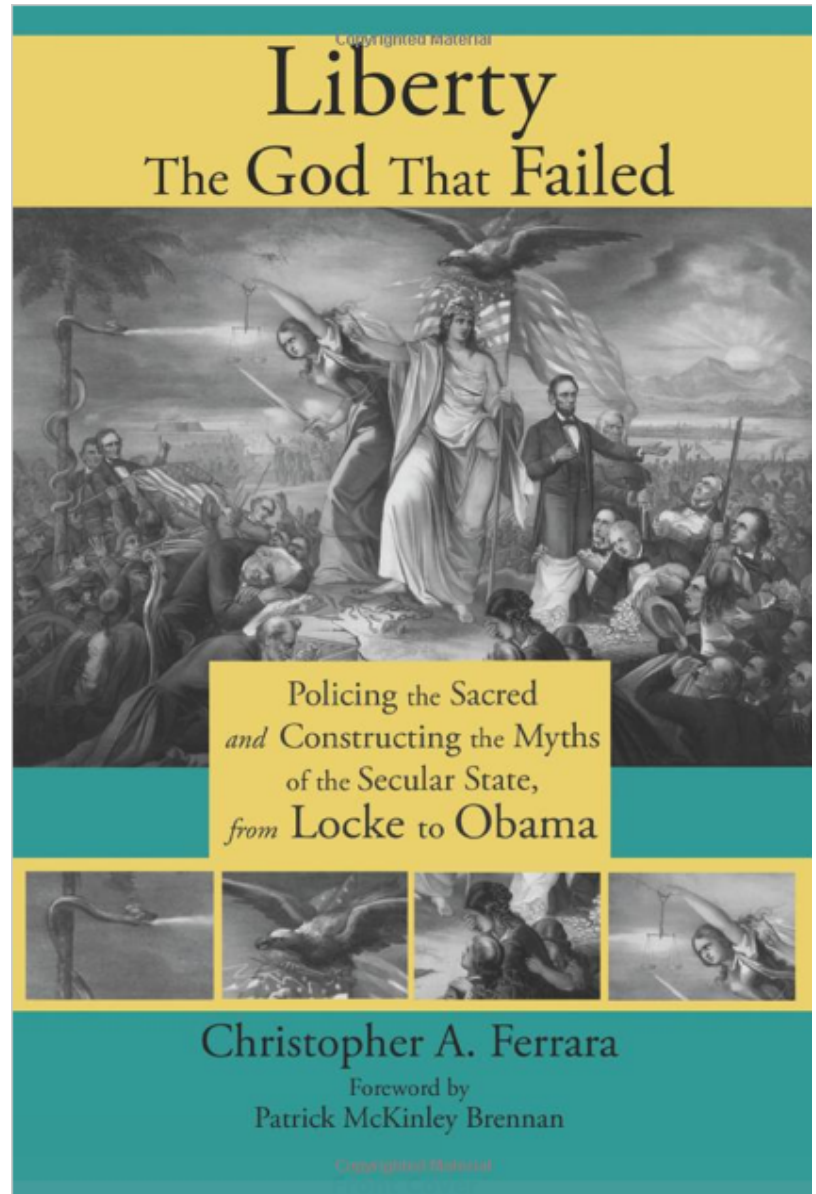




Review of Christopher Ferrara's "Liberty: The God That Failed"

Christopher A. Ferrara is an attorney who serves as President and Chief Counsel of the American Catholic Lawyer's Association, a group formed to defend the rights of Catholics. A prolific author and steady contributor to Catholic publications (*The Remnant*, *Catholic Family News*, and *Latin Mass*), Ferrara has gained a following among the growing number of Catholics who are working to uphold the Catholic Church's traditions.

In his 2012 book, *Liberty: The God That Failed*, Ferrara repeatedly rues that our nation is not Catholic, and therefore not possessed of a governmental system based on strict Catholic principles. His examination of the roots of his own native country has led him to condemn the Founding Fathers, the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and, by inference, those Americans who find good in the American system of government and are trying to reverse the downward moral, political and economic slide of the United States. He claims that "the enlightened Founders, with their predominantly rationalist politics and deistic theology, set in motion: the definitive abolition of Christendom." It is they, he proposes, who are ultimately to blame for what now prevails in America.



