-interested in their political and economic behavior. While not ruling out altruistic acts entirely (cf. Schmidt 1995), this assumption challenges the age-old romantic notion that rulers or politicians are public-spirited servants who merely exist to serve the common good, a belief often propagated by politicians themselves.⁶ Indeed, the idea here is that a politician (including the most philosophical of kings) pursuing political support (votes) is no different than a hedge fund manager pursuing profit. Finally, individuals are considered to be utility maximizers wherein they make choices that yield the greatest benefit net of costs. These costs not only include monetary expenses on physical "things" but also involve other investments, such as time, including the effort to gather information when making decisions. One of the key insights of public choice theory is that all of these assumptions about human behavior apply equally to those within the public sector as much as they do to persons acting in the private marketplace (Mayhew 1974). As public choice theorist Michael Munger has said, there is no "moral transubstantiation" when a person moves from the private to the public sector; in both instances, individuals act principally as rational, utility-maximizing egoists.⁷

With Christian Democracy being defined as the effort to bring religious principles to bear on political mobilization, we now turn to how the basic assumptions and insights of public choice theory to demonstrate that Christian Democracy's attempt to buttress the common good is impossible to achieve, but that such efforts on the part of well-intentioned lay activists can be counterproductive to the Christian mission of evangelizing society.

The Quixotic Search for the Common Good

The ostensible moral goal of a Christian Democratic party is to bring theological principles to bear on public policy to promote the greatest good for the greatest number of people,⁸ a worthy (and romantic) goal to say the least. However, an immediate problem arises when we attempt to define the "common good." At a very basic level, a society that is absent murder and mayhem would be a good starting point for defining the "common good" and justifying the creation of a state (and, in essence, the political process). To this, Thomas Hobbes (1994 [1661]), John Locke (1980 [1689]), Adam Smith (1976 [1776]), Bastiat (2007 [1850]), and James Buchanan (1975) all agreed. In a world where no laws exist, having some order is better than pure chaos and the opportunity exists to reach some sort of unanimous agreement in restraining our natural liberty merely to preserve our own lives from either external threats or internal strife. Even the most rapacious of criminals benefit from some level of social order and predictability (cf. Olson 1993).⁹ Within public choice economics, the initial step out of anarchy and into a society that promotes a basic set of property rights regarding who can determine the use of an asset (including one's own life) is seen as a Pareto efficient move benefiting all people without harming anyone.¹⁰

But beyond the "first stage contract" of creating a basic set of constitutional rules, defining what constitutes the "common good" becomes extremely problematic given that society is composed of individuals with diverse preferences on all imaginable policy dimensions. It is impossible to please all constituents all of the time. The mere fact that there are "nay" votes in legislatures (and unanimous agreement extremely rare) is an indication of this. Politics involves winners and losers, and the winners necessarily impose their will on the losers by fiat, an action that can (and usually does) cause a great deal of resentment. And the observation that legislation involves coercive fiat is important here. Democracy, no matter how philosophically presented, is coercive at its foundation. Laws that are voted on and pass with less than unanimous support must be imposed coercively on the

losing faction lest they be meaningless in their purpose. Even if we could get society to adhere to a "gentlemen's agreement" wherein all majority (or plurality) votes are respected and that the losing faction would yield to the majority decision understanding that they may win another day with another vote, short-term hostilities will invariably arise between the two sides. One faction's view of the "common good" can never be realized if it loses on any particular policy issue.

The ability to achieve a stable notion of the "common good" is exacerbated by the inherent instability of democratic choice. As Kenneth Arrow (1963 [1951]) proved in his famous "impossibility theorem," there exists no voting rule—plurality, majority, supermajority—short of unanimity that can overcome an intransitive preference cycle among potential factions in society. In other words, it is very possible that three or more options can exist within a legislative debate wherein each option is preferred to all others, much like the game rock-paper-scissors. The implication is that democratic choices fall prey to arbitrariness or allows for one individual (or minority faction) to manipulate the voting agenda (in a "dictatorial" fashion) thereby determining the result irrespective of the wishes of a larger faction existing in society. As William Riker pointed out, the profound implication of Arrow's theorem is that democracy can be lacking in "meaningful choice" (1982, 136) contrary to romantic notion that we can arrive at some agreement on the "common good" through deliberation and negotiation. Put otherwise, the pursuit of the "common good" is quixotic in any society with a diversity of policy preferences; any party laying claim to knowing with certainty the "common good" would merely entice animosity amongst the individuals who did not share that view but were forced to conform to it. This is where the danger of institutionalizing Christian in Christian Democracy lies, which we will elaborate on below.

