CHRISTIANITY AND DEMOCRACY

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American democracy does not derive primarily from Athens but from Jerusalem. That is to say, it owes more to Christianity than to ancient Greece.

Consider the assertion, in the *Declaration of Independence*, that “all men are created equal.” That norm is not found in ancient Greece, where slaves and women were non-citizens. But it is derivable from the Old-Testament prophets on social justice, with their insistence that the poor, the widows, the orphans, and foreigners be esteemed.

Or consider the assertion that “all men are created equal” in light of “love your enemies,” or the parable of the Good Samaritan (where the moral agent is not Christ’s fellow Jews but the hated foreigner).

Especially consider the foundational comment in Gen 1:26-27, “God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness . . . So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” All human beings—no matter the gender, ethnicity, race, or class—are equally the image of God.

We owe modern American democracy primarily to our Judeo-Christian, not our Greek, heritage.

Now the question becomes: how long will our democracy survive in a post-Christian world? Will equality and esteem be replaced by efficiency and expendability—as they are in Chinese society, where Christianity was never deeply rooted and where totalitarianism rules in its stead?