It is surely reasonable for an American Catholic to wish that his country had been based on unquestionable Catholic values. But, in this writer's view, Ferrara goes way too far. While repeatedly concluding that the United States doesn't possess the Catholic-centered style of government he prefers, he finds virtually nothing to applaud about America's roots. He even insists that the American government's powers "even before the [Civil War] had been greater than any exercised by King George over the distant colonies." Quite a stretch there!

Targeting by name such early Americans as Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and their successors, Ferrara's thesis would have one conclude that these men had cleverly plotted to bring about widespread divorce, abortion, tolerance of homosexuality, and numerous other social and political ills.



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But a survey of America's history tells us that it has taken more than 200 years for today's acceptance of such degradations to become widely accepted. Also, the praiseworthy mores in place at the time of our nation's beginning were consistently encouraged by these Founders. Further, the moral bedrock existing in America during the breakaway from Britain came from the remnants of once-Catholic Europe, even from countries where that bedrock has been largely abandoned. Ferrara even admits this.

In what appears to be a serious admission against interest, Ferrara cites the refusal of Patrick Henry to support the proposed U.S. Constitution, pointing to the Virginia firebrand's prediction that "the tyranny of Philadelphia may be like the tyranny of George III." After approvingly positing that rather dour assessment, the author of *Liberty* chose to add, "Not even Henry could have foreseen that this would turn out to be a vast understatement." Understatement? If rule by King George had prevailed and America had not broken from British domination, the colonists would not only continue to suffer under King George's tyrannies and indignities, they would have been subjected to Anglicanism as the official state religion with the king as its leader. Ferrara never made this point in his 700 pages.

Liberty's author claims there was little support among America's colonists for the Declaration of Independence and only a meager desire to discard the Articles of Confederation. He castigates the Second Continental Congress for "purporting to speak as the representatives of several million colonials who had never elected them." He then finds fault with the secrecy at the 1787 convention that produced the U.S. Constitution, objects to the ratification procedure that gave it legitimacy, and reserves special condemnation for the First Amendment's prohibition of a national established religion. State sanctioning of religion, of course, wasn't forbidden and several of the states that ratified the entire Bill of Rights had already proclaimed their own sect as the official religion. Was there any Catholic state? No, because there were very few Catholics in America. Tracing the thinking of America's Founders to Englishmen Thomas Hobbes and John Locke and their twin desire for separation of church and state with no government power to "interfere" with the liberty of "We the People" (a term Ferrara scoffs at repeatedly), much of his book could have been written by an Englishman disappointed that America is no longer his country's possession.

Ferrara's main target, as indicated by the title of his book, is *Liberty*. He states: "America was the place where *Liberty* finally replaced what the Christian religion had once wrought in social order: the alliance of altar and throne." But it isn't liberty that has been failing in America; it is license. Consider: Divorce didn't become widespread until the middle of the 20th century; abortion wasn't made legal nationally until 1973; and homosexuality began to enjoy acceptance a full 200 years after the Constitution gained ratification. How can the Founding Fathers be blamed for the social ills that plague America today when the limited government they created, and the outspoken calls for morality they frequently issued, sought to insure that the period's existing moral underpinnings would remain in place?

According to Catholic champions Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, God gives liberty to all. America's Founders formed a government to safeguard what God has granted. America's constitutional republic is a government limited to protecting rights, surely a praiseworthy creation but one that earns repeated derision in *Liberty*. Cloaking himself in Catholic robes and constantly decrying the absence of Catholic thinking among both the Founders and the government they produced, Ferrara avoids mention of the thinking of Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), one of the church's greatest teachers. While never choosing one particular form of government, Bellarmine recommended that whatever was chosen must not violate the laws of God. In his *De Laicis*, the 17th-century churchman wrote:

Particular forms of government are also determined by the law of nations, not by divine law, for it



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depends on the consent of the multitude to place over themselves a king, consul, or other magistrate; and if there be a legitimate reason, the multitude can change the government.

If the “multitude” can choose or change the government, why does Ferrara condemn the Americans who did so? According to Father John Rager’s 1926 book *The Political Philosophy of Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine*, the famed Italian Cardinal called for “distribution of power [into] legislative, judicial and executive” branches. Quoting extensively from Bellarmine’s various works, Fr. Rager summarized:

It is interesting to note how often the political ideas of this great Cardinal of three hundred years ago coincide with the Constitution and the principles of our own American government, based of Federal and States rights.