Finally, public choice theory brings to our attention one additional pitfall of democratic rule that is also dangerous for Christians tempted by Christian Democracy: the use of political power by self-interested politicians under an environment of voter ignorance to serve minority "special interests" at the expense of the general public, an outcome that is often seen as "political corruption" in the popular media. We are not talking about "legal corruption," which would be defined as a willful violation of the law by a politician (e.g., embezzlement of public funds for personal use). Instead, "corruption" here is viewed in the vernacular manner of perceiving Politician X or Party CD being "in the pocket" of special interest Y or Z. Any cursory scan of election rhetoric will serve to prove how politicians attempt to paint their opponent with the brush of "corruption" by accusing

them of being beholden to “special interests” (compared with their own campaign that is only advocating for the “common good” or “will of the people”). However much politicians and parties might want to distance themselves from “special interest politics,” the fact is that such politicking is baked into the democratic cake.

F. A. Hayek (1945) observed in his seminal article “The Use of Knowledge in Society” that information about societal problems and solutions are radically dispersed throughout society. No single politician, committee, bureaucracy, or political party can anticipate all the problems that citizens face nor be privy to the information needed to solve such problems. As such, politicians rely on constituents informing them about their policy needs. The individuals and groups who personally have the most at stake in any public policy will be the ones most likely to lobby political leaders. Individual voters, writ large, do not have the time nor the self-interest to invest in studying these various issues, particularly when the policy decision has no direct benefit to them and only imposes a very small and dispersed cost—a phenomenon economists call “rational ignorance” (Munger and Munger 2015, 65). Combine this with the difficulty in organizing collective action amongst large constituencies (Olson 1965), and it is not surprising that public policy is driven by narrow “special interests” competing for the resources and ability to affect regulations that political power entails (cf. Becker 1983). Not only is the ability to organize and lobby designed to solve legitimate social problems, but such organizing power can be brought to bear on politicians to redistribute resources or craft policies that benefit one small constituency over other larger ones, a process economists call “rent-seeking” (Krueger 1974). And with politicians who first and foremost must be reelected (lest they lose the ability to make public policy), these small constituencies can trade political support (or campaign contributions) for favoritism in policymaking. With citizens being “rationally ignorant” of all the policies being enacted on an annual basis, there is very little effective policing of such rent-seeking behavior.¹¹ It is only around election time, when political opponents can point to the invariable array of “special interests” any politician has advocated for, that such “political corruption” comes to the public’s attention to tar the trustworthiness of an incumbent politician. In other words, political parties will naturally be seen as always serving the “special interests” of narrow constituencies at the expense of the “common good.” The informational requirements of the democratic process, and the reality that individuals will only organize collectively around what impacts them directly, make it impossible for any one representative, let alone political party, to claim they represent the overall “will of the people.”

To summarize, public choice theory does not present a rosy picture of democratic politics. The ability to define the “common good” or divine the “will of the people” through elections and deliberation is quixotic at best. Actual policymaking requires serving narrow interests over efforts to benefit all citizens. This is not to say that democracy is an unhealthy form of government relative to autocratic alternatives. It simply may be the best system of all the poor options available. More important for our present discussion, however, is that democracy’s pitfalls naturally encourage conflictual rifts within society. Explicitly connecting one’s theological beliefs to a system that generates such conflict will invariably tarnish the more general proselytizing mission of the faith. It is that matter to which we now turn our attention.

