Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, the oldest daughter of Robert Kennedy and the niece of John F. Kennedy, was born and raised a devout Catholic, who has come to feel that her church, and much of contemporary American Christianity, is failing its members. This book is a spiritual call to arms, an assault on the way American churches today involve themselves more in prescribing personal behavior, rather than working for the greater good of the community. The author recounts her own traditional Catholic upbringing, and the role of faith in the lives of her father and uncle, who were inspired by their religious beliefs to help build a just society. She gives examples of inspiring figures of the present and past, like Martin Luther King, Jr., her father, Robert Kennedy, and Rick Warren among
others, whose spiritual values led them to devote themselves to helping others. She tells of her own spiritual crisis, as she witnessed the nurturing Catholic church of her childhood become increasingly alienated from the real concerns of its congregants. And finally, she offers a message of hope, showing how Americans today can reclaim their religious traditions and use them to transform their lives and our churches.

**Personal Review: Failing Americas Faithful: How Todays Churches Are Mixing God with Politics and Losing Their Way by Kathleen Kennedy Townsend**

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend (the daughter of RFK) offers up an engaging book about the way that Christianity has lost its way. Having been raised a Catholic, she is not shy in her criticism of the Catholic Church or Christianity at large. She believes that the church should be focused on social justice issues such as helping the poor and less fortunate. Kennedy criticizes the church for focusing too much time on the individual through their emphasis on spiritual growth and salvation.

She writes, "My own Catholic Church has allowed its social agenda to be trumped by an all-consuming focus on contraception, abortion, same sex marriage, and embryonic stem cell research - none of which are mentioned in the Gospels" (p. 19).

Later, Kennedy submits the following observation "There's something deeply troubling and inconsistent about evangelical support for conservative economic policies. Essentially, they've chosen to abandon any notion of shared responsibility and the idea, well supported by both the Hebrew prophets and Jesus Himself, that we have an obligation to improve the world, an idea that was central to both the Catholic and Protestant political traditions throughout history" (p. 119).

If you like this book, you might also enjoy Jim Wallis' book entitled God's Politics or Tony Campolo's book entitled Red Letter Christian. The meaning of "red letter" in the title is that all of the words Jesus spoke in the New Testament are written in red. Like Townsend, both Wallis and Campolo believe the church should be promoting peace, social justice, and the elimination of poverty.

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