

Decalogue & Democracy

Michael Sean Winters | Jun. 13, 2013 Distinctly Catholic

[At the magazine Mosaic](#) [1], Peter Berkowitz examines the relationship between the Decalogue and liberal democracy, taking his cue from a recent essay by Leon Kass. Both men, Kass and Berkowitz, are among the most thoughtful conservative voices around but I think they are wrong when they suggest that the Israelites were given a choice. In the strict sense, this is true, but the choice was between life and death, which is not what most people consider a choice in our modern understanding of the word. I also think Kass and Berkowitz elide the central issue: To what extent can liberal democracy's commitment to a negative conception of liberty, that is, seeing freedom as a "freedom from," compatible with the Jewish and Christian understanding of freedom as positive freedom, a "freedom for." Still, these are important issues that Kass and Berkowitz are raising and they deserve the kind of careful, judicious treatment they provide.

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Links:

[1] <http://mosaicmagazine.com/supplemental/2013/06/decalogue-and-liberal-democracy/>