Conclusion: Christian Democracy, Christian Mission, and Subsidiarity

As noted above, a Christian Democratic party is defined by its attempt to bring a specific set of religious values and ideas to bear on governing society for the “common good.” Christians relying on Scripture, after all, take it as their purpose to serve their neighbors as they would want to be served (cf. Matthew 7:12) and spread the Good Word to all corners of the globe (cf. Matthew 28: 18–20). What better way to do that than in a republican system of democratic governance that is crafted by the people and for the people? Political parties certainly can achieve much good through a representative democracy. As Bryan McGraw points out in this volume, Christian Democratic parties and politicians have indeed undertaken policy programs that have benefitted the lives of many individuals. To this there is no denying. However, as outlined above, public choice theory reveals that democracy is an imperfect system. And the Christian Bible further points out that human beings (some of whom become politicians) are flawed and sinful individuals. Conflict will ensue in any democratic polity and political enemies will be made. Formally linking the identity of Christianity to one partisan faction within society via the creation of a *Christian* Democratic party guarantees that animosity will not only be generated toward specific political figures who draft legislation that is counter to the preferences of others, but it will tarnish the reputation of Christianity itself and damage its broader proselytizing mission that transcends any well-intentioned public works project or market regulation.

The problem for Christians pursuing a missionizing strategy of evangelizing the culture is that a Christian Democratic party involves them in “identity politics,” whether they choose to be or not. Creating a *Christian* Democratic party stamps a strong identity on a formal

political institution—a Christian one to be exact. The name itself implies that those within the boundaries of the party are Christian (or influenced by Christian theology) and that those outside are not. This may sound a harsh judgment, and one may counter such a statement by claiming that Christians of good conscience may choose to participate in a secular party, but the mere fact of using the label “Christian” implies that the platform of the party will be more in line with Christian theological principles than those claiming a more secular title. Worse yet, given that public choice theory reveals that no party can realistically claim to be representing the common good—either because the “common good” is difficult to define and/or the practical necessities of policymaking mean legislating for “special interests” over the more general “will of the people”—a Christian Democratic party will signal to society writ large that Christianity is only associated with a narrow set of special interests or that those who have alternative policy preference are not truly “Christian.” This is not merely a speculative assertion. Recent research by Hout and Fischer (2002) and Campbell et al. (2016) has shown that one of the reasons more individuals have become “religious nones” over the past two decades is that they associate Christianity with a given set of political positions, namely, those of the Republican Party. The strong influence of the Religious Right on the GOP during the 1980s and early 1990s, along with George W. Bush’s public identification as an evangelical, has turned many voters with liberal and moderate political tastes away from the pews on Sunday (Hout and Fischer 2002). Even many of the political stalwarts of the Religious Right in the 1980s began to understand that direct affiliation with a single political party is bound to alienate individuals with various policy positions, not to mention political mistakes, and harm the overall Christian mission of evangelizing the culture writ large.¹² As Jon Shields aptly summarizes

Cal Thomas, former vice president of communications at the Moral Majority, has now questioned the utility of political action. In the pages of *Christianity Today*, Thomas argued, “Real change comes heart by heart, not election by election, because our primary problems are not economic and political but moral and spiritual.” ... Sandy Rios, the director of Concerned Women for America, admitted on a national radio broadcast that politically engaged Christians “can be guilty of losing sight of our goal, which is spiritual redemption.” Even the Christian Coalition discussed the dangers of political activism in one of its training seminars: “While Christians have a responsibility to be active participants in the world in which they live, they must avoid this pitfall prepared by Satan to lure them into his domain” (Shields 2009, 144).¹³

It is important to note that the Moral Majority, Concerned Women for America, and Christian Coalition

were not formally linked to the Republican Party but were simply outside advocates for its policies and candidates. Taking the additional step of directly affiliating Christianity to a partisan organization certainly would not mitigate any of the problems that Thomas and others have noted and in fact would only exacerbate them. If the mission of God is eternal and glorious, and politics is only temporally fleeting and flawed, Christians run the risk of associating their theological principles with the fleeting and flawed by formally embracing political parties.

