

Can Christians be of help?

Christian Democratic parties advocated policies in keeping with both Catholic social teaching together with Protestant social gospel movements which sought to apply Christian principles to help resolve social issues. Many of the Christian Democratic parties which developed at that time are now linked with the European Peoples Party (EPP) in the EU – which identifies as a broadly conservative movement.

Fine Gael, which is the main Irish political party which is linked to the EPP, makes the following claim in its ‘Values Statement’:

‘(We are) a party of the progressive centre. That means we act in a way that is right for Ireland, regardless of dogma or ideology. We base our policies and ideas for the future of Ireland on our core beliefs.’

In outlining what these core beliefs are the following key points are touched upon:

- no barriers to equal opportunity;
- encouraging initiative, innovation, investment and self-reliance;
- preserving, enhancing and sharing prosperity;
- protecting citizens and enforcing the law;
- strengthening families, in all their modern forms;
- fostering communities;
- being truthful and courageous in what we do;
- promoting and upholding both the rights and the responsibilities of people;
- support for the European Union;
- protecting communities through balanced regional development;
- safeguarding our children’s future through protection of the environment;
- recognising that individuals and families know how best to organise their own lives and make decisions for themselves;
- helping to build Europe as a common home;
- global free trade, greater freedoms, fewer borders and barriers;
- protection of our environment and building sustainable communities;
- affirming the role of the state in offering a helping hand to those that need it.

Escaping the Bunker

On any reading, the above is an impressive list of ‘values’ – some of which will be disputed by some or many. Yet, very like the argument being made throughout this book about the deficiencies of the secular liberal state, it is surprisingly easy to completely empty these values of their core meanings by the very opener for the above listicle ‘regardless of dogma or ideology.’ Empty of meaning, values become a to-do list to be interpreted as the prevailing winds (of power) dictate.

There is much in this book which would fit the definition of Christian democracy, either as originally understood as a social movement or as it evolved into party politics. But the book is *not* arguing for a return to a party-political Christian democracy of the last century.

It seeks rather to convey **three messages**.

The first is that politics needs Christians who, understanding what it means to be a coherent Christian, will bring upright, human and moral standards to bear in the political arena.

The second is that the principles of Christianity need to re-inform liberal democracy to save it as a political way of life before secular liberalism fatally fails.

And the third message is, insofar as principles of a Christian worldview can be brought to bear on policies and institutions, politicians of all persuasions should seek to do so, knowing that they are infusing society with a genuine wealth of wisdom which can lead to greater justice, peace and prosperity.