It is also interesting to note that the 17th-century books of Algernon Sidney, a British citizen who studied Bellarmine and generally agreed with him, were in the libraries of the Virginians who became America’s Founders.

Omitted also by Ferrara is awareness that America’s population by the mid-20th century was quickly approaching majority Catholic, or at least becoming widely influenced by Catholicism. This, of course, occurred when the U.S. Constitution was enjoying far more respect among government leaders and the American people than is given today. Immigration, religious conversion, and the belief of many that adherence to Catholicism’s moral strictures was good for the nation swelled the church’s numbers and influence. Until the middle of the 20th century, Catholic morality enjoyed the respect of many who weren’t Catholic but were guided by the church’s stances. As late as the 1950s, for instance, the Catholic Legion of Decency published ratings of Hollywood’s movies that kept producers from creating a flood of morally objectionable works. This effort was never impeded by the First Amendment’s prohibition of a national established religion. Yet Ferrara concludes that “America was the place where Liberty finally replaced what the Christian religion had once wrought in social order.”

Liberty contains no mention of the guarded but very positive attitude toward America enunciated by Pope Leo XIII, who led the Catholic Church from 1878 until 1903. In 1895, with more than a hundred years of American history to reflect upon, Leo stated: “We highly esteem and love exceedingly the young and vigorous American nation, in which we plainly discern latent forces for the advancement of civilization and of Christianity.” Though he warned that America had erred in the First Amendment’s prohibition of a national “establishment of religion,” he nevertheless pointed out that the Catholic Church, “unopposed by the Constitution and government of your nation, fettered by no hostile legislation, protected by common laws and the impartiality of the tribunals, is free to live and act without hindrance.” But Ferrara would have readers believe that Pope Leo erred, that America had already sunk into moral and ethical squalor, all of it traceable to the deficiencies of America’s Founders.

Another authority whom Ferrara should have cited is Father E. Cahill whose 1932 book *Framework of a Christian State* has influenced many. Cahill wrote that “the Church condemns no governmental system as such, provided that the duties of government can be fulfilled under it.” He warned that it would be difficult to safeguard any nation from “the intrigues and aggressiveness of the secret societies [and] the dominance of the financial magnates.” Any criticism of today’s America that ignores the successes of conspirators who seek to bring about moral degradation while fostering totalitarian government has missed the mark.

Ferrara repeatedly decries slave ownership amongst the Founders. Yes, that weakness existed. But should it not be charitably celebrated that a properly constituted amendment to the Constitution, the



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document so often targeted by Ferrara, terminated slavery? Also, *Liberty* informs readers again and again that the men who founded America were members of the Masonic sect. Ferrara wrote: "Not only Washington, but Franklin — a veritable Masonic demigod as we shall see — Madison, Hamilton, Samuel Adams, James Otis and a host of other American revolutionaries belonged to the Craft, including some of the most radical Whigs in colonial America and numerous signers of the Declaration of Independence, perhaps as many as fifty-two of the fifty-six."

A careful student of Masonry discovers that most of its members — then and now — were never involved in, or even knew about, any deep conspiratorial intentions of its leaders. But in response to claims that practically all of America's Founders were Masons, Father Christopher Hunter of the Society of Saint Pius X contacted Masonic leaders themselves years ago and discovered from them that "only nine of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence can be proven to be Masons." As for George Washington being a "master Mason," as Ferrara insists, our nation's first president under the Constitution debunked that accusation and the charge that he was a leader of a Masonic lodge in a September 25, 1798 letter to a Reverend Snyder in Maryland. He wrote: "The fact is I preside over none, nor have I been in one more than once or twice, within the last thirty years."

The 700 pages of *Liberty* contain no mention of the ongoing conspiratorial drive that encourages license and aims to create a world tranny. Its sinister plans must be combated — with God's help if we deserve it — by more Americans who are determined to protect and preserve the great gift of liberty protected by America's founding documents. An aroused and informed populace still has enough liberty to prevail. But no urging to mount such effort appears in this book.



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