But if a formal political alliance is risky for Christians, does this mean that Christianity is irrelevant in the policymaking arena? Most definitely not. As Shields (2009) has aptly demonstrated, Christians have extolled religious virtue in politics by acting indirectly, advocating for various principles amongst the citizenry without attaching themselves to any particular candidate. Informational campaigns on abortion, the death penalty, and other relevant policy topics helped to pressure policymakers of all ideological stripes to consider theological arguments seriously. Linking one’s theology to a single party (as in the Republican Party or a potential Christian Democratic party) makes it all the more easy for certain politicians to dismiss those arguments out of hand. Similarly, being attached to one party allows those partisans to take one’s concerns for granted, willing to trade them away for short-term political expediency with promises of making good on promises in the long term (which often never comes). Christians who can easily sway their support between two or more parties in any given election are more likely to wield significant political influence than those who are credibly committed to one party or set of candidates.

But beyond remaining outside formal partisan affiliations, Christians can also advocate for a governing principle that has deep roots within the Church—subsidiarity. Here the idea is to promote decision making on policy at a level that is closest to the citizens who have a direct stake in the issue. This includes deferring to the authority of the family and other nongovernmental groups in civil society, a virtue that Alexis de Tocqueville saw in the young American republic, the first modern democracy of its day. As decision-making authority is devolved to smaller and smaller units of governance, it is possible to come closer to unanimous agreement on solutions, or at least to avoid imposing the costs of a policy on a broad minority or, worse yet, having a narrow minority benefit at the cost of a broad majority, both of which are typical of policy made at a national level. Christians, who naturally find community in local congregations, are well-positioned to be problem solvers at the local level. Moreover, local governance allows for

greater flexibility in negotiating amongst competing claims and ensuring that both the benefits and costs of any given policy are shared more fairly across the population. Christians, with a theological emphasis on commonly shared and God-given grace, are well suited for leading such negotiations irrespective of partisan affiliation.

Subsidiarity further aligns itself with the concept of political federalism, which has been a popular solution to many of the ills of centralized authority that concern public choice theorists (cf. Buchanan and Tullock 1962). Individuals unhappy with a certain policy decision within a certain locale have a greater opportunity to exit to a locale favoring their policy preferences under a devolved federalist system than one where policy is uniformly applied from central authority encompassing a broad population. Instead of imposing laws on individuals who may not share one's preferences, Christians under a federalist system can lead by example in the communities where they do have influence over policy. If Christian policies are truly beneficial to society, they will be emulated by other communities who see their positive effects. As Lord Acton observed, "Of all checks on democracy, federalism has been the most efficacious and the most congenial. ... The federal system limits and restrains the sovereign power by dividing it, and by assigning to Government only certain defined rights. It is the only method of curbing not only the majority but the power of the whole people, and it affords the strongest basis for a second chamber, which has been found essential security for freedom in every genuine democracy" (cited in Hayek 2011 [1960], 275). Rather than trying to secure power by co-opting the temporal sovereign through the avenue of a formal Christian Democratic party, Christians best serve the "common good" when they allow sovereignty to rest with all of God's people.

Notes

1. Buchanan (1975, 1).
2. Christian Democracy is frequently linked to the Catholic Church in both Europe and Latin America (cf. Fleet 1985). But as Warner points out, Protestants have also influenced the creation of several European Christian Democratic parties, including the Dutch Christian Historical Union or ecumenical political efforts between Protestants and Catholics, such as Germany's Christian Democratic/Social Union (Warner 2000, 10).
3. I avoided the term *Religious Right* here because it refers to a broad panoply of confessional and parachurch organizations that has shifted over time. Falwell's Moral Majority is most commonly identified with the American "Religious Right" and was the organization most associated with overtly trying to influence the platform of the Republican Party. However, other organizations, such as Pat Robertson's 700 Club and Focus on the Family, have attempted to exert similar influence at different points in time with varying degrees of effort and success. As mentioned later in this essay, several of these organizations have stepped back from overt political partisanship, preferring to engage the political climate more indirectly via engagement with civil society rather than politicians or parties (cf. Shields 2009). It should also be noted that there have been efforts on the "Religious Left" to influence partisan politics (e.g., Sojourners, Rev. Jesse Jackson), but these efforts have been rather anemic in recent decades as the Democratic Party has veered in a more secular direction (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014).
4. This is not to deny that public choice theory has been used to advocate for various political positions. Many public choice theorists have used their research and scholarship to push for more limited and decentralized forms of government (cf. Tullock, Seldon, and Brady 2002). However, unlike Christianity, public choice theory first and foremost purports to be a positivist, not normative, framework for understanding society.
5. Buchanan's classic text was coauthored with Gordon Tullock, though the latter never received a Nobel Prize (Buchanan and Tullock 1962).
6. Electoral campaigns are not merely debates about "the issues" (which often represent broad statements about philosophical preference and not actual discussions about the mechanics of governing). Rather, elections are also fought on the dimension of the moral character of the candidates involved, which, not surprisingly gives way to "mudslinging." Because it is impossible to anticipate all possible governing decisions of any given candidate, voters will choose an individual who they believe is the most trustworthy in advocating for their interests, *ceteris paribus*. Whether or not a candidate has performed well in her private life will be a significant signal of her trustworthiness in office. Presenting oneself as more virtuous and "public spirited" than one's opponent is thus a rational strategy. Public choice theory assumes no ethical differential in individuals pursuing politics.
7. Munger's statement was made on the EconTalk podcast "Mike Munger on the Political Economy of Public Transportation." See http://www.econtalk.org/archives/2008/07/munger_on_the_p.html. A similar statement without the theologically-inspired metaphor can be found in Munger and Munger (2015, 20).
8. This notion of the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals has a certain utilitarian ring to it, and rational choice theory, which forms the foundations of the public choice school of thought, has often been labeled as such. However, public choice theorists often temper this utilitarian notion with the concept of Pareto optimality, wherein a policy decision is declared optimal if at least one person is made better off and *no one* is made worse off, a condition difficult (if not nearly impossible) to satisfy in most "normal" legislation. Buchanan (1975, 28–31) saw this as being only possible in the initial move from pure anarchy to some "first-stage contract" (or constitution) wherein all members of a society *unanimously* agree to restrain a small set of their natural liberties for a baseline level of security in the form of a government. Beyond this initial constitution, though, "second-stage contracts" (i.e., day-

to-day legislative acts) were unlikely to be Pareto optimal in that at least one person would be made worse off as resources are re-allocated amongst citizens (Buchanan 1975, 35–52). A utilitarian decision-making model would easily trample the rights of some individuals for the sake of the whole, which is what Buchanan termed the “paradox of government” (1975, 91–106).

9. See also Skarbek (2014) for how prison gangs quickly formulate social order and Leeson (2009) for a similar argument regarding pirates. Leeson points out that before setting sail, pirates agree on a set of rules of behavior that must be agreed on unanimously lest they open themselves up to the possibility of mutiny.
10. An “initial constitutional contract” based on unanimous consent of all individuals in society is extremely rare and may only be realized in very small communities, such as pirate ships (Leeson 2009), home owners’ associations, or other private clubs (Munger and Munger 2015, 68). Buchanan recognized that the transaction costs in negotiating such unanimity are prohibitively high, thus the initial “social contract” proceeds as if it were unanimous (1975, 40–41).
11. College students often clamor for a thoughtful discussion of the relevant issues of the day. Usually, such discussion represents no more than general declarations about vague policy preferences (e.g., “I want workers to be paid a suitable wage”). When confronted by demands to discuss “the issues,” I gently suggest to students that they visit the Federal Register stored in their university’s library. This ever-expanding document records all of the laws enacted by Congress and/or various agencies of the federal government. Students are quickly overwhelmed to see the Kafkaesque regulatory intricacies affecting nearly every aspect of their daily lives.
12. My earlier research also showed this in the Latin American context (Gill 1998). The Argentine Catholic Church had been aligned closely with that country’s two dictatorships in the 1960s–1980s. Upon the resumption of democratic governance, and revelations that clergy were directly involved in torture, the bishops realized they had lost the trust of the population (cf. Mignone 1988).
13. Citations to the *Christianity Today* piece and other quotes can be found in Shields (2009, 144).

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